

the giants



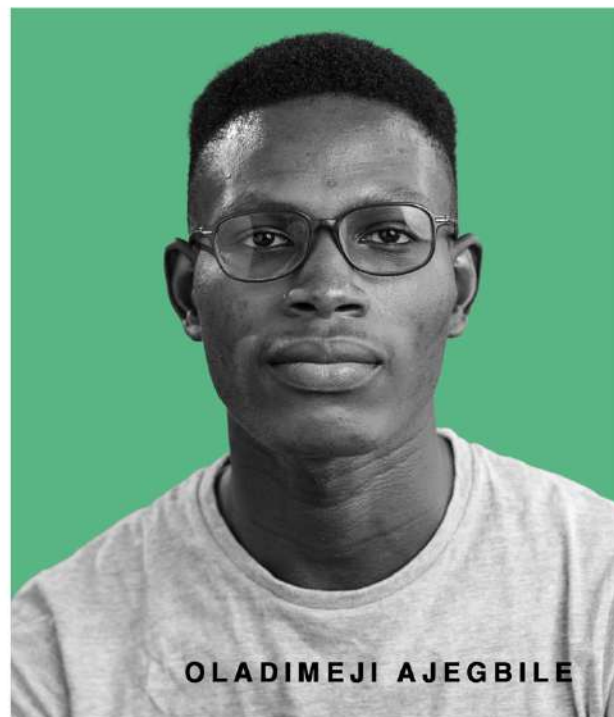
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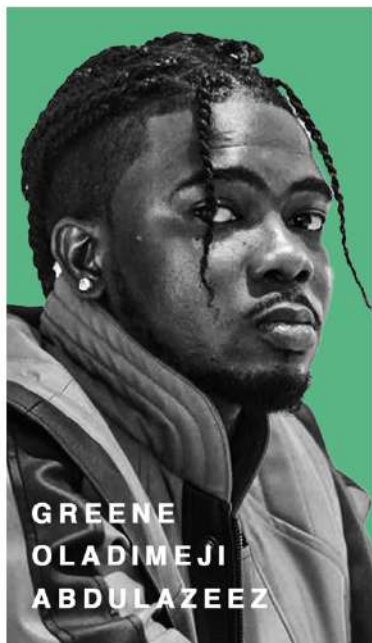
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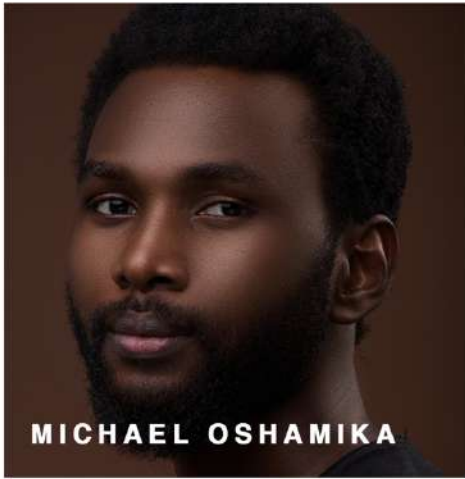
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ITABIYI

AND OTHER GIANTS

1ST EDITION | APRIL 2023

Exploring Creativity in the 21st Century

OTHER GIANTS FEATURED



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HAUWA LAWAL



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JIMOH

Your support is immeasurable, you made this possible!

We would like to express our sincerest thanks and gratitude to God for the inspiration, creativity, and vision to bring this publication to life. We are grateful for the blessings, opportunities, and guidance that have led to this moment.

To the Giant Creative Team,

Your hard work, collaboration, and commitment to excellence have not only made this magazine a success but have also inspired us to strive for greatness. Thank you for the many hours of dedication and creativity that you have poured into this project.

Together, we have brought forth a publication that we are truly proud of, one that reflects our vision and passion for creativity, storytelling, and excellence. Let's continue to create, innovate, and inspire together, as we push the boundaries of creativity.

To the remarkable and inspiring creatives who have shared their stories with us,

Thank you for sharing your voice, your talent, and your passion with us. You are a true inspiration to us all. From the creatives who have overcome adversity to pursue their dreams, to those who have poured their hearts into their craft and found solace and purpose in their art, and all who shared their stories with us in one way or another, we appreciate your willingness to share your experiences, challenges, and triumphs with us.

Your stories have not only enriched this publication, but they have also enriched our lives, and we are grateful for the privilege of being able to share them with the world.

To the vibrant and diverse creative communities who have collaborated with us,

Your creativity, enthusiasm, and willingness to collaborate have been the driving forces behind the success of this publication. We are in awe of the incredible talent and passion that you bring to your respective communities, and we feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with you. We appreciate your support and contribution to this magazine.

We hope that this collaboration has brought us closer together and has strengthened our ties as a community of like-minded individuals who are passionate about creativity, art, and culture.

To all those who have taken the time to engage with our publication,

Your willingness to immerse yourself in our ideas and perspectives is a testament to the power of creativity and human connection. We are honoured to share this journey with you and hope that our publication will inspire, challenge, and enrich your life in some way.

Thank you all for being a part of our creative vision!

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Exploring Creativity in the 21st Century

By **Oluwabukola Jegede**
Founder, The Giant Creative

I used to think creativity could only be attributed to the intelligent, but as I started to grow, I realized creativity could be attributed to anyone, as long as they had a brain and could think. Exploring it is another path that most people take lightly.

My 13-year-old self was smart, very curious, and inquisitive. At that age, my thought pattern was a little bit different from that of my friends. I loved creating something out of nothing. I remember using plain waste papers that I got from my mother's shop to make jotters for counting and solving mathematics, and I sold them at school. Till today, I didn't know how I got the idea of creating a notepad out of that plain waste paper, but I did it and made money from that idea. Creativity doesn't know your age, stature, or gender, and if properly nurtured and explored, it can showcase you to the world.

Most people think creativity is about the tool but that is not so true. "Creativity is seeing what others see and thinking what no one else ever thought." Albert Einstein. Creativity starts in your mind and follows some patterns, exposure, and processes before it is seen publicly, i.e., its final result.



"Creativity is the practice of thinking outside the box. Creativity is the ability to produce new, diverse, and unique ideas. "Thinking creatively means looking at things from a different perspective and not being restricted by rules, customs, or norms." South West Charlotte STEM Academy

How do producers and videographers come up with those amazing music video shoots or the movies you watch on Netflix? Someone thought about it, which happens from the inside by following patterns, processes. They meet with other creative people

to bring this idea or set of thoughts to life, and then we see its final result. That Idea has gone through some rigorous process and now we enjoy the results. The same thing goes with designers, UI/UX, graphics, illustrations, motion, animations, and even branding. It passes through these same processes. It starts with the THOUGHT.

A Creative is someone who sees the world a little differently. A creative is unique and doesn't fit into any box of broad thoughts (diverse thinking). A creative person will come up with ideas to solve problems of any kind. So a creative could be a fashion designer, brand designer, graphic designer, software designer/engineer, programmer, videographer, content creator, skit maker, bead maker, makeup artist, and more! They create from SCRATCH.

As much as anyone can be creative, some challenges can hinder exploring creativity in the 21st century. In the 21st century, technology is in vogue. So many things are attached to technology and social media. One of the challenges is a lack of direction. There are so many creatives out there who don't know what path to take or what direction they are headed. In this time and age where we have so many voices, eyes, and ears everywhere, sometimes it can be hard to decide and take a path, but rest assured that this challenge can be overcome. With the right mentor and by staying close to God in prayer for direction, you can be guided on what path to take.

Some creatives face the challenge of losing focus or getting distracted. Social media can

be a blessing or a great distraction. With millions of users on these platforms, you can be carried away and forget yourself. A creative person has to be focused to be able to think right. Don't be tossed by social media; you can use it to your advantage. Be smart enough to filter and not just digest everything you see up there; you can get distracted. Be careful.

Are you afraid of rejection? Do you have the "What will people say?" syndrome? Be bold. This is one of the many things that helped me at the beginning of my creative journey. Put your work out there and keep creating. If you get rejected, let it serve as motivation for you to do better because that is how you will grow, but never stop creating.

You will make mistakes; this is a challenge that a creative person will face, but that shouldn't keep you down for too long. Get up and get moving. If you don't get up, you won't be able to keep that mistake from happening again. Getting up is an opportunity for you to correct your mistake.

In the 21st century, just like I stated earlier, technology is en vogue! So you have to evolve. There are many opportunities that technology has brought to this world. Tap into it and evolve; see ways in which you can be different and still keep up with the evolving society. Read what other giants in the creative industry have to say about this in The Giants Magazine.

More questions will be answered and doubts clarified by stories, thoughts and interviews from other creatives who stand as giants in the creative industry in the 1st Edition of "The Giants" Magazine.

I'll leave you with this: explore and seize opportunities that the 21st century brings. I can't wait to hear your story! till we meet again.



Meet Michael Oshamika

Michael Oshamika (born September 24, 1993) is a Nigerian creative artist, 3D generalist, environment designer, world builder, animator, director and writer. While he graduated with a first class degree in Pure and Applied Physics at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, he has always had a strong passion for action/adventure productions (films and games) from his early years as an adolescent. He is cofounder of Vecury Interactive Inc., a Canadian based games dev company and also the founder of Hatty Studio, a Nigerian based studio aimed at developing unique 3D animation content on par with current industry standard of production. While plunging deep into production, Michael Oshamika is also focused on contributing to the evolution of the films and games industry in Nigeria and Africa via training and mentoring of talents.

What does creativity mean to you?

“Skillful delivery of inspiration at a near perfect aesthetic level.”

Every attempt at creativity is an attempt at providing information or expressing an idea. Everyone is or can be creative, however, there are levels to creativity and it also varies with respect to the field of delivery. Even a medical practitioner can be creative in the craft. There is therefore the need for idealization or conceptualization to begin the process of any creative endeavour and personally, this is an inspired revelation.

What inspired you to be a 3D artist?

I had always been creative as long as I can remember. Without any lesson, I had craft a wood sculpt of plaques for each group at the teenage church of my early years, made a portrait painting of my mum around the same time. However, I always felt the need for more, there is always a better way to present that which I want to create and in no time I had picked up Graphics design, learning from the best designer I can ever ask for in person of Oluyemi Imole while in the University. At the same time, I was inspired to create something that others can interact with or be engaged in and so games dropped in my mind back in 2013. I learnt Unity for games development for a while but needed 3D assets to make this work. Having no funds to purchase these assets and also lacking the skill to edit the free ones, I plunged into the world of 3D, starting out with and immediately dropping Maya. I went on to Cinema4D and found it more flexible but hardware demanding and this led me to Blender3D which is still my number one 3D modelling application. I have since left games development alone and focused on the 3D design world. It wasn't an inspiration for me, it was a need, a process led me to it and I found it universally necessary in further endeavours.

I have therefore since longed for production level results in the 3D world and my first was in December 2022, when I worked on Battlereign game, creating the entire level and cinematic shots for the game. This enabled me to

“Art can be priceless, it's worth is directly influenced by the value of the artist.”

implement my craft in both the game and also the animation industry.

How did you determine your value as a 3D artist?

“Art can be priceless, it's worth is directly influenced by the value of the artist.”

My value as a creative is first defined by the inspiration received and this is priceless. My years of training comes next and this is crowned by my vast experience in the industry.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

“I take the block away.”

It's either lack of ideas or lack of technical know how required for the implementation of an idea. I take up research on the idea and this is actually the first thing in the creative process.

Creative block in terms of lack of inspiration is due to having a really busy mind. I would take time off to either read, write, play games, see a movie or improve my work process flow if needed and at other times, a good rest is what the mind needs to be clear of all that blocks it.

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

A lot of new things keep popping up in the creative industry.

I am subscribed to almost every digital media platforms of interest and also linked up with dev teams working on improving existing systems. This has helped me evolve as well from being a 3D generalist to being an Environment Artist, Level Designer, world builder, animator and director while also studying and developing projects in virtual reality, virtual production and vfx for films and games.



My love for tech news platforms like techcrunch is big. Redit communities and Discord servers are also great places for news and development information follow up. I have also found it important to interact with fellow creatives both locally and internationally on global platforms like Artstation and Behance.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

I would like to categorize the challenges into Technical, Human resource, and Business(making money - funding & sales) challenges

Technical challenges such as availability of highend hardware/equipments needed to function in the 3D industry is a major obstacle for a 3D artist, however, with creative effort in sales and engaging in outsourced production projects, funds are directed towards solving this challenge.

Having skilled people to work with on some demanding projects is the next challenge and to resolve this, I have taken it upon myself to train those interested in this industry via various programs kicking off this year.

The business of money making in the 3D industry is very important. As a business minded person, various channels have been opened to ensure consistent flow of income. While some are really time consuming, some others do not require any extra attention.

The market for a 3D artist in Nigeria is much more international as very few projects are available locally. To change this narrative, Hatty studio is working on a new animation title for a 2024 release with one sole aim. To boost production awareness and capability of local artists in the country while also attracting foreign investments. Time and resources needed for a good production is scary, however, if that is all that we are able to achieve come 2024, it is more than worth the sacrifices made already and those still ahead.



Meet **Hauwa Lawal**

Content Creator, Writer and Script Writer.

I am a content creator who has worked with various organisations as a content strategist. At various stages, I have also written scripts that have been produced. Other than that, I am currently building a social media brand that tells Nigerian stories in entertaining formats.

Can you just briefly talk about yourself?

My name is Hauwa Lawal and I am a writer. I write skits and also web series. I've not written for TV yet. But hopefully one day I will. I've also written various scripts that are not produced yet. That's basically all about my work. I'm also a speaker but I've not spoken in many places because of my anonymity. I'm also a graduate of mass communication. I have my masters in communication and marketing also.

What is creativity to you?

Creativity to me is just letting yourself be yourself. It is basically just doing the things that come naturally to you. So, whatever it is you have, for example, I work with my stories in my head. but a lot of creatives work with their hand, work with their voice. So that's just letting yourself explore your mind and just be yourself. And that's why I think that everyone is creative because everyone has a spark of creativity in them.

What inspired you to be a content Creator?

I don't think I was inspired. I didn't realize that I was a content creator. I was working with Cracks TV at one point in my life before I got my master's degree and I had to write stories for them and I would write those stories for Cracks Tv on their platform and I would notice that people

would like it, and people would start laughing at what I was writing. I was like, why are you people laughing?, I was just doing my job and then it just occurred to me that I had a knack for creating stories that people might like and are relatable to Nigerians, creating Nigerian-centric stories. So I just went up doing it, and I found myself creating content. I don't it's not like an inspiration or anything. It was by accident really.

What is your creative process like, how do you come up with ideas?

For my ideas, I think it's a combination of how I grew up, where I grew up, and also the kind of movies that I watched growing up. So if you notice a lot of my stories are not Booji stories. They're not all around my character. The part I named Hauwa after me. So in lots of my stories, Hauwa is not in a fancy house or all that. it's really Hauwa surviving in the ghetto. I grew up in Mushin and eventually, my parents moved to Surulere. And so it really inspired by my childhood. You know you'd have all these uncles that just come to your house because they want to steal something or just want to eat because they're hungry and so that's what really inspires my creativity and everything. I just take one of those characters that I grew up with, and I turn it into a story, and I feel like people can relate to it because a lot of Nigerians are not rich or boogie. Of course, there are rich Nigerians but I think a lot of people can't relate to my story, because it's very down to earth. I don't like a rich life, and so it's all around me like I'll jump down and I'll just say something funny, and then I'll write about it. So yeah, that's how I get my inspiration.

How were you able to carve a niche for yourself in content creation and as an anonymous storyteller?

Okay. So for the anonymous bit, I became anonymous because I feel like I didn't want people to look at my stories and say, oh, I didn't want any focus on my face right there a lot of content creators that want a lot of focus on their face, because obviously, they are in videos. And they are doing things that you can do. Obviously, It's very hard for you to

do skits without your face in them but for me, it was really narrating, I was not ready to get into skits just yet. I just knew that. I could make people laugh by just writing, and then there was no need to show my face. Also, at some point, my face was on my page, but a lot of people say, oh, my God! Your face doesn't match! You know what you're right, and I was like, you know what, Let me just take my face out for a little bit. I think that this is the year that I will come out with my face eventually because I realize now that I've created a niche and a brand without my face, and it feels like I have achieved, that feels to me like a win because people can see my work anywhere and be like "Oh, this sounds like what Hauwa would write". You know how I would write and it was not intentional. It was just since my face is not needed, I would just go ahead and do my work without my face. but right now I understand that social media is very visual, and sometimes, you know, you might have interviews like these and I would have loved to have my picture out there but I've been an anonymous content creator, and I can't do that just yet but very soon, hopefully.

Which aspect of your content creation do you think is yet to be tapped into in Nigeria or Africa generally?

I believe that in Nigeria right now, content creators are only just scratching the surface. There is a lot that can be done, even though it feels like I'm a content creator making a lot of money, especially the really popular ones. I think that there is so much room for more growth because even though the world is connected and the world is global, I think that there's just a lot more room for more. African stories, really because I'm very interested in African stories.

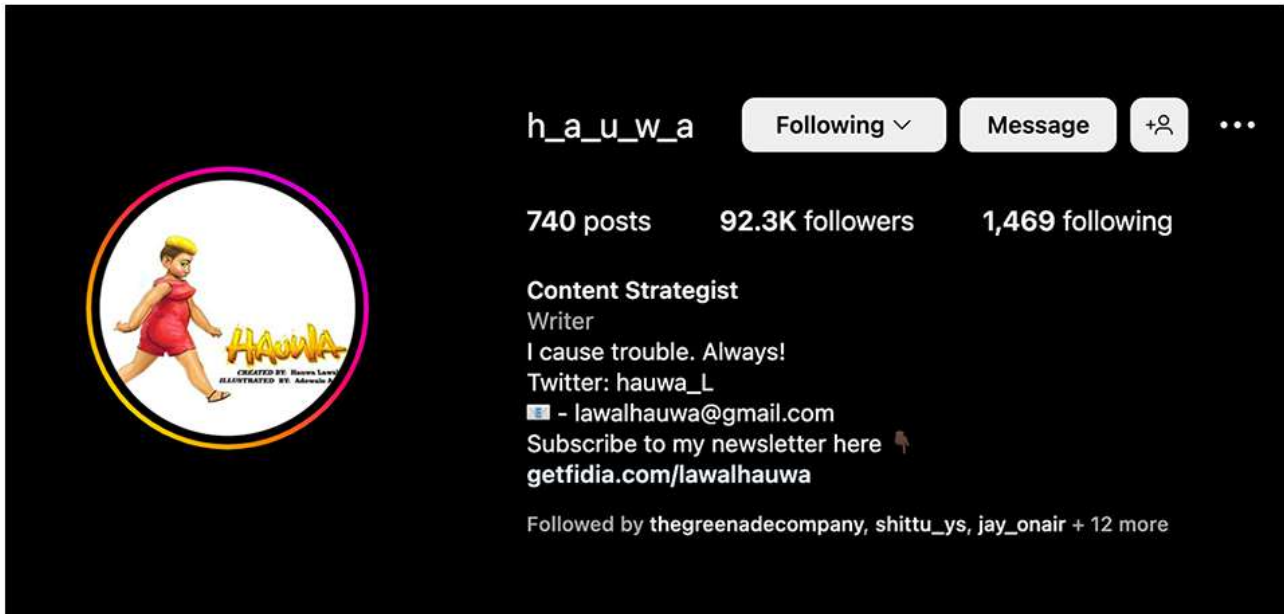
I'm very interested in people seeing the way that, for example, Nigerian children are growing up and Anikulapo. I know it is a big-budget film but I still feel like they so much space for content creation, especially with Nigerian stories, and I think that is one part of content creation that we have not tapped into just yet. We need to tell a lot more of our stories because it's so clear that that's what Western

people have they have used a lot of their stories. And Nigeria, we have not even begun to scratch the surface, and I think that in the future, we'll be seeing a lot of African stories on the big stage.

What made you utilise comedy to tell your story, and to communicate with your audience amongst other elements?

I think that I chose comedy because comedy sells a lot in Nigeria. I think that there are lots of there lots of content creators, and a lot of content creators are doing comedy and I am just naturally happy and funny. I will not say funny. I think I just laugh a lot. I might see something even if it's not funny to any other person and start laughing because that's how I am. So, I decided that I should bring that into my writing. I have some writings that are not comedy centric, I write some

“I believe that in Nigeria right now, content creators are only just scratching the surface.”



comedy but I chose comedy for social media because I feel a lot of people like to laugh. And if I do this so well, why, Don't, I just make this the forefront of my brand? But, I have some stories that some of my audience follow in my newsletter. and those ones are not quite funny. They are more serious stories. So I do both but the comedy is just at the forefront because I like to laugh.

Which misconception would you like to change about your field?

Firstly, content creators have money. A lot of content creators are doing it, and a lot of content creators like, for example, you see someone with like probably 100 thousand followers and you just assume that they have a lot of money because you think that content creators are making lots of money. A lot of content creators are making money, but there are also some that are just trying to scratch the surface.

Another thing is, it's not a misconception as much but I would like to see more people get credit for their content, and a lot of people

would create content and the content would be stolen and they will not be given the credit that they deserve, I've seen it so many times. I think that content creators should be given credit for the content that they create regardless of whether you pay them or not.

What are the challenges faced so far, and how did you overcome them?

I think the major challenge I faced is, performance anxiety and then, secondly, fixating on numbers so for example, I work on social media a lot, and my entire brand is on social media. Social media is dependent on numbers and algorithms so sometimes I'll put some beings, and they will not do so well and doing so well in my own opinion, how many likes do I have? how many comments, and how many shares? And I think that cripples me creatively such that I am unable to do more because I just feel like, oh, what I've done has failed, and so I can't do more. But I'm starting to overcome it in the New Year because I'm just telling myself that as long as I like the content and I think it's funny it really it's not like it doesn't matter if another person doesn't think it's funny, but it's good to work as long as I believe that

my work is good work, then it is good to work and so I've decided that regardless of how my content does. I'm going to keep creating and keep writing, so those are challenges that I face.

What is your advice to creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

My advice is to do. That is just advice because the person that has a million followers on Instagram, Twitter or TikTok or any other platform, doesn't even have to be on social media. They started from zero. Any content creator that wants to start, just keep doing it. There are days that your content will fall flat. You will have those days even the best content creators have those days and there are days that you would just be surprised how well your content is doing, and then you will now be gingered to do more. For every content creator, you are your biggest cheerleader, just do it, get it out of your head and create also don't be afraid to push yourself, and when I say, push yourself, I mean like market yourself. I mean I'll give you an example of Fenty by Rihanna. Rihanna is one of the most famous women in the world and she still pushes her products aggressively. So if you're doing anything, do it well, and then push it, don't, hide. and be like, "Oh, I don't know how this will do, or I'm not sure how people will receive it". Do and push that is it just it.

“I think that content creators should be given credit for the content that they create regardless of whether you pay them or not.”



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Exploring Creativity in the 21st Century

By **Designers Discourse**

Digital technology, globalization, increased connectivity and the emergence of new cultures are some of the possibilities the 21st century affords us. While this has presented us with new opportunities, it has also created challenges and problems that have necessitated creative, imaginative, innovative thinking and solutions. In order to solve these problems, creativity has now more than ever, become very essential.

You may ask, what is creativity? Creativity can be simply put as the ability to generate new ideas, concepts, or solutions to problems. It is not limited to designers, creatives, artists, writers etc, but is a crucial skill for anyone in any field.

Creativity in its true sense provides room for 'original' thoughts, unique ideas, critical thinking, problem-solving, in the creation of tangibles and intangibles that are worthwhile and beneficial to mankind. It also requires letting go of stereotypes, ingrained thought patterns and taking calculated risks in order to discover new possibilities.

One approach to exploring creativity is by

leveraging technology. Technology has changed the way we work and communicate, and it has also opened up new opportunities for us to explore creativity. There are a wide range of technological tools through which we can explore to develop our creative skills.

Another way to explore creativity is to revamp and rework pre-existing ideas in a new and intriguing way than it is from the original. In the book, *Steal Like An Artist* by Austin Kleon, he says "All creative work builds on what came before. Nothing is completely original."

You probably will be familiar with this popular saying, "Two heads are always better than one." This speaks to the importance of collaboration. Collaborating with others can bring new perspectives and ideas to a project, and can help you think outside the box.

Exploring creativity also requires taking chances, risks and accepting failure. According to Brené Brown, in her book, *Daring Greatly*, she wrote, "Vulnerability is the home of innovation, creativity, and transformation." This means that to produce something genuinely unique and distinctive, you need to stretch the bounds of what is practical;

embrace your vulnerabilities and take chances.

Having touched on a number of ways through which we can explore creativity, it is important to note that one of the biggest challenges to exploring creativity is the distractions and noise that come with living in a connected world.

In the book, *Deep Work*, Cal Newport says, "The ability to perform deep work is becoming increasingly rare at exactly the same time it is becoming increasingly valuable in our economy." His point is that in order to truly explore our creativity, we need to be able to disconnect from the constant flow of

information and focus our attention on the task at hand.

Overcoming these distractions requires us to adopt a mindfulness mindset in order to be completely present in the moment and engaged in our creative process. This is the only way we can access our inner creativity and release our greatest potential.

In summary, exploring creativity in the 21st century requires our readiness to accept, adopt and adapt to technology; revamp and rework pre-existing ideas; collaborate with others; take risks and be vulnerable; and practice mindfulness as humans whether artists, creatives designers, innovators, solution providers, etc.



Meet **Adesola Salami “CreatifGuru”**

Adesola Salami aka. “CreatifGuru” FKA GraphixGuru, is a Creative Designer, brand strategist, and consultant with 6+ years’ experience headlining brand & advertising projects for brands and helping celebrities showcase and brand their talent in Nigeria’s business & entertainment world. He has served on 500+ custom campaigns for companies & personalities including Toke Makinwa, Stanbic IBTC, BBDO Agency west Africa, Zlatan Ibile, Lilo Aderogba, Jaywon, Zikel cosmetics, and lots more.

Guru as he is called by his industry peers has grown a firm reputation as a visionary problem-solver and creative mind in the fields of brand advertising, digital content-media production, digital marketing-direct sales, direct marketing, and professional development. Mr. Adesola Salami also doubles as the Senior Lead at Gurudemy, a Lekki-based Tech school empowering youths with relevant and digitals skills needed to compete in the global job market

What does creativity mean to you?

For me, Creativity is seeing things differently. Creativity is the ability to create meaningful and deep expression out of the regular. I strongly believe that every curious person, is a natural creative, Designer or not.

What inspired you to be a creative designer?

The honest truth is, nothing really inspired me at the beginning, unlike many, I got to creative design by chance. During the process I discovered that I'm a curious and creative person. Then everything started making sense to me as I remembered I used to try to replicate banners, birthday frames designs etc on paper and biro when I was much younger, unknowing to me I was doing anything creative or design, I was just passing time as a kid, sincerely.

How did you determine your value as a creative designer?

Thank you for this Question. My value as a creative designer determines itself overtime as I create more work, I get more things and names to add to the portfolio to back my value as a designer then I became undeniable, if you don't see my value and the reason why I charge this xyz for my works, then I won't work with you. I always say this to new designers, keep working, only time will tell. It's a process, you don't have to rush it.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

Omo! Lols. Honestly, you can't really deal with creative blocks when it comes, you can only manage till you get out of that.

For me, I try to pause and start working on a new project that interests me more most especially with the brief and quality materials, then go back when I'm done having fun with the work.

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

"...nothing really inspired me at the beginning, unlike many, I got to creative design by chance."

Trends will always be there and change is constant but your style of works and communication is yours. Try to evolve but don't leave yours.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

Major challenges are mostly time management and demands from clients and brands. For instance, I do other things aside designs but I started mainly with design. Now I can't manage to create as many designs as I used but client won't understand that and you can't start leaving money on the table. I added more designers to my team then I direct the creative but most clients understand and know your pattern of designs, after delivery, some of them will say "Guru I know you didn't create this design, it doesn't look like what you created" even when it looks good which is surprising and

same time challenging but I just have to groom my team to understand my design pattern in creating, which I don't really like at times as I'm not the type to limit or disturb a designer's style or process. Just do your thing but some situations won't allow that.

How do you ensure productivity while working on various projects?

I try to enjoy the work process and I always request for high quality materials like your HD photos, clear brief and all to help productivity and output.

What do you think is the future of creative designer?

Hmmm, it defers for every creative...For me, I'm a Business man, Lol

I remember sometimes in 2017, I jokingly said, I wasn't going to be designing anymore in 5 years time, fast forward to now, I don't design much anymore, I select few projects with interests in brief, brand, and personal works.

I'm the Mr Eazi (Nigerian singer) of the Creative Design Industry in Nigeria.

In a world full of creatives, how are you able to stand out and be successful?

Many will say being yourself will help you stand out but I don't completely agree sometimes being your regular self might not take you Far, that's



where intentional branding comes in. Surprisingly many designers that offers branding services aren't even branded.

I would say, consistency and showing up even when it's not feeling like it. Consistency helped me got here..

What is your advice to creative designers wanting to thrive in the industry?

Be Intentional, Be curious, Be marketable, Be consistent with showing up.

That's what I know.



Meet **Eduvie Martin**

I am that enthusiastic, passionate communicator who understands the power of words to evoke the desired attitudinal change. And I wield that voice.... Often bringing people together in a well thought out plan to amplify a comms campaign. I roll up my sleeves to get the job done but also take a step back to reflect on the impact of the work I do. I am a cheerleader to all my friends and family; I drive those who dream with me to be the best versions of themselves.

My comms career started 15 years ago and has been across multiple sectors including banking, FMCGs and start-ups. But before then, I registered a consulting firm which I used to host multiple events including some for Ikoyi Club, Lagos Boat Club and more... I also trained employees in organisations on how to develop their interpersonal skills.

Shortly after, I landed my role to lead a team of comms consultants for a contact centre in the biggest bank in Nigeria and later moved to the comms department where I went on to launch a news channel, host a magazine show and onboard multiple tools for measuring and disseminating comms.

I am currently the Group Internal Comms Manager at BAT, serve as a board member with the International Association of Business Communicators UK and Ireland and volunteer on the board of the comic book start-up: Comic Republic which my best friend and I run. I lead the marketing and comms efforts which has led to media visibility for the start-up known for its authentic universe of African superheroes.

What is creativity to you?

There is a misconception that a creative person is one who produces something that you can stare at and gape in awe at how revolutionary the item or idea is. I think creativity is something we all do at some point.

It is in those moments we dare to think outside the box to find solutions to a pressing challenge. The Oxford dictionary defines it as the use of imagination or original ideas to create something, invent something. That's the definition I relate to and we all do this in some form some probably more than others.

What inspired you to be a communication specialist?

My dad speaks of moments where I would stop crying when Fela's dancers appeared on the TV screen. I was just a child and already mesmerized by their incredible dancing skills.

Growing up, I was a very creative child often doing things differently and loving creativity in most forms. I was that child that was performing dance to a live studio audience of family members, at someone's birthday dancing competition, singing live in the school choir up to university level or hosting an event or wedding. And I could talk! Non-stop talking with new words I had learnt from the dictionary which eventually made their way to a poetry book that must never be seen by any living person.

My desire to evoke the words that will create the desired reaction was insatiable and it eventually led to a life-long career, one which I still enjoy to this day.

Every aspect of comms is a thrill, from speaking to presenting to writing to meeting and managing new stakeholders, I find joy doing it all.

How did you determine your value as a communication specialist?

Value comes from your ability to drive the desired intent. I am a big advocate of measuring outcomes. You will often find me asking those existential questions about if what the people need is more seminars on wellbeing or just a day off or if one needs extra cupcakes with lunch or just a lunch subsidy to drive staff loyalty. What doesn't get measured, doesn't get understood. We must take pride in measuring the outcomes of our campaigns and be ready to learn from what the numbers are telling us.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

When I am out of ideas, I book some time for an experience. It could be visiting the theatre, museum, park, conference, or a new city.

When I can afford the time, experiencing new things brings fresh ideas. And when there's no time, long walks in a beautiful park with a great view and a pond plugged into a self-help podcast does the trick.

“Value comes from your ability to drive the desired intent.”

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

Never underestimate the power of communities. I find communities in all environments and then volunteer my time to serve. It keeps me grounded and informed. I also love conferences and never let a year pass without attending a good conference – from any part of the world.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

There's never enough time in the day to do all we desire, and time management is very essential.

Defining what matters, what aligns with my values, helps me in moments of doubt as to what to prioritise at each given time.

How do you ensure productivity while working on various projects?

Juggling requires me to manage my time, prioritise, delegate, and trust my team.

I am very intentional about where I spend my time and with whom. I am rarely in places I don't plan to be in, often choosing to be all in or not at all. I plan my holidays across my multiple deliverables and when I am on one part of my multiple roles, I am all in, present for that moment in time.

What do you think is the future of creative communication?

I see more fusion with technology for certain. When harnessed properly, the potential technology brings is incredible and we can already see this playing out in our world today. As creatives, we mustn't shy away from technology or live-in fear that it's out to get our jobs, we must embrace them and see how we can fuse some of our ideas with their capabilities where it makes sense to. The evolution of technology makes me very excited, and I am already using some of the advantages to understand sentiments on comms campaigns.

“Never underestimate the power of communities.”

In a world full of creatives, how are you able to stand out and be successful?

I stay authentic to who I am and informed on what's happening. I believe if you dig deep into your authentic self, you will always stand out. As cheesy as this may sound, there can always only be one you.

What is your advice to communicators wanting to thrive in the creative industry?

Absorb everything! When I started my journey, I put my hand up for everything, I still do. Volunteer as much time as you can afford to, to trying new things in the creative space. Don't be afraid to lean outside your comfort zone.

Embrace the power of communities – there are loads of them out there. You learn from shared experiences and may even make some good friends or future partners in the process. Talk about what you're doing. Sharing your experiences could help someone trying to do this too



Meet Micheal Yusuf

Micheal Olayemi Yusuf, a passionate humanitarian and visionary leader, has dedicated his life to creating positive change in the world through design. He is the Founder of Mentis Academy, a creative educational platform, fuelled by a burning passion to impact lives.

Born and raised in a humble household, Micheal has always been driven to use his skills and talents to help others. Through his academy, there has been various free technical empowerment trainings to encourage youths and give back to the community.

He is also the Founder of well-known companies including Bulky Books, Led Hub, and Lust, among others. He has worked with a number of exceptional companies throughout his years in the creative sector, including FCMB, MTN, SCOAN, DARLING, TBC, IGNITE, KINGSWORD, and many others.

In addition to his work in design, Micheal is also an active humanitarian, dedicating his time and resources to support upcoming talents through his Design Community(Ctrl+m) and other community projects including Design goes to school and The Save Nigeria Campaign.

With his unique blend of creativity, empathy, and social consciousness, Micheal has become a respected leader in the design community and a role model for young designers who aspire to use their skills for good. His work has been recognized with various awards and accolades, and he continues to inspire and empower others to make a positive difference in the world through design.

Can you please introduce yourself?

My name is Michael Yusuf. I am a creative, meaning I have a lot of expressions. I am a creative entrepreneur so I get involved in lots of businesses and solve problems though I have a background in graphic design.

What is creativity to you?

I see creativity as an expression and one thing that really hinders it is exposure. I strongly believe you can't express what you don't have. It works in tandem with exposure. It is the ability to express yourself but the expression is limited to exposure and where creativity is concerned, exposure is extremely important.

What inspired you to choose the field of graphic design?

I have the same regular story that others have. From childhood, I drew and did art stuff but my foundation was creating. We take paper, use a ruler and pen to sketch and cut out then use paint to dab. That was how I started before I got to know it was something you could do with a computer. I saw there was no limitation with it, you can colour, erase, and undo, unlike the conventional one. That was when I got introduced to graphic design. I learnt at Yaba with a graphics guru then. Then I didn't have a computer so I would go to their company every time to sit and watch. Anytime he did something like magic to me, I would ask questions and that was how I took notes. What made it different for me was the change, I really embraced growth. When people say "this is what is working in graphic design" if something else is working, why don't you try to learn? Constant learning is important, that was what helped me over the years. Embrace change and growth. I always tell my people, "if you see me today when you see me next week, something will change around me". That is how I live my life. I am on the lookout for something to change or move around me, which really helps when it comes to this graphic design field.

How did you determine your value as a graphic designer?

For a lot of creatives, I think Chris Do really did a good job. When it comes to creativity in Nigeria, there is no structure, there is nobody to teach you this is what I need to do. There is no association or body that is putting it for us to know our value. I sourced from different creatives online, to understand the value of what I do. When I started, I was just charging regular prices, I didn't put a strong value on what I was doing but learning from our creatives, the conversations of friends and colleagues in the industry about adding more value by rendering better services. For example, when it comes to brand identity, you can just do a logo and send in PNG but if you want to add more value to it, you will probably do a presentation and place it on mockups which will add more value and you can charge more. Knowledge I gained has been a vital part of adding value to myself.

*"...where
creativity is
concerned,
exposure is
extremely
important."*

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

I'm not a trend person. Trends come and go so you need to have a vision and what you stand for, what are your values? At Mentis academy, we hold some things really high which are not trends. Number one is impact. We constantly want to add value to others, collaboration is extremely key to us. Community is another thing we value, this is our trend. We just stick to our values and keep repeating. Even when it comes to how we create, we stick to what we see works and we stay there. If we find that something else works for us, we change not because something is reigning. Following trends can confuse your identity and what you stand for, you can be misinterpreted so stick to what you believe in.

How do you deal with creative block?

Creative block does not exist for me. Most of the time, you need rest and need to go off your computer. When you overwork your brain, it gets tired. I kind of avert creative block by following a process which determines my result. Before starting a project, I conduct research, ask questions after which I go to websites to check what has been done. I always advise my people to look through history, there is nothing you want to do that is new under the sun. Somebody has done it before, so learn from the person. They say success always gives clues, use the



clues for whatever you are creating. Where is the creative block coming from? You only need to sleep. When I started, I did a lot of night working but it wasn't helping even my physical body was feeling it. Right now, I don't play with my seven or eight hours sleep, I don't do all night except in rare cases. I don't work on weekends and because of this, I don't have creative blocks. When you put structures and processes in place, you can avoid creative block. There is a process. When you start, you might have to pull an all night at that time in order to get a name for yourself. This is the first level called hardwork. After hardwork, you need to move to softwork, from softwork, you need to move to smartwork and from smartwork to network. There are different level of works. After a year or two in the industry, you need to upgrade to softwork.

What are the challenges that you faced so far and how did you overcome them?

To have a voice in this industry, you need leadership. Leadership is influence so how do you get leadership to have influence? You probably need to host seminars, speak, let people know what you stand for, share your story. At the beginning, I was trying to find my own voice. The challenge is while trying to find your voice, it is okay to help others find theirs. Don't wait till you get it all or become Tola Alabi before you start sharing. It is from that place that you are that you start sharing.

The goal is to have influence and be a leader. How do you have influence without putting your story out there or sharing what you know. There is something called educational marketing which I strongly believe in, there is no need to hoard information, just constantly keep sharing. There is the law of give and take, even the bible talks about a time of sowing and harvesting. All you are sharing in one way or the other will come back to you. That was a challenge for me, putting my voice there. How did I solve it? Other people did not give platforms even when you volunteer in Nigeria. Even when you call people to speak, they won't want to answer if you are not reputable.

The second was collaboration with other creatives and dealing with clients will always be a challenge. I overcame by putting my voice out there myself, I started speaking, hosting Instagram live sessions. If nobody invites you, invite yourself. Create a platform for yourself and share. When you begin to have a voice, people will want to collaborate with you. Those were my challenges.

What inspired you to be a creative advocate or teacher?

There was a time in my life I was trying to find clarity. I wanted to find an identity for my life. My mentor told me to find three things from childhood I have done without effort. I sat down and started to ponder on this, I was able to mention four to six which I reduced to three. The number

“To have a voice in the industry, you need leadership.”

one was leadership. I remembered that from primary school, I was class captain till head boy, the leadership was there. I remember in school, I took tutorials for free, I just started teaching people so I knew education was my thing and since I engaged in visual arts from the onset, that is where graphic design came in. Those things I did not struggle to do were what inspired me.

What do you think the future of graphic design is in Nigeria and Africa?

In Nigeria, the future is bright because we are even more backwards. When we talk about graphic design, I call them problem solvers. Companies will need problem solvers, those with the ability to think, see a problem and solve it. That will extremely be needed in industries. The issue right now is that companies see creatives as just graphic designers and place them at a low level as flyer design, they don't know that guy can take that company to the next level. Very soon, they will begin to discover them. What we do is

solve problems through visual communication. For example, a client comes with visibility issues then you come up with a nice flyer that attracts patronage or you help businesses put structure in place that will help the business grow or convert customers. Graphic designers are the leaders of tomorrow. So don't limit yourself to that screen alone. You are not a designer but a problem solver, you need to start solving real-life problems, systems, structures, and organizational problems, it is the same process with graphic design. I started my event and tour company recently, it is still my graphic design skill that makes me unique. It is still my graphic design skills that help me solve problems, I will find one creative way to solve that problem. The future is bright in Nigeria and designers should see themselves as problem solvers, solving real-time problems, speak in meetings and contribute to things.

Do you think you can predict any trends that we will be seen in graphic design in the nearest, or maybe far future?

One thing I know that will last is what has been before being simplicity. Simplicity is a trend, the whole Paul Rand style, it was a trend at a time. I know that one will remain forever. As much as we try to use a lot of colours and effects, people will come back to simplicity. It is a trend that will still remain and continue.

In a world full of creatives, what do you think can make one stand out and make them successful?

For me, it is staying true to your call. There is what you represent and stand for, stay true to it. If you are talkative, continue to talk. If it is keeping quiet, do it with excellence. A lot of us try to hide our calls because we are looking at someone else. Use your traits in design and use them to become an advocate in the industry. My advice is to stay true to yourself and do what you do well.

What is your advice to creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

There is one thing I stand for which is a kingdom principle called the great commission. In the Bible, you see that Jesus taught his disciples to teach others. That thing you know, start recreating knowledge. Find people in your area that do not have this knowledge and give it out for free. My advice is to build disciples and when doing this you gain influence. While getting influential, positively impact your community. You don't need to start big. In your area, find two to three people that just finished school and empower them, to find a way to impact their lives. Give them a skill that will help change their lives. So recreate yourself to create a legacy. Nobody will do it like you even if everyone is doing graphic design. We don't think alike or use colours the same way, but that should not push you to hoard knowledge because you want to be the only one who knows. Recreate yourself.

“That thing you know, start recreating knowledge.”

To the Young Introverted Creatives in the 21st Century

By **Foluwahan Chukwujekwe**

Content Creation Lead, The Giant Creative

Imagine your face when colleagues can't stop talking about their creative juices coming alive at the park, a restaurant or on a trip. Or when your office says you should all go on a "fun" team hangout to refuel for a new month or year. Oh, the horror! If you imagine yourself managing your best fake smile while contemplating an excuse to escape the situation, this is for you. Especially if you would prefer to be holed up on a couch (or better yet, your bed) at home churning out your winning ideas. From someone who gets it, kindly take your time to read my thoughts.

For those of us who live in our heads most of the time, whose fun activities do not require much movement or speech, and who find ourselves needing a recharge after every social activity, what opportunities await us this century? Or how do we harness the opportunities in the creative industry right now? It is high time we discovered reasonable and practical answers to these questions that will take us from striving creatives to thriving professionals.

To answer the first question, they are simply limitless! Unlike in the recent past when only those who would confidently woo prospects at



an event or pitch to companies in person could get access to job offers and contracts, we are in an era of unsolicited proposals via email, virtual onboardings and remote engagements. If you asked me, I'd say this is our time to shine! We can shoot our shots on LinkedIn and end up with a new job or a resourceful network, or we can create freelancing profiles and begin to promote our services. Either way, we can be seen and heard while remaining true to our nature.

It might seem a no-brainer, but we must know our

strengths to harness available opportunities. This time, not as introverts, but as individuals. Kindly permit me to let you in on a hard truth. You do not want to keep hiding under the blanket of being an introvert and close off yourself from developing skills that will stand you out in the industry. And I do not necessarily mean industry skills, but rather personal traits/attitudes. I have been learning this while coursing through my journey as a creative writer. Yes, I might not be the biggest fan of social gatherings, and yes, I might always be on edge whenever I need to speak to a large group of people; but that should not stop me from sharing my value and impacting others through my work. Neither should it stop you.

You might find that you are very patient and can walk your client repeatedly through a process to ensure their satisfaction. Find a way to sell this when pitching to a prospective client or employer. Or, like me, you might be very open-minded, and trying out new tools and methods does not tend to throw you off balance. Everyone is now looking to hire adaptable people, especially as industries keep experiencing a wave of rapid changes. It all boils down to being able to sell your strengths over your likely inability to hold long conversations at events or to say much at meetings. You want to sell your strong suits so much that people can barely notice your weak points.

Additionally, we can learn to work on our lapses from the world around us. I get inspired when I see quality content creators who say they have always been shy and introverted. What makes it better is that we might not even

have noticed if they didn't let us in. I am also motivated by how much I have been able to come out of my shell so far. You must have heard the face your fears cliché. Before you roll your eyes to the back of your head, let me share a little experience involving this daunting task.

While in my final year of university, the student association president of my faculty requested that I join a team of trainers for a skill acquisition programme. At that moment, the thought of standing in front of young adults and training them on creative writing seemed less appealing than going on one of those scary rollercoaster rides (which I have always believed are not meant for humans). "What if they notice I am shy from the get-go?" "What if they take me as a phoney?" "What if my teaching techniques are lame?" These questions give a glimpse into my overall thought process at the time. Then I remembered when I said I was not good at teaching, but I knew many things. It is funny how the second part of that statement was my driving force to take up the challenge.

What if I told you that I ended up being a good trainer and being able to connect with my trainees? Or what if I say that some of them went the extra mile to save my number for future conversations? I am glad I did not suck at it, but how would I have known if I did not try? Now, you do not have to go the whole nine yards first. You can start with baby steps, and then, before you know it, you are breaking the grounds you never thought you could!

So, to the young introverted creatives in the 21st century, I hope you win, thrive and get to live through your art. I am rooting for you, and I am one of you.



Meet **Abimbola Funmi**

I am a marketing communication practitioner with practical experience in managing brands through a creative and integrated strategy.

Over the years, I have recorded remarkable successes in managing advertising and marketing communications for brands. I promote products successfully through multiple digital strategies, achieving consistent success with excellent planning skills and proactive campaign tracking.

I've managed brands like Airtel Nigeria, SupaKomando, Nigerian Breweries, Nestle, Friesland, and many others and my goal is simple; to execute the business goals effectively through communication strategy.

What is creativity to you?

To me, it's all about birthing brilliant ideas that challenges status quo.

Creating something unique that would resonate with the consumers and get them to show interest in whatever you are trying to communicate. I also understand that creativity can be relative and as brands, we tend to identify who we need to talk to so we can communicate those ideas effectively.

What drove you into digital marketing?

Everything and everyone is going digital. It's a solid method or platform to build effective communication and everyone is online these days.

I got into digital marketing because I wanted to understand advertising beyond TV and Radio. How do I sell effectively to people who are just on Instagram to have fun? Let's say it started with curiosity and it's been an interesting journey which I absolutely love.

Understanding the trends and tricks around digital marketing has helped me greatly to know the right things to say to people to reach out to them as a brand.

How did you determine your value in the industry?

Basically, my work spoke for me. Getting good feedback on the work

I've done made me realise how much growth I have recorded in this career path.

Clients loved to work with me and this is because they understand that I tend to immerse and soak myself in any brand I handle which has been a great strategy that has been working for me.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

I take my mind off it totally and distract myself with my favorite playlist or binge watch a movie and then circle back to the problem, works 85% of the time

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

I believe the world is evolving, new things are popping up every day. In order to remain relevant as a marketing professional in the industry, one must evolve with these trends and apply them, when necessary, especially on Digital. People move with these trends and they expect that you meet them on that level which is why Marketing professionals tend to study consumer insights/ thoughts to properly communicate a product or service.

“Everything and everyone is going digital. It's a solid method or platform to build effective communication and everyone is online these days.”

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

The urge to be a better version of myself sometimes get so high and can result to me doubting myself on certain issues. However, knowing my capabilities and finding ways to improve myself on a daily basis has been helpful in so many ways.

How do you ensure productivity while working on various projects?

I'm very big on priority. I prioritize a lot and this helps to attend to projects or brands with little or zero hitch.

Understanding the brands you work on is also effective in ensuring that you stay productive when developing marketing ideas for these businesses.

What do you think is the future of digital marketing?

Digital marketing is an essential part of any business nowadays. The trend is only set to continue with more and more businesses relying on digital platforms to reach their target audiences.

The future of digital marketing lies in personalization and customization with businesses using data to deliver highly relevant and targeted content to individual consumers. This will result in a more engaging and effective user experience which will, in turn, lead to better results for businesses.



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Meet Onyekachi Eze Precious “Dr Poe”

A graphic designer, idea catalyst, brand identity designer, UI/UX enthusiast, and lover of God Founder and chairman of Poe International, a branding company focused on inventing and innovating businesses with the potential to stand up to fast-growing global trends. co-founder of Poe-hotspots, a leadership community to motivate and drive the need to build capacity and character. Co-Convener of Design Rethink Events and Refuel Conference: a creative but business-centered event to educate and inspire today's creativity to be relevant for today's growing business needs.

focused on building business and people skills, passionate about youth and personal development, driven by innovation and creativity, trends, and strategic collaborations at different levels. A BSc holder in estate management bagged certificate training in human resource communication in today's fluid workplace, brand management, and strategy development, and is a career planning expert in user experience. A diploma holder in graphic design, with a Certificate from Google Digital Skills for Africa.

I gained robust work experience in the finance sectors, including asset management, outlet, and Mirco Finance Bank, in corporate communications as a digital designer and communications analyst. Currently the creative lead of a startup in the diaspora. Partnered with several media and youth development events, such as the International Youth Diplomacy Conference in Ghana, the Innovation Growth Hub Entrepreneurship Event in Partnership with the State Government of Abia State, and the Creative Tech Category Award Winner in ABIA 30 Under 30.

Please can you give a brief introduction about yourself?

I will start in a very unconventional way. I'm a positive Nigerian and I will consider myself a global citizen I'm someone that is open to learning, connecting with people, and then making valuable partnerships where it's needed. So my name is Onyekachi Eze Precious. My surname is Eze. For some people that know me as Dr Poe, you might as well be shocked that is just an acronym, a mixture of the names. Then the doctoral part of it is a little bit weird because some people till today don't know I didn't go to any school to study anything medicine. I got the title at the university from my classmates. I kind of discovered Google in 2012, but then it wasn't as famous. When I was in school, I kind of found a way to answer most of the questions by using Google, so they assumed I did jazz. I told them I have the solution to every problem. My roommate added the doctoral part because I told him when I come, the solution comes. I got that title since then. I schooled at Abia State University. I was born in the east, Enugu to be precise. I picked up a lot of interest and which helped me meet new people because I feel that whatever I have done today is a result of people that I've met before and the people I'm still going to meet. that way. But what I've done today is a result of the people I've met before, and the people that I'm still going to meet. That's what's going to be taking me from one point to another. So I value people a lot and that is quite an interesting part of my life, my existence.

What is creativity to you?

This question feels like a *déjà vu* because when I was working in a creative agency, I sat to do a presentation on creativity, and why people should strive to be more creative, strive to be more creative. So in my research, I found out that men like Thomas Edison, and Da Vinci, were called creatives right or inventors. The word creativity is a recent term unlike in the 1990s. They were inventors, the word inventors were used because these were the people that actually brought things, that would help facilitate or make

our lives work better into reality. As much as it looks as though they created it, they didn't create it out of anything. They found a problem to solve, and then they brought out a solution to the problem.

So we can now submit that “creativity has nothing to do with art or science” or has nothing to do with the ability to draw or render music services, “this guy is creative, he knows how to dance and sing”, no. It has its own place but overall we see creativity or we tend to attack it from the point of using abilities or being able to recognize problems and be able to solve the problem. So this goes beyond people trying to lock themselves down to where it has to do with the arts. So creativity went beyond the arts, went beyond drawing, singing, and making interesting moves. So we see it as solving problems, it could be there's a problem that has already been here and has been solved but can be improved upon. So you bring in your ability to solve that problem because I've seen a lot of young people that are really creative, they see themselves as not because it has been classified as a special ability of some people.

Every single human being is creative, be you a lawyer or a wheelbarrow pusher, there are certain ways you've been wired to see a problem and to solve it in a very smart way. So I gave them examples of most people that

created the medical or hospital equipment were not necessarily medical doctors, but there is a problem in the medical field, they found it and came to solve it. They brought about the medical equipment that we use. Most of them were engineers, so this is creativity in play. Now let's look at the computers that graphic designers or artists make use of in making their drawings. It shows that we found a problem with the creative industry. "Let's discuss what are the requirements you need for us to make this work"? Then we created a tool for creatives to use. It's not for particular people, it is something that everybody has in them. It is capable to expand on and making use of, it is for the user. A very wise man, Albert Einstein said that "creativity is like energy, it can't be used up". You can't destroy it, you can always transform it from one point to another, just like ideas evolve. That's how you know you can also view creativity. So in summary, it is the ability right to recognize the problem, or the gap and mitigate that gap in a very informed way, in a smart way, and in the very simplest way possible.

What inspired you to get into the creative industry?

Inspiration is personal but it's not also limited to myself. First of all, I'll start a little bit with my background. My mom is a graphic artist and my dad also has artistic inclinations but I've also seen people that have different directions from whatever their parents were or

are. So, I'll talk about the inspiration for a while, so we can get the bigger context of what I mean. So it's basically, like for me, a feeling to take my act to the next level, or to actually get in to do something in the first place. A lot of things inspired me to go into design or the creative industry. And every day, new things keep coming up to inspire me to either revolt within the same sector or expand my skill. as the case may be, within that sector. One of those is my inner desire, as I said initially because what design is to me is actually solving the problem and bringing the solution, my own way, to bring my own self to the solution, the uniqueness of myself, to express myself the best, unique way possible.

Everybody has solutions they are bringing to the table but I also see myself as part of the contributors too, so I see myself as a problem solver. I gave the instance of how I got the doctor behind my name, so I find myself always looking for means where I can bring that solution to people and to everyone around me, and that is through the design that I do in the industry. Others are still revolving around problem-solving, I see myself differently so at the point when I was when I got to a point in my career, I asked myself "what next am I supposed to be doing in this career, or what is the next thing I am supposed to be doing"?

I found that I have some abilities to put people together, to educate people and to actually build people. I also said, "Okay, if this is possible, I can pinpoint solutions that creatives bring to the table and use to create million-dollar businesses", which a lot of creatives don't know yet. So if my creative solution can be used to create million-dollar

"Inspiration is personal but it's not also limited to myself."

businesses maybe I should expand my mind into solving problems that are bigger, by even creating products or services or partnering with businesses that will create these products and make life easier for people. So it inspired me to also go into the aspect of creating solutions and partnering with companies because that's what I'm doing right now. So I partner with companies to help them build solutions and take my percentage. So that has been my great inspiration being in the industry, for the fact that initially I didn't know how powerful we are, or I could be. Later I found out I could do more, and now I'm doing more.

How do you determine your value as a graphic designer?

Value is subjective. It depends on who or where it's going to be applied. Every individual should understand that they are living for a reason. If you understand this, it means that everything you pick up, every tool you pick up, and every activity you get into should get what is driving you to that endpoint. Jeremiah 29 verses 11 says "For I know the thought I have towards you, the thought of good and not of evil, to give you an expected end". That should be an eye-opener to you that if everyone thought God has for me will take me to an expected end, that means everything I find myself doing should have an expected end. I should be able to come to that point where I look at myself, I look beyond my skills, and find a greater problem to solve. So your value starts from the day you find out that your skill is a transitioning point, a channel, and not a destination.

You can see that people who have made remarkable marks in the industry were people who went beyond just being graphic designers to solve bigger or giant problems. So what does this entail? You are able to picture those problems, but you can't really picture or see some problems if you haven't tried to. Depending on where you're standing, what you see depends on your position. What makes people see themselves as valuable is what they have seen, where they have been to, the kind of people they talk to, the kind of people they listen to, and the kind of activity they

engage in.

You start separating yourself. I think when God was trying to call one of his prophets, he asked them to separate them. Where you are standing determines what you will see, and the things you see will determine the act or the kind of energy that you will use to attack them. That will bring me to what psychologists call reverse engineering," which they use for athletes. The athlete is built more in the mind than in the activity. So he's encouraged and given the mindset that, whatever the size of the opponent you are going to fight, whatever the size of the field, you are bigger and better. You're going to do this, and you're going to do that. So they keep feeding their minds, telling them that their opponent is like a rat, that can be stepped on and be gone, so that mindset creates that which can be done; it's no longer about the muscles he's gathering, it's about the world view, about what he can see and the world. Your value as a creative will be so limited that you will start seeing yourself as just a corner graphic designer somewhere, looking for clients to bring jobs to you.

Your value starts increasing the day you learn how to write a business proposal. It starts increasing the day you start attending business events because these are the people that need your service, not your family, pastor, or village people. The value

starts going up once you start reading what they read, and attending their meetings. The day you design a flyer and decide to go for the event, you go there to introduce yourself to the chairman of the occasion, and this is what you do. That is the day you start determining your value. It doesn't happen when you learn more software. That's where it all starts, your network, the people you know, the activities you engage in, the volunteering you've done in some important places, it gives you some mild access than you playing to get there. That is where that value discovery comes from, you might be expecting me to tell you to raise your price or design a portfolio but that's not what determined your value. Even the Bible states that "the glory of the king is in the multitude" so you can't be a king if you don't have the multitude of people that are crowning you the king. You can be a king in your room, it is only you that knows that but if you want to raise your value, you have to go to those places you really admire, you feel those values dwell there. Then your association with them will definitely spike your value.

How do you keep up with the evolving trends in your industry?

The number one thing is that you don't exist alone. I have issues when people say things like "they are self-made" but you see them browsing on YouTube. So if you can search for solutions on YouTube we can also search for how

to keep up with trends. Now, this is how, being a part of the community is very important, like being in a circle of friends or a community of people. I see community as; we are all different people at different points on the map, receiving almost the same information at different times. In communities, you kind of see what is happening. You have people that saw a piece of information first coming to you or coming back to drop it, to tell you this is the latest thing happening. So number one I try to engage with community folk or get to know exactly where this information is. So in some places, I go to see trends or what's happening with a few friends in different companies that share them with me. So the information is key.

In a world like ours, we have a lot of things going on at the same time and it is hard to know, what to do or what trend to jump on or not jump on. Believe me, every trend will always repeat itself in different ways so you have to find yourself either an interrupter or an intrusionist or someone that seeks to engage in any of those things. What do I mean by an interrupter, you know that there is a trend going on or there's something on the ground but you don't want to move with it. So what do you do? You bring something that's totally different from what's going on and that's how most brands stand out. Forget about the backline, after some time people might align with what you are doing.

"That's where it all starts, your network, the people you know, the activities you engage in, the volunteering you've done..."

The second one is when you see yourself as an intruder, you just intrude into the path people have been going with, already past trends. If it's a flat design that is trending now, you see someone saying "I was with you guys in this, but I'm going back to what has been done before" and he goes back to pick on 3D, and then revolutionize his 3D to match what is happening with the flat concept, so he is putting in the two. The engagement is where it doesn't matter what is going on, let's jump on whatever is going on". I choose what to be, or what to do at that time but engagement, but I rarely engage with what is going on because I know that trends will come and go right but if you understand the basic principles, you can stay under trend. I will say where you have people's pictures in black and white, with flowers and some geometric shapes around them, it's been here for a while and how come it started trending last two years? It was somebody that just intruded and went another way. After some time, it became a thing again and someone was awarded for becoming the best Afro-Futurist designer of our century last year.

So sometimes trends are beautiful but you can choose where to belong. So I think I'm either in one or the two because I just want to stand out. I just want to do something different, right? So if all the cows are white, I have to paint my cow purple so you have to ask yourself, why is this cow purple? So every other cow that is white, becomes a little insignificant. So because I want to stand out, I choose the trend and later interrupt or intrude.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

Everybody goes through a creative block, well it depends on what the block is. I think we creatives need to do more mind functions, we have to be more mindful, and get ourselves in so more mindful activities. Can you imagine going to a doctor and you have an operation scheduled for 9 am, and you get there and the doctor says "I'm having a creative block, I can't operate on you". This is where we have to cut the line between creativity and work. So you wake up and go to work because you're a professional, so

you are expected to deliver. Once you start seeing your creative work as work, and no longer a hobby, it's a different thing.

What you'll be doing is finding every single pattern that brings you to that point of the block. Could it be that you don't sleep well? Could it be that you don't feed your mind with more creative activities where you are not working or seeking to deliver a task? Could it be that you are not engaging enough in other people's creative works, or you are not partnering or collaborating enough? I've come to that point where I had to call one of my students to tell me about something. "Okay, what do you think about this you know? Tell me more about this, have you encountered it before? Tell me more. What do I do? He started telling me about the places he got some things, and I was excited. Secondly, you are not feeding enough.

Creatives don't feel that food is important enough to them. Creative block is just a situation where your mind needs rest not because you don't know what to do, or you don't know how to handle your craft but because you need to refresh and it happens like that. One of my students told me he took medications, he has been falling sick, having a fever for over a year. Have you gone to the hospital? He said. No. "But what are you doing"? He is self-medicating. When he wants to work. he doesn't know what the

problem is. Is it his brain, the sickness or something else? Another one is food; she doesn't think she needs food. She is awake from morning to three or four pm before eating. Why won't your creativity block? Because we have bad habits we don't know, we are so happy doing our work that we forget the beautiful things in life.

Creatives don't see going out with their friends, hanging out or doing something else that is totally not Photoshop, as something that is valuable to their health. Travelling, meeting new people, being on a WhatsApp call with colleagues, and talking about everything else, clients, laughing about the craziest moments you had. We are working on a project Love Sense. We are trying to see how we can enlighten more creatives and life more creatives on how to take better care of your mental health because all this thing is what boils down to creative blocks. The first thing I mentioned is not opening up yourself to inspiration, I mean getting ideas from other people when you are at your lowest period. or putting time lapses for growth for yourself. It brings about that block; an information gap can bring up a block. If you have something to deal with, a project or a brief, and you've not seen that kind before, a block will set in. These are just habits we just have to do our best.

What are some of the challenges you faced so far, and how were you

able to overcome them?

The major challenge that every creative person out there and I faced myself is not knowing where to go from here. I know some people might be expecting you to say, financial and family challenges but I don't see those as challenges. Those are physical but the mind seemed to be more serious. I've been around creatives that could not make down payments for roasted corn at the initial stages of their career. Most of them didn't even have a laptop because I knew when I was starting, I didn't have one laptop I was borrowing a friend's laptop, but that wasn't a challenge for me. When I was casting my future looking at where I want to be, there is nothing as depressing and as challenging as not knowing where you are going from here, because you might have everything around you going well for you but if you don't know where you are going, you come to that point of feeling more frustrated than the people that figured it out without having anything.

So the challenge was, I didn't know where am I going to, where exactly am I going from here? Do I find help when I open my mind to understanding that my creativity is just one part of me? The design of the act is just one part of me and I have other parts of myself to look at and train so I am better at it. So the second challenge is working challenges in institutions where our career can be more valued. "The accountants, and doctors have the future", that is why your parents don't have any problem with you being a lawyer or a doctor or an accountant. There is a problem with you when you say you want to be a musician or graphic designer. Some people didn't find it a big problem but this was a challenge to me because when I told my mom, I wanted to study fine arts, it was not easy.

Some of this comes with parents trying to get their kids to pay off what they couldn't achieve, or what they dreamt of but that's not a problem, because every parent wants his child to be better than him or her. So their decisions are correct in their eyes. The challenge became even more when there are more people in the industry not even

seeking to be professional. I know there are professionals there, people that are very good at this thing that now make a whole living out of it. So that was when I started asking those questions I mentioned earlier, where exactly am I going? What can I do actively not passively to be able to get to that point where I can surmount these challenges? I could have said light, internet but those are just physical issues, it can always be solved in one way or the other.

But this was the mind-tasking issues, where can I get to from here, the condition of the industry generally and how the work is been accepted and how it is valued because of “people that got information from quacks and are trying to do something quickly” and get ahead. Those were the major downtown challenges that I've had.

What inspired you to be a creative designer?

So what inspired me is in the last comment I made where we have an industry that doesn't value this part of creativity. So you rarely see a young child, saying that he wants to be creative, and the parents will take him to the psychiatric hospital because something is wrong with his head. They feel it is not where people make the big money or blow. The internet has shown us a different side of this where you can see creatives, see people lifting their whole generation from poverty because they are smart. You see creative people, can create something out of nothing because they can put it out there and demand what is right. I have creatives I still mentor, where I go beyond trying to improve them and their skills and trying to make them be human, because it starts from being human.

Anything that has to do with art has a way of driving the owners crazy. If you see football, music and everything entertainment and art, it has a way of making people lose their vibes. Art is a companion. You speak to your art and the art speaks back and you are happy. When I saw they had the skill, I introduced the concept of humanity and other areas of their life because very soon you're going to have your family and you are coming out from a family, you will

“Art is a companion. You speak to your art and the art speaks back and you are happy.”

need to expand your creative business. Do you have information about that? What are you doing? People didn't get that information. What are you doing right now? So that inspired me a lot.

When I saw that there are possibilities here. While these guys are still complaining, I can convert your complaints into something valuable to you. A wise man said, “You can convert your pain to purpose”. I discovered that the guys that went through me, most of them started creating brands they own. They learnt marketing so they applied it to their brands. Some started creating agricultural products and they were branding them to match what they were saying. If they can give this kind of value to their product then they can sell their graphic or creative services to anybody with proof and that also adds to their value.

What do you think the future of graphic design is in Nigeria and Africa in general?

Five years ago, I read something on Forbes about the future of technology of mobile phones then I think at that time, it wasn't so yet easy to get people to turn on their data. People turn on their data to receive messages and emails then turn it back off. So what was the article saying? The article was saying by 2025, you will start seeing devices that will come without you being able to turn off your internet so you subscribe to turn it off. You buy the amount of time you want to stay off the grid. If things are changing that way, what will happen to the rest of the creative industry I think that there will be heightened use of information. People making use of creative services will be more aware because we have more voices and advocates. said talking about their work, and how they want to be treated in different work areas.

There's going to be an improved sense and understanding of creativity, what it is and how people can make use of it for their own benefit. Talking about AI, I can see a lot of things going on the Internet. AI is taking over, yes but the power of AI still lies with the people. How effective it will perform still lies with the users. You can't replace human jobs completely but you can input AI in everyday transactions, businesses and working experiences so you don't have to leave

everything for AI to basically do. People are going to be more informed and more jobs are going to be created. There will be a layoff of jobs so it is the people that will choose to move from the new jobs to the old jobs that have been created. Jobs are getting eliminated but you will choose to get eliminated with it. There will be less of people that don't know what they are doing.

People who don't understand graphic design will begin to understand and have an idea of how it is beneficial to their business. I think graphic design in five years' time will be most valued. Male photographers from 1995 to the early 2000s couldn't capture well but when the software started coming out, it was rumoured that photography will take all the jobs. During that period, more tools and gadgets that could help professional photographers started to come out and most photographers earn better than bank managers in one appearance now.

The betterment or the improvements on any software we're going to be using is going to improve for people owning that skill and have been advocating. Street photographers now won't even collect ten thousand naira for appearances due to their development. This is a trying time, for the creative industry, this is the point where we have to push the boundaries by ourselves, have more conversations like this and be positive about where we are heading to, and how we're going to get there. I'm very sure that in five years' time Africa as a whole, and the West will come and look at us because most of the tools they create, we make use of them more than they do sometimes.

In a world full of creatives, how can one stand out and be successful?

So when standing out, I see a lot of people standing but not standing out. You standing out is what are you standing for at this moment. When you say standing out, it has to be for a reason. Simon Sinek said "Answer the question, why? In the movie, Far From Home, when they decided to tighten the security of the institution, someone came out to

advocate and speak against it and nobody was looking at the person. In the initial stage, when standing out, nobody is going to be looking at you but when they see you are strong and consistent enough, you start noticing patterns you have created. For example, the time I and my team were coming up with advocacy to make creatives think like business people.

The first event we did, we had Rina Dida, a UIUX designer in the United States, we had other creatives but nobody understood what we were talking about because everything on the mind is how to get clients. We were introducing the thought of partnership with businesses and creating businesses with skills. If a designer is paid ten thousand naira for a deal that fetches ten million naira, that is below one percent of what was paid. This means I have a powerful tool in my hand to create businesses that can change the world. So we did it the second time, the coronavirus came but we found a way to do something. The third time, we tried to convince the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and we are still going again this year. Our aim was to make them understand that the skills of creative people shouldn't be limited. We started calling legal companies to teach creatives how to understand the legal aspect and apply it.

Sometimes you have to define your why, the reason why you want to stand out. then you put a cost to it and find the necessary joints and partners that can help you achieve that cost before you start. As an individual creator, your reason for bringing solution to a problem. The world is still divided among people so we still have partition issues. For an individual creator, you have to tell yourself this is who I am. This is my vision, and these are the steps I want to take to achieve this thing. To create a movie for creative designers or graphic designers in Nigeria, apart from my skill. I'm going to write this, I'm going to meet this person, but who will think of creating a movie, graphic designer centric, I don't think anybody has thought of it at all.

There are movies for video directors and lawyers, what makes you think a graphic designer doesn't have a story to tell. So if we can put aside our skills and think about the world in general, you see there are reasons to stand out and an opportunity to stand out is uncountable. People need to go beyond your skill. Skills matter a lot because that is what validates the name you call yourself but you can also go beyond and that is where you meet the people will help take your career to the next level..

What advice do you have for upcoming creatives who are hoping to thrive in the industry?

The advice I'll have for them is keep creating. Keep putting the work out there, look for opportunities to collaborate. . Grow your relationship with your clients beyond the flyers, seek for more opportunities for improvements. Render community services, be a part of the community, be a part of the things that are happening. Stay on course, take care of yourself and your health because these are the things that you need when you finally arrive. You don't want to arrive and your health is fading. The little money you made, you will use it to go to change your kidney. Take care of your health. Appreciate other's work, be a contributor not destroyer. Don't destroy or bad mouth people's work no matter how bad, instead try to render help.



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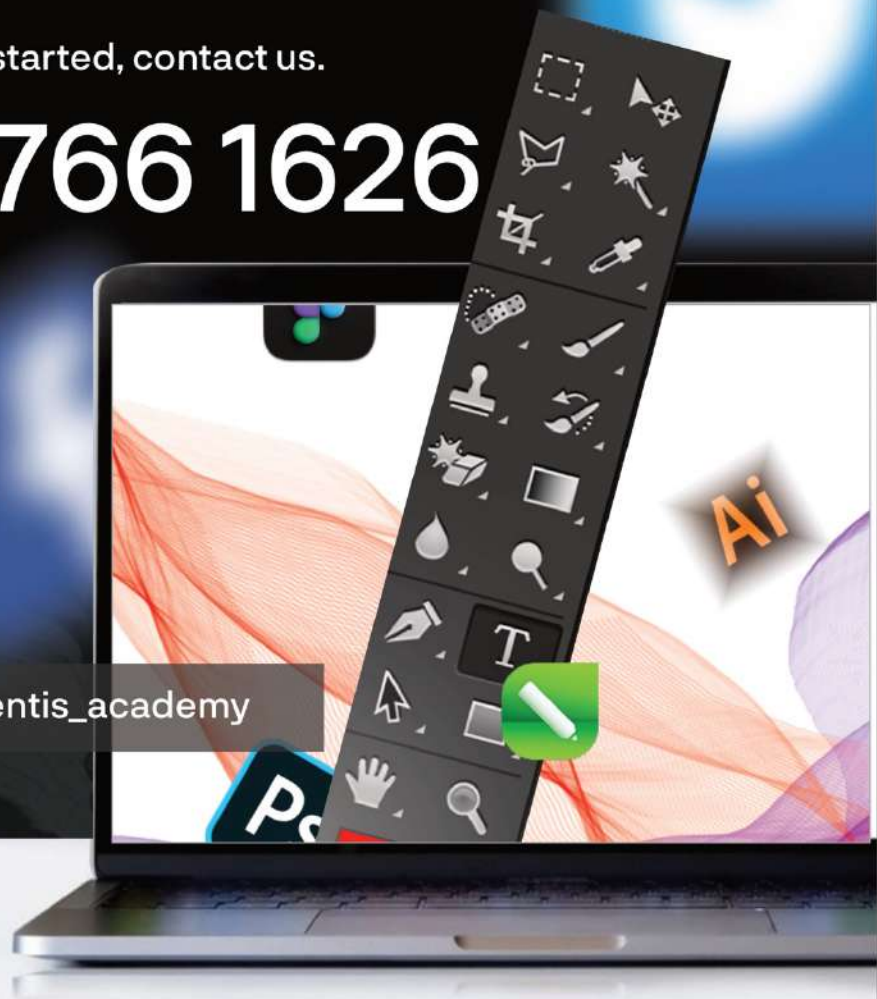
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Exploring Design in the 21st Century: The Intersection of Leadership, Education, and Design

By **Mentis Academy**

Design has come a long way in the 21st century. With the advent of new technologies and changing consumer preferences, the role of design has become more important than ever. Design has always played a critical role in shaping the world around us too. But design is not just about aesthetics; it's also about problem-solving and creating solutions that improve people's lives. Leadership, education, and design are three areas that intersect in fascinating ways. In this article, we will explore how design has evolved in the 21st century and the importance of design education & leadership in a 21st century designer.

Design in the 21st Century

Design in the 21st century is all about innovation and creativity. New technologies like 3D printing, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence have given designers new tools to work with. These tools have allowed designers to create new products and services that were previously impossible. However, to fully leverage these tools and make a meaningful impact, designers should consider the importance of education, leadership, and collaboration. Education is a critical component of success in the design industry. It provides creatives with the technical skills they need to create designs

using digital tools and software. It teaches creatives about the principles of design, such as color theory, typography, and composition which forms the basics. By understanding these principles, designers can create designs that are visually appealing and effective using industry-standard software such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. Designers can develop the technical expertise needed to create high-quality designs as design is beyond knowing the tools but the basics.

Design Education has become a paramount tool as it:

- a. Encourages designers to develop their creativity and critical thinking skills. By working on design projects and assignments, prospective designers learn how to approach design problems creatively and come up with innovative solutions.
- b. Often includes collaborative projects, which help prospective designers develop the skills needed to work effectively in teams. By collaborating with other designers, students learn how to communicate effectively, share ideas, and work together to create successful designs.
- c. Often includes courses in business and marketing, which can help prospective designers understand the business side of design. By learning about topics such as branding, marketing, and project management, designers can develop

the skills they need to succeed in the industry.

Design Education is essential for fostering good expertise in design. By providing designers with the technical, creative, and business skills they need to succeed. Graphic design education can help prepare designers for successful careers in the industry.

One of the biggest trends in design today is user-centered design. This approach puts the needs of the user at the center of the design process. By understanding the needs of the user, designers can create solutions that are more effective and efficient.

Another trend in design is sustainability. Collaborating with other designers can help generate new ideas and approaches to sustainable design. For example, a group of designers could collaborate on a project to design sustainable packaging for a product, sharing ideas and resources to create a design that is both aesthetically pleasing and environmentally responsible. Collaborating with other creatives can also help ensure that the project meets the needs of the client and end-users while also being environmentally and socially responsible. By working together to identify the client's sustainability goals and user needs, designers can create designs that are not only visually appealing but also functional and sustainable.

Effective collaboration requires open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to explore new ideas and approaches.

Design is becoming increasingly important in the world of business. Companies are

recognizing the importance of design in creating products and services that stand out in a crowded marketplace. This has led to the rise of design-led companies, where design is at the center of everything the company does. To dine with the high & mighty there is the need for proper positioning. Proper leadership skill will help position designers in the 21st century by enhancing their communication skills, improving project management skills, fostering creativity and innovation, developing better problem-solving skills, and increasing confidence and motivation. By developing leadership skills, designers can feel more empowered to take on challenging projects and pursue their goals with greater determination and enthusiasm, learn how to approach problems systematically by asking the right questions, and develop creative solutions, with this, designers can tackle challenges more effectively and produce better results & invariably be indisposed in company's decision making,

Design is a powerful tool for solving problems and creating solutions that improve people's lives. In the 21st century, design has become increasingly important. Education, leadership, and collaboration are essential components of success in the design industry in the 21st century. By focusing on these areas, designers can unlock their full creative potential and create designs that have a meaningful impact on the world around us. Whether working in graphic design, industrial design, architecture, or another design field, designers who prioritize education, leadership, and collaboration will be well-positioned to thrive in this exciting and rapidly evolving industry.

This is more reason we at Mentis_Academy saw the need to harness this core in shaping, nurturing and birthing creatives who will create designs beyond the aesthetics but design that works.



Meet Abiodun Fiwa

Abiodun Fiwa has spent a good portion of her life using her skills and career experiences to train and mentor aspiring UI/UX designers to grow and thrive in the industry. She is a design facilitator with over 7 years of experience organizing design meetups and boot camps. She is also a FigmaAfrica ambassador.

Fiwa is a product designer who is passionate about solving complex problems. Currently the lead product designer in her company, she is the founder of Perxels Design School, Schfordevs, Enoverlab, and OpenHubAfrica. These are all learning institutions that are solely focused on training beginners and intermediates on UI/UX design, product management, software development, and raising funds to help young and aspiring Africans transition into the tech industry successfully.

Fiwa believes that today's business environment is changing at a fast pace. Tough business problems require technical skills and soft skills to create sustainable solutions. And that is why she takes delight in mentoring aspiring designers to take time to practice, improve, and explore different ways of solving problems through a design thinking approach.

Fiwa's adaptability, analytical mindset, and strategic approach combined with a good eye for design means that Fiwa consistently delivers intuitive and enjoyable experiences across iOS, Android, and digital products

Fiwa enjoys chilling on YouTube and Netflix or exploring different foods and delicacies in restaurants around Lagos.

What does creativity mean to you?

To me, creativity means giving life to my imagination and my visions. Creativity inspires me; it enables me to analyze, visualize, and come up with new techniques from existing ones. As a designer, creativity is very crucial in our area of work; it helps us birth new ideas and solutions to problems.

Before now, most people have associated creativity with actors, artists, and photographers, but creativity has surpassed conventional methods of reasoning or acting.

It's understanding the limitations of what already exists and trying to improve on them. It is an essential skill that applies to practical tasks such as product iterations, product development, human management, etc. It can be used for professional development and personal growth. In short, as long as there is a problem, there is a need for creative thinking.

Finally, Creativity goes beyond imagining: it's about improving an idea, analyzing a technique, and developing new solutions.

What inspired you to be a UI/UX designer?

I started my journey into tech as a graphic designer. I was young, in school, and didn't want to remain idle when school was on strike. I am someone who can relate better to visual representations than to logical concepts such as coding, so I thought I would maximize this skill. I enjoyed the fact that I could bring my ideas to life into something people could see and appreciate; this gave me joy and inspired me to keep going.

My passion for helping people made me want to start teaching graphic design. It was during this process that I discovered UI/UX design, and since following this path, I have devoted my time to solving problems through designs and teaching aspiring designers how to solve problems. This has become a source of inspiration for me. I now

*“Creativity
means giving
life to my
imagination
and visions.”*

create products that are used globally.

Lastly, I have been privileged to utilize this skill to work with multiple brands outside Nigeria both as a freelancer and a full-time staff member to bring their ideas to life, thereby solving many people's problems.

How did you determine your value as a UI/UX designer?

I determine my value based on my ability to solve problems and impact knowledge.

I have a strong sense of how to solve problems. I utilize my design-thinking approach to build usable and useful products. This has helped me work successfully on projects both locally and internationally.

I also determine my value based on my impact on this generation. I am

passionate about growth and quality learning. I ensure that every person who learns from me is well-rounded. I am a dedicated teacher and ensure that my students yield good results.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

Whenever I encounter a creative block, I take breaks. I pause whatever I am working on, rest, and sleep. When I wake up, my mind is fresh and ready to start again.

Other times, I go on the internet, research similar problems, see how they were solved, and then come up with my solutions.



How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

I don't follow all trends. I am attracted to trends that are genuine and can solve problems. If a particular trend is not substantial and there is an existing trend, I stick with the old one. I am only attracted to trends that can improve my ability to solve problems and trends that can add quality and value to my skills as a designer.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

My biggest challenge so far has been working professionally with people. It has been challenging working with humans in the sense that we are all different and think differently but have to work together as a team to achieve a common goal.

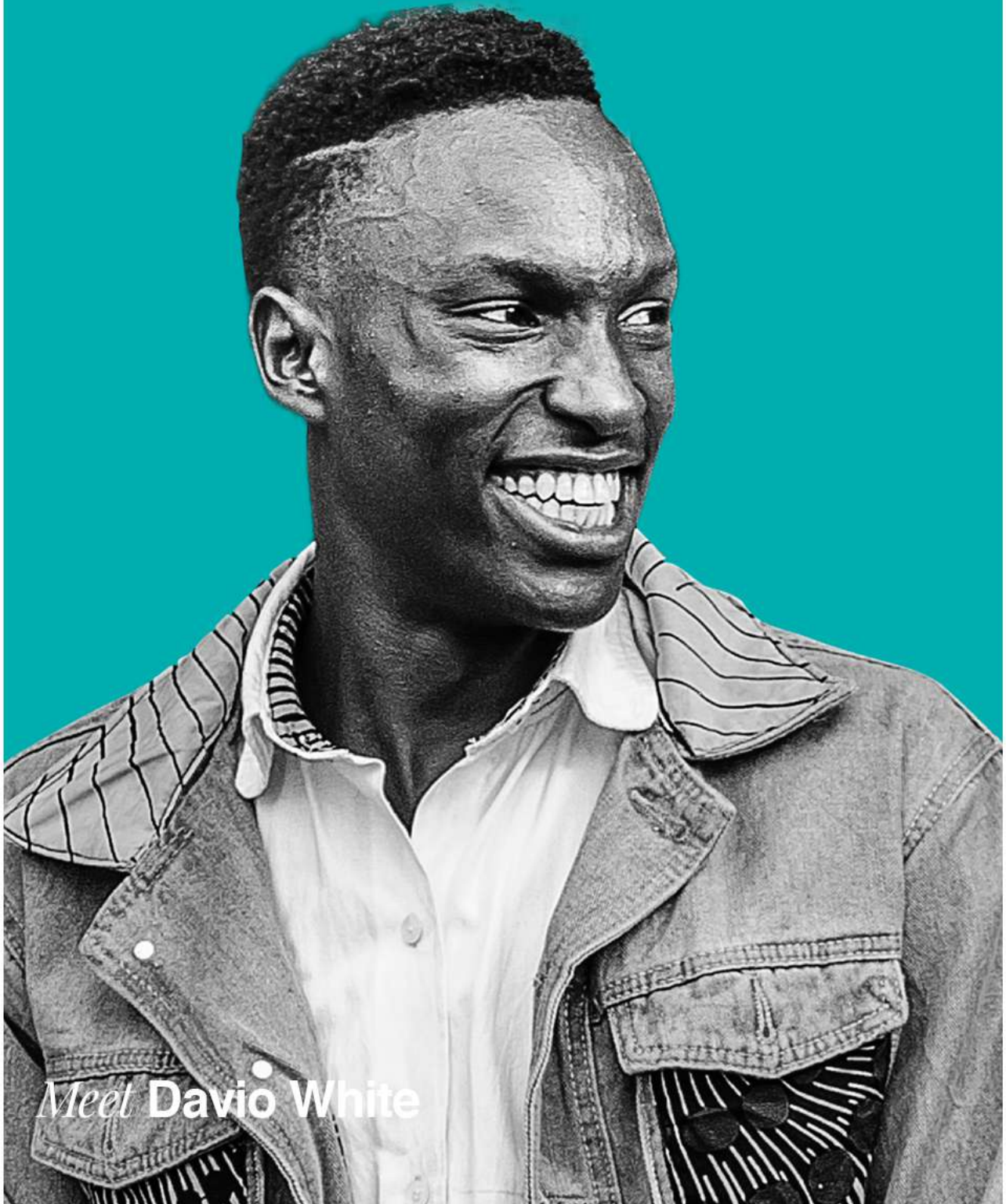
I have learned to handle things differently by learning from my past mistakes, recognizing that we are different, and not setting too many expectations.

I've learned to communicate my ideas about how things should be done rather than expect them to happen without properly expressing them. diligently. These are the things that have enabled me to shine in my own space despite the number of creatives in the world.

What is your advice to creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

My advice to aspiring creatives is to learn. Learn the fundamental skills necessary to stay relevant. Learn to solve a problem, add, and pay attention. Put in the time, effort, and sacrifices necessary to improve yourself.

Once you have a solid foundation and can solve a problem, money will come. Remember, value attracts wealth. Your motivation should be your love for solving problems and creating designs that are unique, usable, and scalable. If you have this on lock, the money will come. It's not rocket science!



Meet Davio White

Davio White is a brand and product designer with two years experience.

He's concerned about brands growth and upmost value for any brand that comes his way.

He works remotely as a product designer for Chiva app (Nigeria), Flipex (Nigeria) and NFT Notified (Netherland)

Can you please introduce yourself?

I'm a lot of things. I like to start my introduction like that, so I do quite a lot of things. But recently I've been able to niche down to 2 different skill set which is branding and product design, so I am a brand and product designer. I reside in Port Harcourt, Nigeria and that's where I work remotely from the house. I'm also a tutor, and I've taught quite a lot of people. I have a course selling on the platform. I do quite a lot of things. I currently work with three companies as a product designer, NFT Notified in the Netherlands, FlipX Nigeria, and Shiva Nigeria. Two are fintech products while the other is an NFT product.

What is creativity to you?

Creativity is making something out of nothing. That's how I would put it. So it's like making it just like in the early days, in the beginning, God created. So he made something out of nothing and that's how I would define creativity.

What inspired you to be a creative designer?

Okay, my story is far back as 2020, and honestly, nothing inspired me. For places I've been opportune to speak at, I always tell them I came into tech by mistake. I use that word before I just feel like it was based on the divine direction because I used to be a cleaner. I worked as a cleaner for about 8 years from 2013. I resigned in 2021 September. So in 2020 during

the lockdown, I was on YouTube. I was just going through America's Got Talent (AGT) because then I used to be a singer. So I was going through America's got talent channel, and then the next video that played immediately after the one I was watching was a design video by Lugos, by Nick and I just saw myself coming back to his channel to watch after that day and that's just how I grew in design. But yeah, when we talk about inspiration, because I know you brought in the word, it's for it. So I just wanted to give you a little background on how I got into tech. Then what has inspired me? I tell people other designers inspire me, a lot of people. I don't have a particular designer that inspires me. Seeing people's work inspires me to keep doing what I'm doing. So I get an inspiration from all that designers from many other things but I would put it majorly on people's work. So when I see your work, I always learn from it, from people's designs and it has helped shape my journey in tech.

What is the must-have gadget, software or tool for a creative designer?

I would always recommend a monitor as a gadget for any designer. So, to break it down and reach down to what I

“I don't have a particular designer that inspires me. Seeing people's work inspires me to keep doing what I'm doing.”

do, I would always recommend one has a monitor and a keyboard, they are very important. Because if you have a monitor and you don't have a keyboard, it becomes a big challenge. Then for tools I do branding and product design so I use Adobe tools. I use them because it's the industry standard. So I use Photoshop, Indesign and Illustrator. These are the three software I use. I was using after effects before, but my brother is a motion designer now, so I stopped using it for him to handle that kind of job and for product design, I use Figma. I would not lie that I use other prototyping tools because people want to always ask me what prototyping tools I use. I use just Figma for everything but currently, I'm learning about some other software so there's Protopie and Invision where people can also try that out. Well, these are the tools that would strongly recommend for any brand and product designer.

What aspect of your field do you think is yet to be tapped in Nigeria or Africa?

I can't say for sure, even though I've been seeing augmented reality (AR). So I think it hasn't really been in Nigeria, the skill set that Nigerians have not really dived strongly into, That would be of some of it. I also feel like there might be designers doing it, it's just that they probably haven't had the platform to be known for what they do.

What misconceptions would you like to change about your field?

I've been dragged online about if I'm not mistaken 3 times and it's because people feel like I shouldn't do certain things because I don't have five years of experience in tech. Well, honestly, I feel like growth in tech is personal, and then it's not to be equated with the number of years, but years give the experience but the amount of experience I've gotten in two years comes from constant study, and what I've done, I like to say experience is based on what you've seen, what you've done and what you've heard. So that is what I tend to be. So I would like to change that misconception because there is a certain post I put out and people want to drag me for it. They feel like, hey, you are

not up to five years old, so you're not supposed to make that post. It's based on my experience and that's something I would like to change. Another thing would be in the Nigerian industry, they don't really pay as much. I've worked for a couple of foreign brands, and I understand the kind of value people place on things we do for them but in Nigeria people just want to get their business going. So if I was opportune to be President, I probably will tell people "Hey, pay the creatives very well".

What are your key principles?

One thing I don't joke with is communication. My clients love me for that, and whether I'm done with your projects, not done with it, or halfway, I always communicate, and if I know I'm going to deliver your projects more than the deadline we've agreed on. I would also communicate that. I've done that just once throughout my career when I had an emergency so I had to give a timeframe that would see sit well with me. So communication is very important. Other principles would be humility, and being able to take feedback is very, very important because once we need to understand as creatives that we're not designing for ourselves, we're not creating these products for ourselves. It's for the people that have reached out to us so it's their own first before it becomes ours. Tomorrow we'll be proud of what our products have acquired or gained in the industry. We need to understand

that it's not our own. So I'm humble and willing to take feedback from whatever my clients have to say regardless of their knowledge in design, so I think those are the major ones.

What does a perfect workday look like to you?

I'll say when I have nothing to do but I always have something to do. It's either I'm studying, practicing or I'm working. So I definitely always do something. A perfect work day would be me knowing that I'm closing out a project that day. I have some projects, initially, I used to work for money. Well, right now I work for the value I give to clients, and the value that the products will get at the end, so it takes longer time but initially, I could just do it in a day or two but now it takes more. There are some projects I'm working on it, it's been like three months already and these are just branding projects. A perfect day for me is like today. Honestly, now, we wouldn't be having this meeting because I would be very busy. So I'm closing out one of the projects today and I'm really excited about it.

What specs and downsides have you experienced when working with teams on projects?

I've worked with a team that is very flexible even though I'm at the head of control. We still talk like guys. we know outside this design there's still life. It's not just you knowing how to do what

you know how to do. So we've built that friendship or business relationship as colleagues that have really impacted the development's growth because the products are currently in development. Then, the other part of it is working in a team with people who feel like because they are ahead of you, or they joined the team before you, you don't have a say, so that can all honestly affect your thinking. But for me, I don't let anything get to me. I just do my work and stay in my lane, earn my money, and just do my thing. So that can really affect you when you have teams or you have colleagues that don't want to listen to your own opinion, especially in meetings, or even when you reach out to them via DMs. I have worked with teams in which I don't even know my colleagues, to the point I didn't know any of them because I didn't want to relate to them. So I ended up leaving because the working environment wasn't really cool. These are some of the things that can really affect the work environment in any organization.

What are the challenges you've faced so far and how did you overcome them?

My major challenge was low-end and having a high-end laptop. Initially, I had a low-end laptop. The laptop I got into tech was a gift from a cousin of mine. She just gave me her own laptop, I was using it for music. So I was collecting songs, I didn't know I would get into tech. So it was a very low-end laptop and that was my major challenge but how I overcame it during the course of my career. I bought two laptops. I had to save. I had to cultivate this habit of saving. So I'm the kind of person that is always indoors. I know creatives always stay indoors but I am always indoors so any money I know I would spend on certain things. I have different accounts, I would just leave it in the accounts and if I'm having a long throat to buy something, I just throw it there. That was how I was able to gather money from all the gigs that I did, and I bought the high-end laptop since then frustration has not been mine again. I used to be very frustrated while working. You click on something and it takes like a whole lot of time. So that was it asides from light and a bad network, the major thing was the laptop.

What's your advice to upcoming creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

To be honest, I would say they need to take it easy. Things don't just happen overnight, but they can happen overnight. If you put in the work, you need to put in more of the work. I see a lot of people reach out to me, "Hey Davio, how can I grow my account"? And I'm like, what is your priority? You need to have a priority, your priority should be how should you get gigs as a designer, and you're looking for ways to grow your account. Have a priority, and have a good route map. My perfect good route map will be buying courses. Every designer should buy a course because when I started, I started by learning on YouTube, and YouTube is great but when you have gone through the course, you now know what to look for. If not, you would just be learning back and forth. So buy a course, it's going to help you, and give you a perfect road map to your journey. Connect with other people, there are a lot of things I'll say, connect with others and be humble. I love bad critics. To be honest, I love it because it has helped shape me. I mean in June last year, I made a post on NGD and he dragged me for it but

that boosted my growth and I've seen a lot of bad stuff people say. Be open-minded, always take all of these things, and just work on them. Definitely out of everything the person is saying, there should be one thing you can look at and say "I have to fix this". Don't neglect networking and connecting with other people. It's very, very important. I've connected with a whole lot of people, developers, also designers, and they've recommended me for a lot of gigs. Just be humble, and also engage in other people's posts. If you want to grow your account, engage in other people's posts, and in turn, they'll do the same. So in this world, you have to give to receive. Keep creating magic, you never can tell when your big day will come.

Unlocking Creativity in the 21st Century: The Significance of Critical and Design Thinking

Dada Samuel Oladimeji

Creative Designer, The Giant Creative

Creating new things, coming up with new ideas or refining existing ideas is one of our superpowers as humans. God created us and blessed us with the ability to be creative as He is. Every human possesses this ability; the only difference is that some use it better than

others. I specifically recommended a few tips that can help you unlock your Creativity in the 21st century.

Creativity is a superpower; however, it needs to be developed, improved and worked on consistently.

After spending a lot of time on research, I narrowed down my findings to one sentence; to improve your creative skills, you need to improve the way you think, and you have to be intentional about it. To improve your thinking, you need to spend time listening more than speaking, intentionally pondering and meditating on ideas, and paying attention to problems or issues that need solutions.

In the 21st Century, Creativity is an ability that needs to be improved on consistently. Critical thinking and Design thinking play a significant role in helping creatives unlock their wealth of ideas and preserve their relevance irrespective of the level of rapid growth in the industrial revolution.

Critical thinking, which is the ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise information to make an informed decision is a crucial skill for creatives who want to explore their creativity. It involves using logic and reasoning to identify strengths and weaknesses in arguments, assessing evidence and considering alternative perspectives. At some point in your creative journey, when you need to make certain decisions that will define your career, critical thinking will help you navigate ideas and scenarios to make good decisions and access even better alternatives.

On the other hand, design thinking is a problem-solving approach that involves understanding the needs of users and developing solutions that meet those needs. Design thinking involves a human-centred approach, focused on understanding the user's perspective and developing solutions tailored to their needs. Design thinking



which mainly focuses on understanding people's pain points can help Creatives solve complex problems and help them come up with an innovation that best solves them.

In conclusion, Creativity is a well of potential in each of us that needs to be unlocked. Critical thinking and Design thinking can be your approach. It might be difficult, but doing it consistently is the fastest way to bring out the creative potentials that can impact your world.



Meet Director Abula

Abdulazez Greene Oladimeji (born 23 February) known mononym as Abula, is a Nigerian-born cinematographer, music video director, commercial director, filmmaker, and talent manager. He currently serves as the CEO, and founder of The Grenade Company. He has directed music videos, and commercials for Zlatan, Fireboy DML, Portable, Dr Dolor, Mohbad, Adekunle Gold, and Taaooma.

What does creativity mean to you?

To me, it's bringing ideas to life. Most times, ideas that only your mind has seen. Exhibiting these ideas in form of action is what creativity is .

What inspired you to be a film producer?

As a kid, I have always wondered how people got into a small box (television). As I grew older, I got to know the main reason why it is possible is because of a camera. Luckily for me, my dad is a journalist/camera person. So we always had cameras laying around our house always. That's where it all started from.

How did you determine your value as a creative film producer?

It has always been to be the change the industry needs. As we all know, there used to be a huge difference in quality and production power between Nollywood and Hollywood movies. I have therefore had it as my core value to make sure the Nigerian motion picture industry be on the same standard as our foreign counterparts.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

I hardly have them. All I need to do is listen to music, and my brain refreshes.

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

Unfortunately, one has to keep up with them in order to stay relevant. They can't be pushed aside.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

Apart from working with tight budgets, Location is always a big challenge. We only get to shoot in Lagos most times, there are other beautiful places in the country but Extra costs and security are big challenges. However, we have become masters in knowing how to make one same spot look like 10 different ones for different scenes.

What do you think is the future of film production?

The future is here already. As you can see, our music videos, which broke the barriers first can now compete directly with foreign ones. With the advent of Netflix and other SOD platforms, bigger fundings are now available for films in the industry and the productions are now top class.

What is your advice to creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

It is never an easy task. Expect challenges, lots and lots of them. But keep pushing



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Exploring Creativity In The 21st Century

By **The Hive**

Examining the ways in which creators can express themselves through the act of creating is a key component of exploring creativity in the 21st century. As technology continues to advance and the world becomes ever closer and more connected, creativity has become an increasingly important part of society, with many people turning to creative pursuits as a means of self-expression, career advancement, and personal fulfillment.

As an African-based community, we believe modern creativity is characterized by a combination of cultural and modern influences. Drawing inspiration from people, art forms and styles, music, the spoken arts, and many other facets woven into African society.

Global trends are also a great influence, particularly in the fields of technology and design. As we shift towards a digital economy, it only makes sense to embrace technology

that allows us to create innovative works of art and design and share our creations with the global community across the web.

Without mincing words, collaboration and community are instrumental to growth. Working with designers across borders enables you to create new projects and share ideas while fostering a strong sense of support and collaboration within the creative community.

Storytelling is yet another tool in the creative's arsenal. This enables one to communicate their values and experiences. to share their authentic self in all its shades. In the end, stories connect us all.

Creativity gives us the lens through which we examine the world around us as it continues to evolve. While influencing the Huan society through creative expression.

From Doubt to Design: Navigating Insecurity as a Creative In the 21st Century

By **Favour Amos**

Client Relations/ Human Resources Manager,
The Giant Creative

As I deliberated on the ideal topic to write about for this magazine, I found myself overwhelmed with ideas. However, I struggled to settle on the perfect one and found myself writing and deleting countless drafts that failed to meet my self-imposed standards. Despite eventually submitting one of my pieces, I couldn't shake the feeling of inadequacy, which led me to retract my submission. Insecurity has been a great challenge, causing me to miss out on numerous opportunities and dismiss countless ideas that I deemed unworthy. To compound matters, I have resorted to rehearsing conversations within, hoping they will transpire as planned, only to be disappointed when they don't. I often find myself comparing my work to others, wondering if it is good enough, and sometimes struggling to share it because I fear rejection and criticism. If you identify with this, then this is specifically for you.

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, it's clear that this century has seen a remarkable explosion in creativity, innovation, and individuals pursuing diverse fields in the



creative sector. I have heard people say, “everyone is now a content creator, everyone is now a designer, everyone now writes”. However, there are ways to overcome feeling inadequate and be bold with your ideas and work in the 21st century. The first step is to embrace your unique perspective. I noticed everyone has a unique way of seeing the world, and that perspective is what gives your ideas and work value. Instead of worrying about fitting in or conforming to others' expectations, embrace your unique perspective and let it fuel your creativity. This step will help you stand out and make a meaningful

impact in your field. No matter how silly you think your ideas are, they could be the next big thing. The founder of TikTok, Zhang Yiming, is someone who embraced their unique perspective and found success in the creative industry. Before founding TikTok, he founded a news aggregation app called Toutiao, which uses artificial intelligence to recommend news articles to users based on their interests and reading history. This perspective eventually led him to create TikTok, a social media platform that uses AI to recommend videos based on users' interests and viewing histories.

It is also necessary to practice vulnerability. Being vulnerable can be scary, but it's also a powerful way to connect with others and build trust. It may be difficult to expose yourself to criticism and rejection, but it's important to remember that vulnerability is not a sign of weakness. My dad always says, "It takes courage to open up and share your ideas with others". In doing so, you allow yourself to receive constructive feedback and learn from it, ultimately improving your work and growth as a creative. Some days when it feels challenging to speak up, I write down my thoughts and share them with the team. One way to build confidence about sharing your work is to utilise social media platforms. You can choose to share your work openly or create an anonymous account. There will be people who resonate with your work. Trust your instincts and take action, even if it's scary.

Another thing I've learned is that when the outcome of your creative work, it is easy to get discouraged if things don't go as planned. I always try to focus on the process of creating, which helps me stay motivated and engaged.

Enjoy the journey of creation without worrying too much about the result. Failure is a natural part of the creative process. It's necessary to learn from your mistakes. Instead of letting failure reflect your worth or talent, view it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Take what you've learned and apply it to your next project. Also, having a supportive network of friends, family, and colleagues has made a big difference in how I feel about my creative work. Surround yourself with people who believe in you and your ideas and who will encourage you to take risks and be bold. Online creative communities and forums offer a safe and supportive space to share your work, receive feedback, and engage in constructive criticism. They also allow you to cultivate a network of peers who can provide invaluable support and mentorship, which can help alleviate self-doubt and encourage creative growth.

If you feel insecure about what works to share, don't worry. There are many options available in today's gig economy. Freelance job boards and creative marketplaces offer a platform for creatives to showcase their skills and services to a global client base, which can provide exposure and build confidence. Another option is to work on hypothetical projects or join online creative challenges to practice and share your work with others. Remember, you can't learn if you don't share.

I went to an art exhibit in Lagos State, where I came across a sign that read, "Behind every great work of art is a creator who overcame self-doubt". I felt that statement spoke to me, and from that day forward, I was determined to continue creating without fear. I know there will always be moments of self-doubt, but I also know that the rewards of creativity are worth the risk. Let this be the green light for you to take the leap.



Meet Oluwaseun Shobo

Oluwaseun SHOBO is an incredibly gifted individual. Fondly called the Brand Master, Shobo is a sought after brand consultant, premium voice-over talent and an inspirational speaker.

He began his career as a brand consultant with a passion for building domestic brands up to global relevance. He has worked with various multinational brands. He is also responsible for the birth of many start-up brands and has successfully managed their brands through their growth and expansion stages.

With over two decades as an active player in the voice-over industry; his passion for its growth and a need to groom African talents for global takeover inspired him to start the pioneer training hub for voice talents in Africa (The first-ever in Sub-Saharan Africa), The Voice Over Academy (voiceoveracademyng.com). In addition to this, established the continent's largest and most professional pool of voices- The Voice Over Bank (voiceoverbank.com.ng) and Africa's premier practice and resource center for voice-over drills (voiceoverdrill.com)

Shobo's projects have attracted global attention, including a host of local and international media houses. Shobo, an award-winning creative is the recipient of the prestigious SOVAS Voice Arts Global Influencer Award which he received in December 2022. He has also earned numerous awards and accolades from various platforms and higher institutions across Nigeria due to the wealth of experience he has garnered in both the Marketing Communications and Voice Over industry.

Shobo is a professional member of the World Voices Organization (WOVO) USA and also the Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA), USA where he sits on the board as the first African and Nigerian board Director. He also sits on the advisory board of several other organisations.

Can you give a brief introduction about yourself?

My name is Seun Shobo. I like to call myself a creative entrepreneur but some people will say, of course, and I call myself a great entrepreneur voice-over talent but most people know me as a voice-over talent, some people call me the brand master and that's because I've been in the advertising industry for a while, also being a voice-over in the industry for a while, and then creativity generally comes to me easily. I'm an ideas person. Everybody that knows me knows that there are a lot of things that we see right now were actually ideas that were birth from my office with people right who are major entrepreneurs today. If we want to just talk about me, I'm a voice-over talent. I'm a creative entrepreneur. A lot of people call me the brand master.

The brand master was given to me by my client. It was a name given by clients who never saw themselves, who never met themselves before. it was given to me, because, at then, I was doing, a lot of brand consulting for them, they were small businesses but some of the ideas I gave them catapulted their businesses to the next level. So it was out of some form of excitement and ecstasy, "this guy, we need to call you the brand master and was from two people, and then I adopted the name, and so everybody calls me the brand master. And I think It's basically because of the ideas. I share a lot of ideas with people. When I hear an idea I try to add value to it and bring some creativity to the mix.

What is creativity to you?

Well, for me creativity is much more than just doing things differently because that's what people will tell you. Oh we are doing things differently, and we think differently, that's what creativity is all about. While I agree with that, I think that creativity is breathing life into ideas. So you can just bring thought to an idea but when you bring life, it is very obvious. People can see, people can feel, and people can engage with it. So when you breathe life into an idea, it is evident to all, there is a result. People see, because creativity is not just "I have this thought, and I want to do it, and I want to do it differently", because a lot of people do things very differently, and they don't get results.

Creativity is all about breathing life into that thing such that it is able to provide results. For example, God created the heaven of the earth, and God created so many things, and some of those things are a result because we use



those things as human beings. Even we human beings are a result of God's creativity. He breathed life into us, and then we are giving results back to him. So creativity without results is nothing, it is not creativity. It's just ideas. Well, what makes it creative is it's what creates. Creativity is from the root word, create. And if you're saying something is creative, coming from create, that means there is some form of life that passes through it to give you something. There's no creativity if you're not breathing on something, or if there's no life in something or no results in something. So a lot of people misplace them, they misplace what you call ideas and creativity. Ideas are thoughts that come through but creativity or creative thoughts are the ones that have life, and you give life to and they give you results.

What inspired you to be a voice-over artist?

Well, I would say that the same answer will be from the root of creativity. So for someone like me, I would always go to my radio cassette players in the house. I would put a cassette there and press record, and I would be talking. What people call podcasts now is what we used to do then. We would just record our voices, press record, and then playback, and then myself and my cousins, I used to do that a lot. And then when we're doing that, we didn't know what it was, sometimes we do adverts that we hear and we never knew that was anything

that had to do with the root of voice acting or voiceovers but when I was in year 2 in the university, a friend of mine invited me for a talent camping audition and that talent company does commercials. So when they invited me there, I was chosen but it was for singing. So when I got there, the guy in charge when he picked me up, the guy in charge called me for a job the next week. When I got there, the guy was like "No, this guy you can't just be singing, this voice is a powerful voice that should be everywhere on the radio, for voiceovers and the rest of that, and then I said, "I've heard about voice over, but I don't really know much about it", and then he told me to go into the booth to record. I recorded, that was my first demo right, they took it to different agencies. And then I started being called for jobs.

I did a lot of work, and then, of course, that's how my journey began as a voice talent. So for me, it has probably been from childhood and then, it just got expression as at that time, because when that guy told me to go into the booth, it didn't take me twenty minutes, I just started flowing. I just started because it was something, I always tell people that I've been doing and enjoying myself right. But I didn't just give it the name voice-over then. So like me when I go to the studio, I usually tell people that it comes to me. Apart from the fact that of course, I've worked and had a lot of experience with it, I mean this is my twenty-first year as a voice-over talent. I've been doing it actively since I was eighteen. It's something that I learned on it so that's why one of the reasons why I started an academy was because of the experience I had, I didn't want a lot of people to go through that long journey to get to where I got to now. Those people, the knowledge we have, that some of my colleagues have with the experience made me think "this is it, let's cut your journey short. You want to be a voice-over talent, you want to be a star, a talent of great reputation, this is what you need to do.

Basically, that's my journey of becoming a voice-over talent and then, of course, one of the things that got me more interested was that I did a particular commercial that is

rumoured one of Nigeria's biggest commercials ever for Skybank and when I did that, it was all over the world. It was everywhere on CNN, and I was hearing my voice, everybody was hearing my voice and saying "That's Shobo now". That was when I understood that there's something called the business of creativity, or the business of voiceovers. And that was where my real interest started because really, talent is just 10%. There is an understanding of business and how to sell it. In fact, talent is less than 10%, because talent is not enough. No matter how talented you are, there's something called attitude. It's what will actually drive you to the top, your business savviness, and then, of course, being legacy conscious, I always tell people, you have to be legacy conscious because, in the steps of creativity, there are four steps from my own study and inventions.

There is solo creativity, a creative person. You have the desperate mindset, then you have the solo mindset, you have the collaboration mindset and then you have the legacy mindset. For the desperate mindset, you find a lot of creative people in that space. They can do stuff and are talented; they just want to get jobs, new jobs, and no matter, and if you want to do Ido mixing, for solo, you will kill yourself one day. Collaborate with someone, look for; someone to collaborate with. When you talk about the last two, the collaboration mindset and the legacy mindset, those people that have the collaboration mindset, find creative people in their space, "oh, let's collaborate, let's come together, let's partner and see what we can do" and they good. Then the legacy mindset is people who think and if you about the institutions, you think about policies of how they will affect that industry. That's where I stand, I stand on the legacy mindset.

I was listening to somebody the other day and the person said " You cannot build an economy because there is something called the creative economy, and, you cannot build a creative economy with just celebrities, just personalities. You need to build institutions, creative

institutions that are taking the gospel of creativity in Africa to the next level, and that's the challenge in Africa we find out we have a lot of stars but our creative industry is not as massive as it's supposed to be.

How did you determine your value as a voice-over artist?

Well, for me, like I said it was from that job. When I did that job I saw that my voice was everywhere. It was all over the world, that advertisement ran for fifteen years, and I don't like to say how much I was paid, you know, so I don't disgrace them. It ran for fifteen years on ATMs, on television, on video, on their phone systems, and in different places and I began to wonder, "wow! so these guys are using my voice everywhere but I'm not being paid for it, I'm not enjoying the fruit of my labour in terms of the way they were enjoying it " because when you

*"At the end
of the day,
what I do
today,
where I earn
from is from
my voice."*



talk about that Sky bank, it's that song that actually got a lot of people endeared to the brand. The song, the voice-over, everything. It got people endeared to the brand, and at the end of the day, the person who did it, or who was responsible for it is not enjoying the same popularity or value that this material is giving to them. So I said, "you know that means I was naïve". So I did a lot of research.

I started doing research about creativity, I went to different places. I went to the School of Media and Communications, Pan Atlantic University. I went to Orange Academy. I went to different places. I built myself, I built my capacity. As of then, there was no agency in Lagos right, in fact in Nigeria. I knew the accounts they were handling, I knew the name of their MD, and I was such an encyclopedia when it comes to advertising, and branding in Nigeria, I had so many things in my head, and till now I still do. I did a lot of capacity building, I read books. I did a lot of research, I went on websites, and I would seat with my laptop for hours, doing research, and learning a lot of things. And for me, that's how I started

understanding that, "oh, wow! this is it so there's something called residuals, there's something called royalties, there's something called licensing, there's something called usage fee for voice-over talents, oh, interesting, wow! So these people because I didn't know this, they used this one for me. No problem".

At the end of the day, what I do today, where I earn from is from my voice. I've made millions with my voice and that's because I went to build myself and I now understood the business process, I understood professionalism, I understood branding. I understand how to sell myself right, my authentic self, not trying to package myself because a lot of people do cosmetic branding. There's no authenticity to what they do right. It's just all fake because, at the end of the day when you say oh, this is who I am and you look for me, you don't find that person inside. That's why I say branding is inside out not the other way around. That's how the journey of knowing my value started, and there was a particular time, I did a line of voice-over. It was just a line I did and I was paid millions. It was from then. I said that's it. It was just a line, it didn't take

me up to five minutes and they even renewed my contract again. Since then I knew I had gotten it.

The one thing creative people do not do is not looking beyond their talents. They need to learn to build capacity outside their talent right? For example, when we started the voice-over academy, there was no academy in Africa. We were the first ever. Now, you find a lot of people doing voice-over and teaching it, which is not bad. It makes the industry better and gives it more value. However some of these people, when you ask them the results that they have gotten, they have not gotten results and you cannot teach what you don't know. You can't give what you don't have right when you are still in the process. Right Take as much, learn as much, and go to business schools if need be, if you need to go for courses, short courses or certificate courses, go for it, learn everything that has to do with business. For example, a lot of creative people, if you tell them, show me your accounting books, they can't show you, that's the truth. And you will be praying to God, going to the church or mosque saying I want to attract investors, I want investors to find me. If an investor comes to you now and says I have ten million dollars to give you, which is very possible. It's happening in the tech space. If I have 10 million dollars to give you one of the first things that they're going to ask for is your books no matter how much you have made, they're going to ask you for your accounts. Okay, how much of you do you make? What will be your turnover? You will now be stuttering then obviously you are not serious. You're not ready for business. They're going to ask you for it, no matter how small your business is, you must have it documented. How much are we making? If we are not making a profit, let's even know. Even if it's twenty thousand nairas, you are making a month, what an investor will reward you for is your diligence not for how much you are making. Be diligent in your books. If I give them ten million dollars for their business, they can make twenty million back. Why? because they are diligent with their books. So these are those little things but some of them are just thinking about talent. You have a good voice but how

“The one thing creative people do not do is not looking beyond their talents. They need to learn to build capacity outside their talent”

about the business part?

For me one of my dreams is by the time people come, I want to be one of the first people in Africa to be able to say, you know what this guy through creative entrepreneur maybe to Forbes is one of the top hundred influential people, Time magazine, this guy worked through this amount because of his creativity. That's the way we should be thinking not voicing or designing something today and earning probably fifty thousand nairas and you are happy and relaxed

and the same process continues. What is the vision? How do you affect an industry? Those are things that we should be thinking about right. As I said, if you are building institutions, the truth is, it's going to be better for us as Africans. One thing I've noticed in the States is that they build institutions, everything is about brands. They're building institutions. I've been studying them, they are not better than us in terms of skills or talents but for them, they are building brands out of their own space to dominate different parts of the world. That's why we always want to collaborate with them. There is no African brand right that collaborates with an American brand that doesn't make headway in Africa. That's the truth and why is it so? This is because Americans in general do not mess with their brand. They build it carefully, it is very intentional.

How do you keep up with evolving trends in your industry?

For trends, the truth is that one of the only best ways that you can keep up, or that I keep up is, I read a lot. I'm somebody who reads a lot. I do a lot of research so I would always understand trends. For example, in my team in the voice-over academy in Nigeria, one of the things we do is discuss trends a lot. When we see something that's happening, we discuss it. How does this affect our business? What does it say about this industry? We do a lot of research on how it affects our business. How does

this affect the voice-over industry? So we do a lot of research, we do a lot of reading. Once you do research, for example, I remember when there was a ban on foreign models and foreign voice-over talents, when it came we were one of the first people to get the news in fact a lot of people were sending it to me and my team. One of the things that we're able to do from that is that we were able to build some ideas, especially things that have to do with policies that we hope to suggest to the government that listens. So we said, "Okay, you know what from this, let's try to build our own policy, let's have our own policy ideas, creative policy, ideas such that when we get to government that listens we can write to them and say this was the ban but can we do it like this because this will bring more money to our country". For example, if you're buying models, that's not the solution.

We are in the world and age of collaboration. So if you're from the age of collaboration where the world is now a global village, what should we do? If you are bringing foreign models to our country, no problem. What you need to do is make sure that you pay the regulatory bodies, they have a fine for you, the fine is \$5,000 or \$20,000 per model, right? And by the time you are using five models and you pay \$100,000, then you know that of course, maybe I should use people here. Then also, in the industry focus on copyright issues. of editions in Nigeria. Right? There are copyright issues in Nigeria, people do not get their royalties. Some companies don't believe in licensing. They don't know what licensing is, this is what happens all over the world but in Nigeria, it's not enforced. There are copyright laws but it is not enforced. For example, in this kind of trend that came up then, one of the things that we have to tell them to revisit is copyright laws, you will have to learn to enforce copyright laws. So for trends, we keep up with trends by researching, we read and then, of course, we don't just keep up with them, we try to create solutions, especially for trends, we try to create solutions that now affect our business from those trends.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

For me, one of the ways that I get inspired to create is that I observe a lot. I can be in this room and I've seen like five different characters. Instead of talking, I will just be watching and I take things in very fast. So when I take it in and play it back for that person, they're always shocked. I'm a great observer. I can observe so well I can just be looking at you and you won't know but in my mind, I'm recording everything. So I'm very observant. One of the roots of creativity is play, you must learn to be playful and have fun. As serious as I can be, I can be very playful and in the place of play, you get ideas, and then for you to breathe life into that idea you, then come into that serious side. Bring that play idea or that idea that you got in the place of play, and bring it to the serious side, and see what is the value in this idea. Where is the money? And then that's how you create.

Creative blocks for me, It's not like I've never had them before, I have them at times when I am stressed, so what I try to do is, I try to rest more, try to play more and also try to observe much more. I can't tell you a lie that I read when I have a creative block, no, that's not true. I sleep more. A lot of creative people deprive themselves of sleep just because they want to get ideas but when you are stressed, you cannot think so your health is a major priority. You must learn to prioritize your health. So when I see that, I'm not getting the idea I want, I can just go and sleep. In my mind or my dream, I can just get something and I will wake up. It has happened to me, not once, not twice. Learn to rest, learn to play, and don't carry the whole job on your head. Everything you want to kill yourself on it, calm down. There's too much more about life. Enjoy, play, don't be boring every time, smile, have fun, laugh, enjoy yourself, go out with your friends, watch movies, and do something. One of the things I also do is watch movies. I am not a movie watcher but when I do, I watch for a purpose. I listen to podcasts, read a lot and do a lot of research, most times I'm always on my laptop working. I talk to people. One of the things, I believe, is I can learn from everybody and

“...one of the ways that I get inspired to create is that I observe a lot.”

anybody.

My daughter was here yesterday, and I was still learning from her. She said something I'd never heard before and I was like really? That's something new. So if you are not humble, you cannot even be creative. Proudful people cannot, what they do is not creativity. No, it's just mainly ideas. The only way you can create is to learn from people. You can't be all-knowing. So you must learn to listen to people no matter their age because you can create something for that target audience, you can create something for old people or people of your age.

What challenges have you faced so far as a voice-over artist and how did you overcome them?

Well, for me, it was basically people seeing value in what you do and I feel like it was our call as voice-over talent

to do that because you are the one that will influence people, or that will let people see the value in what you do. It's not anybody outside. So what I decided to do was take our branding and professionalism more seriously and then I began to see changes. A lot of my friends will tell me that you have made voice-over fashionable, you have made it real to us. That tells you that there was a mindset before but it took someone to say, let's do it differently, to now saying there is going to be a change in that industry. So for me, the challenge will be, we need more investors in the creative economy. We need more people to come in because, for people, the voice is life. You do your television ads, you use voices. You do your radio ads, you use voices, for your podcast, you use voices, your children's toys, you use voices, for trains, you use voices. For example, Lagos state just did a metro train or metro line and there was a voice-over telling people they are moving from Mile 12 to Okokomaiko. It was a terrible voice-over. I apologize to the person that did it but obviously, it shows that attention was not paid to that kind of thing. Those are the things that we're talking about.

You know that you're going to do this thing, you are trying to create something worldwide and the voice-over is terrible, then there is nothing world-class about it. You should pay attention to the little details. So your trains use voice-overs,

airports use voice-overs, your planes use voice-overs, documentaries, awards, we have the voice of God. So the voice is life. One of the challenges is that instead of you to start preparing for the voice-over, first you prepare for the last and that's what we are saying. So we, as voice-over talents need to keep pushing on and saying, "you know what, this is a lot of value to you, and the earlier that you realize it the better". For example, you have shot an advertisement, and you knew you are going to need voice-overs and you started shooting voice-over last, you started looking for the voice-over artist last. No, that's the first thing, because that's the thing that will inspire how the TV commercial will be shot. You prepare for the voice-over artist last then you say "I'll give you ten thousand or twenty thousand naira. No, it's not going to work. That's the most important part because the voice is what inspires action. Go and do your research, you will find out that voice is one of the greatest tools of communication. You have images, you have words, you have the voice. So the voice is what gives the call to action, do this.

If you want to buy something or you want to use it, banks will tell give you instructions, it is the voice that does that. Sometimes when you read and you take action, it is when you listen. You hear this thing on the Internet, even when you watch things, you're still hearing stuff as well. Those are the challenges. The challenge is preparing leads for voice talents. The truth is they bring a lot of value to the table, so treat them as people who bring value, not people who are just people that you just think about. Of course, that also has a lot to do with us and how we present ourselves because the reason why people think like that is that the desperate voice-over talents are the ones that lead them to think like that. So for us, there are several challenges. The challenges of investment, the challenges of the industry, and how it is perceived right, and there are also the challenges of people or clients preparing shabbily for voice-over talents or for voice-overs.

How do you ensure productivity while working on various projects?

Let me use my own example, especially in my office. I've been abroad for a while now and my office has been running actively and very productively. The reason why is that I allow people to be themselves and I decided not to follow the stuck way, the way that people think offices should run. If you go to my office today, or the Voice-over Academy or Crib, we have established an environment for play. We have cribs in our office, it is colourful, we have a podcast room, we have an audio studio, there is my office and the office of the staff. We have the training place, and on our doors, you see storytelling like "whenever you enter this place, just know that you are a legend". If you're coming into my office, you see, "this is where money is discussed. If you have money for us, come into this place". So we've established an environment for play, for creativity. So you see a lot of creatives there, they have fun. You will hardly see someone sad in my office. It's not possible.

Everybody is always almost every time, always joyful only if something sad happens, The environment is always free, I don't tell them to wear a suit and tie, you are coming to create and it does not affect creativity. Wear your jeans, and be as free as possible. We don't resume at 7 am. I know that they cannot resume at 7 am. Some of them are coming from far places, resume any time from 9 or 10. We open by 10 and close by 5, right but people leave there at 9 o'clock. Not with me, I don't give them work till 9 o'clock but they enjoy being in the office. When I was in the office, I get there at 7 o'clock and I leave there at 9 or 10 because I love my office. It's like my home, people come to visit me there. I enjoy it. You know we play, we enjoy, we talk. For me, productivity is when we allow people to be themselves, and authenticity and one of the ways you can also be productive as a company or as a person is also always listening. I listen a lot to my colleagues, what they say, the ideas they have. It might not be perfect but I fine-tune it. If I don't listen, how and what will I be able to fine-tune? I fine-tune their ideas units and say this can go this way. For

me, that's how I stay ahead of my peers and stay productive. I always make sure that I listen and then create an environment for productivity.

No matter what you do in my office if you like sleeping on the couch or in the crib, or standing at the table, what we need is productivity. We want you to be productive. That's the deal we have. So if you, if you like play from 10 am to 3 am, you are going to report on what you have done and you see people create stuff. We've allowed them to be themselves, and we are not putting pressure on them, when you allow people to be themselves when they are authentic, they come in their playful way, or they are themselves. People that worked with me, don't remain the same in terms of every year, there is some level of growth whether they have gone for training or either they have added one new skill to themselves because you allow them to be themselves. You see that they are much better. The next day, they have taken their craft to another level. That's how it's supposed to be. So allow people to be themselves, create an environment for creativity, and also, of course, listen to people.

What do you think is the future of voice-over talents in Nigeria or in Africa generally?

For me, I think there's a lot. The future is massive even though right now, as we speak, we also have artificial intelligence, that people feel like

it's a threat but for me, I don't think it's a threat. I think we should find a way to collaborate with artificial intelligence because in the end, it is still artificial and the machines learn from us, the voice-over talents. So like I said, the voice is life. Voices bring life to everything so the future is not something that we can even question. We also have the fact that languages, especially in Nigeria are thriving a lot because a lot of people, especially cosmopolitans like those living in Lagos if I ask do you speak your language, you probably can't speak it but the people that are speaking it are making so much money. You find out that the majority of the Northern guys are not using smartphones, they are still using transistor radios and if you are going to advertise to them or you're going to send a message to them, it's going to be in their language most of the time, you can't speak English to them.

If you are going to a village in the southeast or west, most of them are listening to the radio or watching TV, and it's almost always in their languages. So language voice-overs can never go extinct. Lagos is just a part, a small fraction of Nigeria, where almost everybody speaks English and probably Pidgin then maybe a bit of Yoruba. Right now, the voice-over industry is valued to be more than 18 billion dollars because you have the audiobook industry. You have the animation industry, you have

documentaries, you have commercials, you have gaming, you have educational toys, you have navigation systems, Google Maps and the rest. So it's a lot. Voices are everywhere. The voice is life, and you can find a voice in everything that you do it's very important that when we begin to see things, we know that there is a major future for voice-overs, especially in Africa, where it's just picking up the way supposed to be because in America it's already gone far but in Africa, it's just picking up the way it's supposed to be. Talking about five to ten years from now, it's going to be massive because right now, everybody is teaching voice-overs. People are claiming to be voice-over talents which of course all of them might be the best or professionals but the truth is, it's growing in the industry, and it's getting people aware of what is going on in the industry.

So what's your advice to creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

I believe that one of the things that you can do, one of the best advice I can give is to stay focused. It is easy to get distracted. If you believe in a cause, or if you believe that this creative process is something that's going to take you to the next level or is part of your purpose, you need to stay focused. It's easy to get distracted by different things, by life, and by frustrations here and there. Challenges will come, there are times that you're not going to have money, there are times you will use your money to do a lot of things, and times you have to invest back in your company, it's not going to be all rosy but stay forecast because, at the end of the day, consistency will be rewarded. Diligence will be rewarded. It's not just going to be all "oh, it is sad". Always also have a legacy mindset or a collaboration mindset, go away from the solo and desperate mindset and move to a collaborative and legacy mindset where you want to influence policies and you want to build institutions. So stay focused and don't get distracted because you know that at the end of the day, something positive is going to happen.



Meet Peteru Ogunjinrin

My name is **Peteru Ogunjinrin (a.k.a. The Billionaire Designer)**. I'm a Multi-disciplinary Designer with a great interest in Brand Design and User Experience (UX) Design. I have 5 years of experience working in-house in organisations, in marketing agencies and running my design studio as a Creative Director, Brand Designer and UX Designer.

With my experience, I have worked with Small & Medium Scale passionate business owners to develop their brands or products from ideation to launch. I'm passionate about working with NGOs to curb the menace and moral decadence in our society. I have completed Branding & Product Design projects for organizations across various industries, ranging from financial to health, agriculture, marketing & advertising, real estate, NGOs, and product-led organisations.

I enjoy the creative process of coming up with branding solutions, from briefing to execution, thereby simplifying complex problems through collaboration with teams across the globe. I have a strong flair for brand storytelling as well as developing a company's public image and messaging. I currently head the design team of MyFairies Health Care Limited, UK. I also co-run a design studio, Fortrex Studios, in Lagos, Nigeria. Fortrex Studios works with different business owners to solve their business problems using design as a tool for problem-solving.

I have trained and still training young designers who are new in the tech industry to gain the right footing they need to get started in their respective career paths. I'm an advocate for mentorship and discipleship. I'm a lover of Jesus Christ. I draw most of my inspiration from the Bible or nature and I use my skill to preach the gospel of Christ. I've worked with Rhema Frames & Adunbarin Wears among others to spread the Word.

Can you give a brief introduction about yourself?

My name is Peter Ogunjinrin. I started out as a graphic designer, but then I reached into UI/UX design, and I've been training some students personally. I also run my own design studio. I started my design journey in 2018, even if it is a short-time experience compared to people in the industry. What kept me moving and growing really fast was the fact that I did a personal search because what I studied is not what I am doing currently. Upon leaving school, I did a personal search and started asking myself, "What do you want to be known for?" When your name is mentioned in the room, what should come to people's minds? And I sought to design—graphic design. Before then, I designed for people free of charge. Then the design was like being called to an event to clap. I didn't know it was something to be paid for. I had no choice but to confront it when I asked myself within and decided to pursue it for the rest of my life. The universe worked to my advantage at that time, and I was able to get hold of people who requested that I do designs for them free of charge. I did it for free up until 2019, when I got to meet someone who showed me the money-making aspect of it. I got a job and started getting paid. My journey has been a bit fast to an extent because of the people with whom I have worked. They listened to me and gave me opportunities that helped me grow quickly.

What is creativity to you?

I would like to relate this question to an experience I had in 2020. I got stuck on what creativity is. I realized I had paid for far too many classes, and everything they were teaching me, from Photoshop to Illustrator to Figma, I knew how to do better. I got to tell myself that there are two aspects to designing that those who train don't really talk about. There is the technical part—learning how to use tools and software—and then the creative aspect. This part requires you to give it your touch from the person in you. Creativity can be built through different things; however, my sole source of creativity is God. I'm not trying to sound religious, but it is the truth. At some point in time, I was stuck; I didn't know what I was doing, and I felt I chose the wrong career

path. I will get jobs to work on, and the client will reject them. I never knew it was a common thing in the industry; I thought something was wrong with me. I concluded that creativity is improving on what already exists. God has created what needs to be created; no matter the inventions that will come in, even from Elon Musk, you can trace them to a creation of God. There is something he has put in nature that will aid that development and technological advancement. Every gadget we have in the world is either made from plastic or steel, and these are things you can get from nature.

Creativity is not you coming up with new ideas because there is nothing you are thinking of that hasn't been thought of before. talking about electric cars, starting with the use of horses. People decided to improve the means of transportation from a four-legged

“Creativity is not you coming up with new ideas because there is nothing you are thinking of that hasn't been thought of before.”

animal to a four-wheeled machine. The shape of a horse vertically is the same shape as a motorbike in Nigeria, so the inspiration is still from the horse. You are not coming up with a new idea but looking at what is already there and suggesting improvements. How can I make it better for the users? Creativity is an improvement, and that is something that should be checked by every designer. For every work handled or design process, someone has done before, improve it and give it your own touch so when people see it, they see creative work. What really helps my creativity as a designer is nature. I learned about colour bridging and selection from the sea, ocean, sky, and animals, especially lions and leopards. I learned colour selection, hierarchy, and proportion from plants. Creativity is looking at what is already there, improving on it, and giving it your own touch.

What inspired you to be a creative designer?

In 2018, upon leaving school. I studied English education at UNILAG, and when I was about to leave school for three days, I was crying and asking myself, "What do I look for? What will I do? After this, I came back to design. For me, it was more of a purpose, a call. It wasn't something I saw people doing and decided to do. I was designing for free until someone told me I could convert my passion into my portfolio and get paid. That was what inspired me, the inner quest, to be who I am and who I was created to be.

What are the must-have gadgets, tools, and software for a creative designer?

The most important gadget for every designer is the laptop, but with the trend of things, you can design graphics with your smartphone, so I would say a smartphone as well. As for me, I prefer my laptop when it comes to working. However, if you are the smartphone type of graphic designer, then I will recommend your smartphone. For the software, there are people who deliberate that Cnava is better than CorelDraw and all. The answer is the tool you are most comfortable with; that is the software you should have. If it is Canva, Photoshop, Indesign, or any other software, that is what you should have on your gadget. The

third thing is that you have God. It is good to have tools, but if you don't have inspiration, your gadgets are as good as useless or a tool for watching movies. Someone can do a whack job in Photoshop and another can do an amazing design; it is not about the tools or software.

Which aspect of your fields do you think is yet to be tapped into, whether in Nigeria or in Africa?

I'm not sure I have a definite answer to that; however, I can say that a particular aspect of the industry that was once tapped but people are now deviating from is brand design. Brand design is an aspect that most people ignore; some designers consider it less important than UI/UX design. It is something I think people need to tap into again.

What misconception would you like to change about your field in the creative industry?

It is the issue of software that one is better than the other. When I was coming up, I got comments like, "Photoshop is better than CorelDraw." If you are using CorelDraw, you are an ancient designer, and I just laugh. I do some designs in CorelDraw, and when I send them to my clients or anyone else, they are amazed. People get it wrong; the tool is not the one doing the work. Before software came into existence, designers did their work by painting on paper. The tool is just something to make your work faster. It

is not the tool that does the design or tells you what composition or layout to use. People focus too much on the tool. I have done UX design in CorelDraw and Illustrator, except for collaboration features like Figma. You will never know the tool I used. A lot of people focus too much on tools and not the personality of the designer.

What key principles do you personally adapt in your work or your operations?

For my work, my key principle and what I unconsciously look out for is white space. I don't like my design clustered; I love space, down to my gadgets. I prefer wireless to wired electronics. White space is a key thing, and I have issues with clients who want everything covered. I start educating them, and some will agree and others will decline. It is something I apply to my work and business.

What does a perfect workday look like to you?

The client calls me to get a job done, they pay me upfront, I get it done, there is no correction, and I get my balance. Almost every designer will go with that, but that has never happened.

What perks and downsides have you experienced when working with teams on a project?

The one I experienced last year in November was when my gadgets decided to all mess up at the same time. It was really a tough one for me;

for almost a week, I couldn't reach out to anyone. I had to meet some people physically and explain what was happening, and to some I sent emails. It was like everything had a meeting and said, "Let's mess this guy up today. That was really a downside for me. When working with a team, the challenge I have affects production, especially when there is a deliverable they are waiting to get from me. There was a team with whom I was working, and I had to send two video recordings. I sent one, and upon sending the second one, my laptop messed up. I sent them an email because it was a new contract. I sent an email to explain the challenge and ask for an extension of the deadline, but I never heard from them. I'm sure they were disappointed; they couldn't get the two videos they were expecting. I couldn't get the contract. The positive side is that I can get people to critique my work and give me comments. I worked in a team where my team lead is sound in design, so after working on a project and he corrects me, he passes it on to the managing director, and when I am done with everything, there is this comment he gives me. He says, "You understand the work," because, with any little comment he gives, I go to do more than he asks; I give an extra. Having people criticize my work is good because he has seen it before. He also brings me projects and recommends me to his own clients.

Previously, you mentioned how your devices posed a challenge to you. Aside from this, what other challenges have you encountered as a creative designer?

I would say the comments I get from the clients have been a great challenge. Comments like "make the logo bigger", and "change this colour," even though the colour doesn't relate to what the concept is about. I had to go with what the client wanted, not what the users wanted to experience. Clients controlling my creativity is a challenge, so I overcome that by telling the client at the beginning of the project that if they want me to do this for them, I will do it, but at an extra charge. However, if they want me to put in my creativity and do my best while they just suggest things,

I will do anything they want me to do, I will do mine, and then we can compare both. If it is strictly what they want, then it will come at an extra charge.

What is your advice to upcoming creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

The first thing is to have God on your side. Once he is in control of what you do, your steps are ordered, especially if you are on the right path. As a young designer, challenges are inevitable, especially when you meet a client that wants a perfect touch and you don't have it yet. There is a way it affects you. Moving to the physical aspect, have a mentor. I had challenges with colours and pricing and I had to meet people, and get a mentor to guide me. I have four mentors that I can call for guidance, having a mentor is good. The next thing is studying and practising, when a mentor comes in is easily passing it to a mentor for correction and you can work on yourself. When people see your work, they don't know what you have passed through and the people you have passed through, they just see the perfect work. When

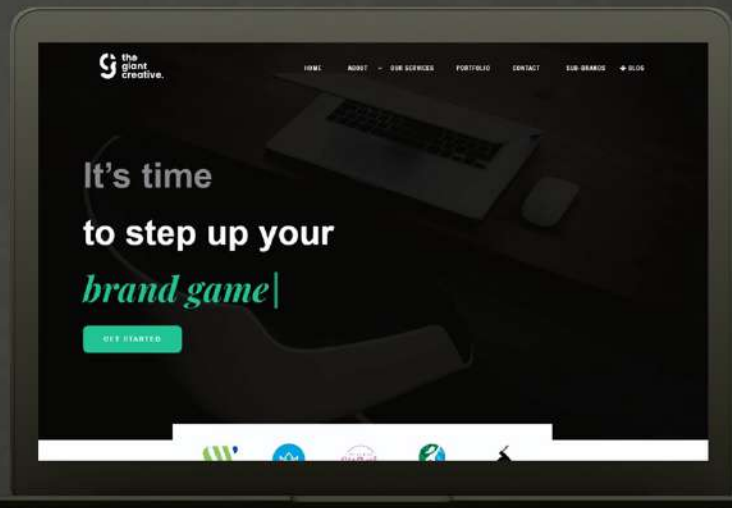
“...have God on your side.”

I started my UX journey, it was my mentor that really helped me. I had to show my work to critics and when people see it, they comment “Oh Peter is so good at UX design, in a month he has done a wonderful job”. Your mentor corrects and all people see is the final output. Studying, practising, having a mentor and having God is my advice.



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Exploring Creativity In The 21st Century

Written by **Imaabasi Aniema**,
For **Perxels Design School**

The 21st century has seen a surge in creativity, with more and more people exploring their creative sides in diverse ways. As technology advances and our understanding of the world around us deepens, creativity has become a key factor in our evolution as a society. From the development of new products and services to the exploration of new ideas and concepts, creativity is the driving force behind the progress of the world as we see it now.

Creativity is no longer confined to the traditional arts. It is now seen in many aspects of our lives, from the way we communicate to the way we solve problems. We are constantly looking for new ways to express ourselves and to improve our lives, especially using technology. With the rise of the internet, anyone can now find a platform to showcase their work and share their ideas with the world. This has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for those who are looking to explore their creative sides. From virtual reality

to artificial intelligence, the possibilities for creative expression are endless. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have been instrumental to giving hitherto underprivileged people the chance to showcase their ideas to the world. Additionally, artificial intelligence has enabled the development of new tools and applications that can help people create unique and innovative works of art.

It is no surprise then, that the UIUX design industry is thriving in this modern era. UIUX design is a field that combines a unique blend of creative problem-solving and technical expertise, and it has become an increasingly important aspect of modern business. UIUX designers must be able to think outside the box in order to create unique and engaging user experiences. They must also be able to identify user needs and develop solutions that meet those needs. This requires a great deal of creative problem solving and the ability to think creatively. As businesses become more reliant on technology, they need designers who can create user-friendly interfaces and experiences.

Creativity is also essential for staying relevant in the UIUX design industry. As the field continues to evolve, designers must be able to think of new and creative solutions to problems. This requires a willingness to try new things and experiment with different approaches. Also, as new technologies become available, designers are constantly upskilling to be able to incorporate them into their works in unique ways for the satisfaction of their clients. It is in light of this need for upskilling and reaching new heights of creativity that Perxels Design School was established. At Perxels, we believe that there is a creative trait in anyone who is willing to reach their potential. Here, we teach UIUX designers how to reach into and explore the

inherent creative traits in them, and use this to design valuable products that are of benefit to mankind.

Remember, the 21st Century is the era of technological uprising. As citizens of the world are on a constant search to express their creative traits through technology, all hands must be on deck. Especially in Africa, we must stand up and embrace the new wave of creativity in our favour.



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Meet Eneh Mercy

I am Eneh Mercy, A product designer. As a Product Designer, I develop user-centric design strategies that promote business growth, improve the value of products, boost client satisfaction, promote innovation, and guarantee the success of a brand or product. I concentrate on how customers utilize a product and navigate it. I want to make an interface that is simple to use and intuitive.

I am also passionate about human capital development, which has led me into working and founding a Non-governmental organization - The Female Media Network (Tefem), a platform which have impacted over 2000 women in society for the past 4 years, equipping them to take advantage of the opportunities available in the technology and digital media space. I'm a member of many social impact and community development organizations such as Tedx Ikegnebu, Bedrock community, Owerri business week, Smfest, to name a few. I've received many awards from different organizations and the most recent award was given to me by JPI, an international platform, in celebration of my contribution to women community development.

On the 3rd of October 2022, I celebrated 4 years of serving as the CEO of Tefem network. Working with a team of 15 Creatives since 2018. We have run different trainings in Africa, with focus on the south-eastern part of Nigeria. Through this network, over 300 women have developed businesses, products and services that have been of impact in their smaller communities. I served as a Tech Facilitator, Mentor, and Leader.

On the 8th of March 2022, I got featured on our local news, ABN TV Advocate Broadcasting Network on startimes channel 140. I spoke on the need for digital empowerment for women in tech and how Tefem is bridging the gap. On October 26 2022, I got featured on a global magazine - Shout out Atlanta, where I talked about what we do in the community of Women through Tefem

In the past 4 years, I have contributed to over 100 brands, product and businesses that spans across a wide range of industries.(Health, Finance, Real Estate, Blockchain, Agriculture, Food Industry, Retail, Renewable Energy, SMEs, Pharmaceuticals, Online Advertising, Ed-Tech, Telecom, Transport, Construction, Leadership, Clothing Industry) providing them with industry-standard designs. I have volunteered and spoken in over 50 Community Social Development Organizations in Nigeria and have visited over 8 Nigeria states to teach and empower communities.

What does creativity mean to you?

To me, creativity is the ability to generate new and unique ideas, perspectives, or solutions to problems. It involves the ability to think outside of the box and come up with original and imaginative concepts. Creativity can manifest in many different forms, such as through art, music, writing, design, science, and more.

It's also important to note that creativity is not just limited to a certain field or profession, but it's a quality that can be nurtured and developed by anyone in any walk of life, and it's open to everyone, it's not only for artist or writers.

It's often associated with the ability to come up with something new and different, but it also includes the ability to use existing resources in new and unexpected ways.

Overall, creativity is a valuable and necessary trait that can be used to improve one's life and the lives of others.

What inspired you to be a product designer?

Growing up, I had a flair for creativity, I appreciate good products, I loved art, colors and anything that looked beautiful.

I played a lot with colors, I draw most times though not professionally, I help friends and classmates to draw in

school.

After secondary school, I went for computer training (Microsoft word, excel and all) . I was one of the best students in corel draw class, I was so careful designing and matching colors, then I understood that creativity can be put into professions.

So getting to university, I started my design journey and it has been 4 years now and still counting in this beautiful profession.

I was inspired by the desire to create useful and meaningful products that improve people's lives.

I had an interest in problem-solving and the creative process of design. Product design is a field that combines creativity and practicality, allowing designers to bring new ideas to life and see the tangible impact of their work.

I am able to see the direct impact of my design on the end user, and how it would help them in daily life.

I also appreciate the opportunity to work on a wide range of different products and industries, which keeps the work interesting and varied.

“I was inspired by the desire to create useful and meaningful products that improve people's lives.”

How do you deal with creative blocks?

Creative blocks can be frustrating and can make it difficult to come up with new ideas or solve problems. However, there are several strategies I use to overcome them.

I take a break: Sometimes, stepping away from a project for a little while can help clear your mind and give you a fresh perspective. I take a short walk, go for a run, or even just get away from my work area for a little while. Changing my environment: Changing my surroundings also help to stimulate my creativity. Get inspiration from others: Seeking out inspiration from other sources is also a great way I get creative juices flowing again. I look at art, listen to music, or read books, or explore the work of other designers in my field. Brainstorming and freewriting: Brainstorming is a technique where I generate as many ideas as possible without worrying about whether they're good or bad. In freewriting I write whatever comes to mind without worrying about editing or refining it. This has been so helpful in getting past a block and generating new ideas.

I always try to assure myself to remember that everyone experiences creative blocks at some point, and they are a normal part of the creative process. I try not be too hard on myself, I just keep in mind that it's a common thing to experience, and I always try different methods to overcome it.

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

1.I follow industry leaders and influencers, product designers, design firms, and publications on social media.I sign up for their newsletters to stay updated on the latest trends and developments.

2.I attend conferences and events to learn about new technologies, design trends, and best practices from experts in the field. I network with other designers and build relationships with professionals in the industry. This has helped me stay informed about trends and learn about new

opportunities.

3.I participate in design communities and forums online to connect with other designers and share ideas and inspiration.

4.I read design blogs and publications to stay updated on the latest trends and developments in the industry.

5.Most importantly, I dedicate much of my time to continuous learning, educating myself by taking courses or workshops, learning from tutorials, watching youtube videos or reading books to keep up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies in the industry.

6.I always try to keep an eye on emerging technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and automation and how they can be used in product design.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

As a product designer, or having any skill in tech something is constant, that is facing challenges.

So being a designer didn't make it any different. some of the challenges I face as a product designer are:

1. Keeping up with the latest technologies: Great Product designers need to stay up-to-date with the latest technologies and trends in the industry

to ensure that their designs are relevant and competitive, this can be a bit demanding and difficult to keep up with.

2. Balancing Work, Play and sleep; I have a very difficult time balancing these three because I find myself spending more hours in front of my system. I find it hard to know when to sleep, eat or play, I basically have low social life and I don't really like that, I wish to have more friends and go out more

3. Most times I feel I'm not doing enough, the more I know, the more I feel I don't know and the circle continues this way, I honestly feel it can just stop..... Lolz, I know it won't. but it's a challenge.

How do I overcome these?

Continuously educate myself:
Continuously educate themselves on the latest technologies and trends in the industry to stay current and competitive.

Setting goals and giving myself rewards for hard work, taking some time out to play, have fun and rest.

How do you ensure productivity while working on various projects?

There are several strategies that can help ensure productivity while working on multiple projects simultaneously: I prioritize my tasks based on importance and urgency. This will



help me ensure that the most important and time-sensitive tasks are completed first. I use a task manager such as Trello or Asana, to organize and track my progress on all projects. This will help me keep all tasks and deadlines in one place and make it easy to switch between projects.

I set clear and specific goals for each project. This will help me focus efforts and ensure that progress is being made on the most important tasks. I break my projects into smaller tasks which will make them less overwhelming and easier to manage.

I try to eliminate distractions as possible, such as notifications, social media, or unnecessary apps that can slow down my work. Sometimes I keep my phone away totally or put it on Don't disturb me.

What do you think is the future of product design?

Hmmmm. the future of product design, well that's a big question, personally, I think the future of product design will involve a greater emphasis on sustainability and user experience.

Additionally, advances in technology will allow for more personalized and intuitive product design, with a focus on user experience and human-centered design principles.

Also, the use of virtual and augmented reality in the design process will become more prevalent, and the use of data analysis will allow for more informed design decisions.

Overall, I think the future of product design will be characterized by a greater focus on sustainability, user experience, and technology.

In a world full of creatives, how are you able to stand out and be successful?

Standing out of the noise is really a hard task but based on my experience, I understand some ways that were able to help me retain my own voice. To stand out and be successful in a world full of creatives, I focused on developing a unique style and voice, not trying to be everyone but just add my unique touch to everything I do.

I'm passionate about personal branding, so I was dedicated to building a strong personal brand for myself, and was consistently producing high-quality work. Networking and collaborations also helped me in gaining exposure and building connections in the industry. I attended a lot of events and also volunteered in teaching and helping younger designers in the industry.

Additionally, staying up to date on industry trends and being open to learning and adaptation was something I didn't joke with and it contributed much to my success.

What is your advice to product designers wanting to thrive in the industry?

To any designer reading this right now who wants to thrive in the industry, I have few advice for you

1. Develop a strong portfolio: A strong portfolio is essential for showcasing your skills and abilities to potential employers and clients. Make sure to include a diverse range of projects that demonstrate your design process and problem-solving skills.

2. Stay current with industry trends and technologies: Stay

up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies in the product design industry by following industry leaders, attending conferences and events, and participating in online design communities.

3. Build a strong network: Building a strong network of contacts in the industry can be extremely beneficial for finding new opportunities and staying informed about the latest trends and developments.

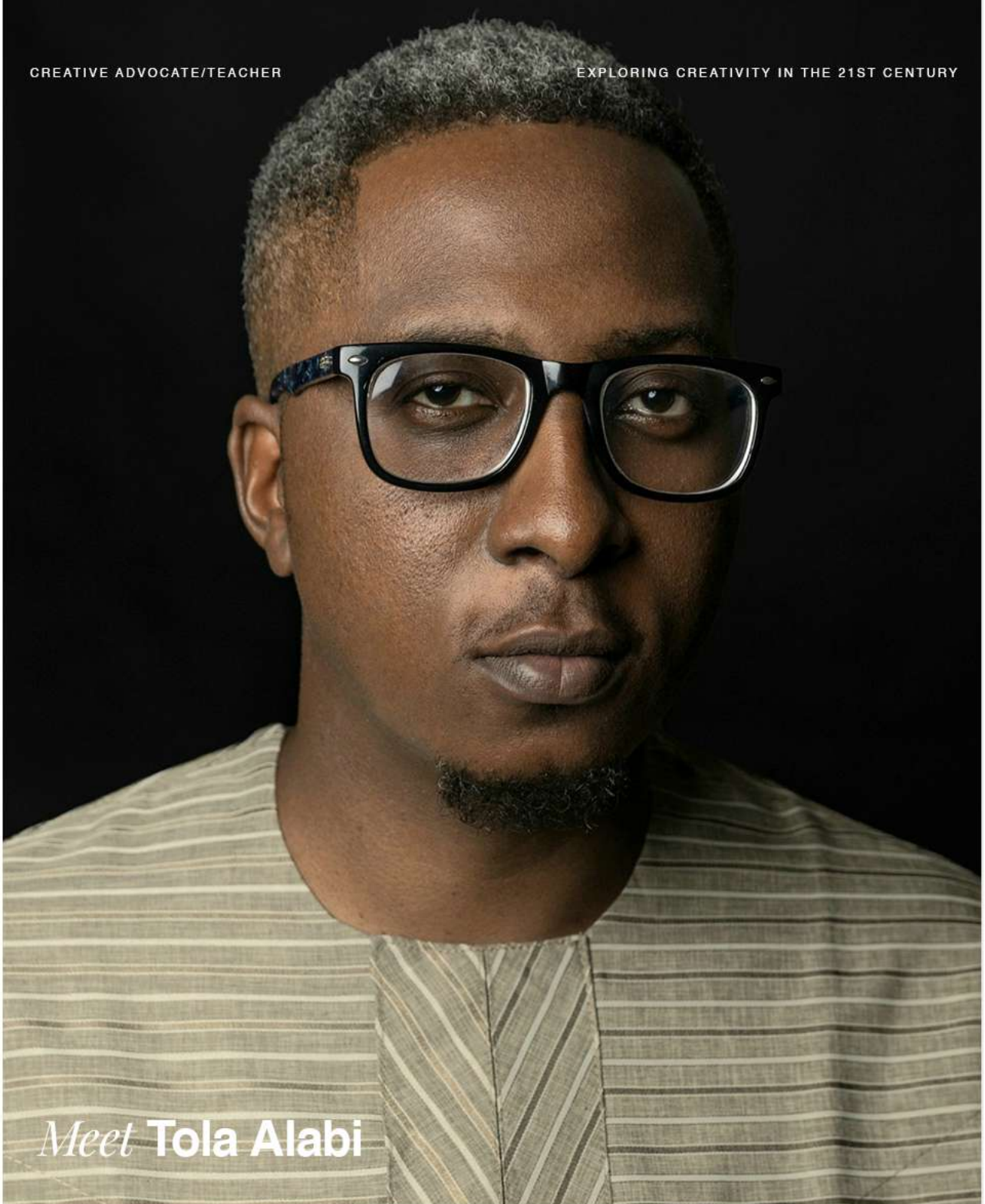
4. Be adaptable and willing to learn: The industry is constantly evolving, so it's important to be adaptable and willing to learn new skills and technologies.

5. Practice and Refine your skills: Practice and refine your skills through side projects, personal projects or internships.

6. Be open to feedback and constructive criticism: Feedback and constructive criticism can help you improve your skills and develop a better understanding of what works and what doesn't.

7. Lastly, be passionate and persistent: The product design industry can be challenging, but if you're passionate about what you do and persistent in your efforts, you will be more likely to succeed.

I wish you well , I believe in you



Meet Tola Alabi

Tola Alabi is a thought leader, with expertise in branding and visual identity design. He is the founder of Tola Alabi Consulting, a branding consultancy based in Abuja, Nigeria.

Tola is widely sought after as a speaker and business consultant. He is considered a veteran in the Nigerian design industry with over 17 years experience consulting and creating amazing brand identity systems for over 100 businesses and organizations.

He has an undergraduate education in Architecture from OAU, ife, Nigeria and a post graduate education in Computer Interactive multimedia design from Niagara College, Canada.

Please give a brief introduction about yourself.

My name is Tola Alabi. I started out as a graphic designer, and I kind of progressed into being a design teacher, now I do what is called "life branding," which is a concept I kind of developed to teach people about life and business as a whole.

What is creativity to you?

For me, creativity is a thought that inspires valuable and unique action. So creativity is a thought that comes to your mind usually while you are playing, while you are in a state of play where you are not constrained by rules or by standards. The thought that comes to your mind inspires an action that people see as unique and valuable. That's what I see as creativity.

What inspired you to choose the field of brand design?

I started out as a graphic designer, so I did everything from logos to flyers to websites to interactive multimedia design. I did everything in animation. I started out doing everything. I was a generalist, but I think after a year or two of design, the number of things that informed me to go into brand design, which is identity design if you call it brand design, was an article I saw on Wikipedia. One day, I was just surfing the internet, and I stumbled on an article on Wikipedia, and it was about a man named Paul Rand. I wasn't reading about Paul Rand; I was looking at IBM. I was carrying out research on an American company called IBM. I went to Wikipedia, and I saw their logo on the Wikipedia page, and under their logo, they had a logo designed by Paul Rand and I was kind of impressed that a company as big as IBM would write the designer's name under their logo just to say this is the person who designed our logo.

So there are different levels to design. A designer can be so influential that a company like this will say, "This is the guy who designed it," and I told myself, "That's the kind of designer I want to be. I want to be the kind of designer who has that much influence in the corporate world. So I found

"...I was a generalist, but I think after a year or two of design, the number of things that informed me to go into brand design, which is identity design if you call it brand design, was an article I saw on Wikipedia."

out about Paul Rand. I started researching and reading about him, and that's what sparked my interest in brand identity design and got me interested in branding. I realized that it was one part of the design that could get me to easily talk with owners of businesses, and that's what I really wanted to do. I wanted to get more into the corporate world and discuss with people that ran businesses. Then I realized that people who run businesses are very interested in their branding. They might not be interested in other areas of design, but when it comes to branding, they are very interested, and that gets you to interact with them. So it was really Paul Rand's influence that got me interested in brand identity design and branding as a whole.

How did you determine your value as a brand designer?

I've not determined yet. Every day, I get to see it more and more. I'll be honest with you: when I started even when I got into branding, I didn't know what my value was. I didn't know so I know, determining my value based on what the client was willing to pay me. For a very long time. I did not understand what my value as a brand identity designer was. I didn't even understand what my impact was. I just knew that I was passionate about this thing, I didn't know what the value was to the client, and that's a big problem that people that go into business solely out of passion have. You just want to do the work, so whatever they pay you, you are just happy during the work, and it is very easy for people to take advantage of you when you are like that. It's a good thing to be passionate, but then it's important to know your value, but I didn't know my value till very long, and I remember it was a particular project that allowed me to see and have a glimpse of my value as a designer. I had been contacted by clients who asked me to do a logo. They were two sisters and they said they wanted to start a company they contacted me and said, they wanted me to do a logo for them and I gave them my rates, and they said that we can't pay this rate, it's too expensive. They said it's just a small logo and a small business, just do it for us, we are just managing and I believed them. Maybe they were not

trying to deceive me, maybe they saw themselves as a small business so I did the logo, and I greatly reduced my rate because I didn't know my value.

So I greatly reduced my rates, and I gave them the logo, and they were happy. About six months later, if not shorter, they called me, and they told me they wanted me to design some other things for them, so they asked me to come to their office. By this time, they had an office. By the time I got to their office, I was on approaching the gates. I saw my logo crested on the gates. Then I drove in and went to the reception. I saw the logo on the reception desk. It was there, there were lights behind it, and a mirror behind it had the frosting of the logo. Then I got to an office, and before I entered the office, on the door, there was a logo frosted on the glass of the door. When I got into the room, there were throw pillows, and on the pillows was the logo. Then I realized that this person did not decorate with anything but the logo I designed for them, and I realized that the logo in itself formed the appearance of the company. They didn't invest in any other thing, just that logo, which was put on everything. When I got to see them, they were like, "You can see what we have done with your logo," and I replied, "Wow! That was when I understood what branding was; the logo was more valuable than I thought. I just thought it was going to be a logo put at the top of the corner of a letterhead or business card. But then, it was used for the gates, at the receptionist desk, for the doors, and throw pillows.

Then I realized that, Tola, what you are giving these people is more valuable than you even realize. Each day I get to realize my value, so it's through interaction and exposure that I get to realize my value. So I realized that a lot of designers are not exposed; they don't have exposure, and that's why they don't know their value. But the more exposed you are, the more you begin to know what your value is.

How do you keep up with the evolving trends in the industry?

Well, personally, for me, I don't keep up with trends. That's the truth. You know the thing about this trend: I feel that if you are doing something, you need to be who you are. You are the trend. You are a trend in itself. So everything we see as trends started with one person who was confident enough to do something the way they believed it should be done, then someone saw it and said, "I like the way this person is doing it; maybe I will start doing mine like that," and then it had this multiplier effect. So you see, for me, I would rather be a trend than follow a trend. I don't even do that consciously, but I would rather be myself and do things the way Tola Alabi would do them than do things the way they are normally done. When I started doing logo design, I was so out of trend that for the first logo I did for my company, I used glow, lightning, and drop shadow. It was the first logo I did for myself; I was like, "It's fair." It was something that looked futuristic. So I put on shadow, dropped light, and everything. It was so shiny, and I put it out there and said, "That's my logo. I remember someone seeing it and saying, "What's that thing"? when I put it on my flyer, and I replied, "That's my logo." He said, "That's not how a logo should look," and I replied, "That's how I want it to look," and I kept that logo. Then I realized that people started coming and saying "I like the way you did your logo; can you do mine the way you did yours"? People started asking for shiny logos, and if you look at my early works, all the logos are shiny. They have all the effects on it. There was a problem with it because it was not fully functional. You get to a stage where the client will want to print and then tell you, "This logo is not printing because it's too complicated. It became a trend, even though it was a flawed trend, because I was confident enough to do it.

After a while, I realized that this was not working. So I didn't become simple because other people were simple; I became simple because I realized that the way I was doing it initially wasn't working. The trend is about being myself; when I believe in something, I just do it a particular way,

and then I go with the flow, and I realize that when people see it, they just have to follow it. So there's an attraction that confidence has that creates trends, but for me, I don't try to focus on trends as a thing.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

The truth is that I believe the creative block is real. First of all, I've come to understand that creative block comes from three things: you don't have enough information on what you are working on, you are not being paid enough, and you are distracted by not having enough resources. So while they are working on a job, they are thinking about whether the credit is about to go out and where do I get money to get another. You can't be creative again with that kind of thing on your mind. So you are not being paid enough to focus on the job. Then the third thing is that you don't have enough time as a designer. This is a critical one. As a designer, you have not asked for enough time, so someone has come to you and asked for a logo, and then they tell you "I want the logo by tomorrow night". You will have creative block because creativity is a journey. So a lot of the time, what people call creative block is truncating a creative journey. So when they don't give enough time for a creative journey, because everybody has a crazy journey. For you, your creative journey to do a logo might take five days. That's how long it takes

you to come to a place of inspiration and expression. For me, my creative journey might last two weeks. That's how long it takes me to do research, get inspired, express myself, or some people, it takes a month, you must know yourself. Most people work with what the client's expectation is. They work with the client's expectation journey and their expectation journey is always very short because they needed the logo yesterday. So they will tell you, "Do this logo, we'll pay you," but give it to us by tonight. It doesn't align with your creative journey.

So you need a client whose expectation journey matches your creative journey, and that's when you would not have a creative block. So whenever I have a creative block, there are three things I question. "Have I asked this client enough questions?" So when I realize that I don't have enough information, I go back to call the client and ask for more information about the business. "Why did you start, who is it for, where are you going, who is your audience?" I ask those questions then. I also ask myself if I have asked enough questions. I ask "Have I charged enough, am I still distracted by my needs? With work, there is the distraction of money here, I need to up my rates so I won't be distracted anymore. Then I'll start thinking if I have asked for enough time. I don't compromise on time, I tell them how

much time it takes if it is two to three weeks, I don't compromise. If your expectation doesn't allow me two to three weeks, then you are not my client. I let them go. So that is what I do when I have a form of creative block, I question the amount of information I have, the amount of money I'm making from it, and also the amount of time I've given myself to be creative in the first place.

What is your advice to creatives who can't move past the passion stage?

Passion is good because it's where creativity is hidden. I will never advise anybody to do something they are not passionate about. Passion is incredible because you know it's the passion that helps us grow. I have a one-year-old son, and I watch him grow. Since he was born, every development has been a passion. When he started to walk, it was out of the passion of wanting to move, so I saw him going from his belly to crawling from crawling to walking, from walking to running from running to trying to climb. All those things are rooted in passion. But passion is wild and needs to be tamed and that's where we must not stay in passion because as I told you earlier if all you have is passion, people will exploit it because passion doesn't allow you to set what the value is. It just allows you to just express yourself. In business, in romance people exploit passion, so people that go into a relationship just like they like or love the person, are the kind of people that they take advantage of. They take advantage of you and you will stay in the relationship. The same thing with business too, "I just love this thing, I can do it, you don't have to pay me". People will take advantage.

"Passion is good because it's where creativity is hidden."

While passion is good for the early stages, you have to go to a place of purpose. The purpose is now what trains passion to say, "We have this passion, but this is how it moves, this is what you have to give to inspire this passion, to express itself," because the truth is that there are demands in life whether you are passionate or not. You'll pay for stuff, but you can't enter public transportation and tell the driver, I'll pay you my passion? No! You pay the fair. You have to pay that money; passion doesn't pay bills, it doesn't unfortunately that's why there needs to be purpose. That's where what is most important is empathy at every single stage. So I believe that for those that are passionate, I always question what level of design they are, and at what level in their design journey they are. Are they in their early stage, or are they in their intermediate state? If they are in their early stage then I just allow them to be passionate, let them discover themselves and let them grow. That's why it is important for us to have mentors. When you have a mentor, the mentor tells you it is time to grow from this passion stage to grow to a point where you are now working strictly from a place of purpose, not just passion.



What are the challenges you've faced so far, and how did you overcome them?

I guess one major challenge that I had and that I'm still happy about is the validation challenge where you know, because the creative industry in Nigeria is still very young, a lot of people do not yet see or know the value of creativity. Because people don't see the value doesn't mean you need to stop expressing it. You need to keep expressing it. It is an expression that people begin to see value in. So one of the biggest challenges I've had is making people understand what I do. My parent, are in their seventies. They still ask me the question "This thing you are doing, what is it, what does it mean"? They don't understand that computer job you are doing and that is hard. I don't blame them because they are coming from a different era. The problem is the world is changing now but when I was coming up, it was those people that don't understand the digital era who were the ones with the money. So how do you earn from somebody who is like my parents' age mate that does understand the value of what you are doing? You are always seeing yourself always pitching and telling them "this is what you can do for your business, this is what can be done for you" but they don't understand it because they didn't come from that era. Unlike now that the younger people are beginning to have that, the financial table is beginning to turn where you have

younger people now owning, having building a lot of financial influence. You can have someone that is 28 years old running a very successful business, he is very exposed and knows the importance of branding. He can pay millions of naira for his branding. You don't need to do too much pitching for him.

Designers have it easy now because there is exposure. When I started, it was a big challenge because if you want to do a logo for someone, you charge ten thousand naira. They will say, "For just this small thing, take five hundred naira." That's what they will tell you, "I don't see it as something I can't hold, I can't smell it, I can't wear it, and you are charging me ten thousand naira". The biggest challenge I had then was the exposure to your clients; the clients then didn't understand the value of what I was doing, but now that has changed. People now know the value of branding thanks to television and the Internet. So it's no longer that much of a challenge, anyway, but for me, it was a big challenge.

What inspired you to be a creative teacher or advocate?

What inspired me to be a creative teacher was the gap; it was the gap that inspired me. I realized the education I had; I realized how privileged I was because I studied architecture at Obafemi Awolowo University, after which I went to

Canada and studied computer interactive multimedia. And then I came back to Nigeria, but when I came back to Nigeria, I took it for granted. I just thought every other person should know all I learnt in Canada, but I now realize that not everybody has the opportunity to go to Canada, especially in the graphic design industry. So it clicked to me that the reason I went to Canada and came back was to give that Canadian experience to the people that can't go because some people will never be able to go. That's how life is, just because of the status of their parents. They just don't have the means to go. So I realized I have that responsibility as somebody who has been given exposure—not to bottle it up, but to express it. I realized that I would be that school, that international schooling experience, for the guy who is in a rural area of Nigeria but loves design and wants to get something close to global exposure. So that's what actually inspired me to be a teacher. I realized that Tola you have this knowledge, you cannot just be using this knowledge to be making money for yourself and getting all the clients because you can't service a quarter of the client.

So that means that if the design is going to improve, then more people in the design industry need to improve, and how can they improve if someone doesn't tell them the fault in what they are doing, and tell them a better way to do it? And you can't think somebody else will do it because you are the one that has the knowledge. So that inspired me to teach and mentor people in creativity because I realized that I'm getting older and people are just coming into the industry. If I don't teach what I know, then the industry that my children will meet will be faulty. So that's how it will come back to affect me if I use it selfishly. So it was the gap I saw in the industry that inspired me to go into teaching.

Where do you see the future of brand design in Nigeria and Africa generally?

If you asked me this question two years ago, in 2020. I would have told you there was a bright future for the act of designing because people can't do it. The average person

cannot do it on their own, so they would always need to hire a designer, but all that changed with the advent of AI, and it's continuing to change. AI is disrupting a lot of things, and to be honest, it is disrupting even the career of design as an action. People look at it as a bad thing; it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's only a bad thing for a designer who has only lived off clicking a mouse. That's why if you study my content, and for people that are part of my logo design class, I don't focus on launching Photoshop, Illustrator, or CorelDraw. I try to focus on the ability to think, research, recommend, and consult, that's very important. That is something AI might not know because what AI is presenting now is not solving a thinking problem, it's solving a doing problem. You still have to think and put in the prompt in AI. That means you need to be able to think but if it's about using the tools we don't need to use the tools anymore. Look at everybody's profile picture now, it is their AI photo and no artist printed that for them with the computer. I think the future of brand design would be left to people who are thinkers, who are creative, and that's what I said initially, that creativity is a thought, it is not an action. It is a thought that inspires action.

Very soon that action will not be done by human beings anymore, it will be done by a computer, but that thought will always be done by human beings. And that's where the future of brand design would be for the thinkers. People who can think of people who can be creative are the people that would have a bright future in branding and brand identity design or any form of design that has to do with corporate branding.

In a world full of creatives, how can a particular creative stand out, be successful, and thrive?

When I started in Nigeria, which was about nineteen years ago, there were a handful of people I will call creatives. In fact, the design industry was barely existing, so it was easy for me to stand out because all you needed to do nineteen years ago was be good. Let your work be good, and people will see it and want to work with you. But now there are so

many good people; so many people are good with design. Sometimes I just look at them—a 19 year old, 18 year old and even a 15 year old, JSS 2 doing incredible stuff with design. They are good. Now, how do you stand out? It cannot be determined by how good you are because people are good now, and not only are people good but AI is even better and faster. So how do you stand out when you are competing with people and machines? The most unique thing about me is me, my story, my passion, my experience, my vulnerability, and my mistakes. If you want to be unique as a designer, stand out. You cannot be doing design solely as a service; you cannot be using creativity solely as a service. It's so easy to get replaced by that. You need to start using creativity as a platform for telling your story, your unique story, and taking people on your journey.

That's why you need to become a storyteller, you need to start embracing everything more personally. Designers don't do personal projects enough, and personal projects are projects that you do to express what's in your mind, what is tugging at your heart, and talk about it. You can talk about what it means to be a female in Nigeria in the design industry. You talk about the pain and the triumphs, talk about the criticism, talk about the glass ceiling, talk about those things. So as you are designing, you also have the medium, it might be a podcast, it might be a YouTube channel where you are

expressing, and that is when you start to build an audience, not a client base, an audience that doesn't pay you but listens to your stuff. As they're listening to you, they're seeing themselves in your story, your expression, and they start to ask, "What does this person do? Ooh, she is a designer; she has become my number one designer because she is more than a designer to me. She's now a personal brand in whom I see myself. That's when you see brands like The Futur paired with a personal brand like Chris Do. To be honest, I can't tell you how many of Chris Do's jobs I've seen as a designer. I don't know their jobs, but they are highly rated in the design industry because they tell their story. The first thing that attracted me to The Future was when I listened to Chris Do's story, and he kept talking about his stories, and his experience with his clients. The experience of being an American Asian person. He talks about everything, so it can't be about how good you are at work anymore, it's about how unique you are as a person. That's what you mix with the work now, and that's when you stand out in the crowded world because there's only one you. You can only stand out when you're being yourself, and you must bring that to your work.

I know people who tell me, I don't like to bring my private life into my work. No, that's a disservice. Maybe if you were born in the 1970s and 1980s, you can do strictly business. The world

doesn't work like that anymore. There are about 80 billion people in the world right now; you need to bring that personal life into the conversation and be vulnerable. The more vulnerable you are in your journey, the more people will feel comfortable with you, and the more they will remember you. So that's how you can stand out as a creative in today's world where there are so many creatives and machines because the machine doesn't have personality, so the machine will always lose out when it comes to empathy and vulnerability over human beings. So if you want to do that, people will just like you as a person and like your story and identify with it.

Which aspect of your field do you think is yet to be tapped into either in Nigeria or Africa?

I was having this conversation with somebody in my mentoring group, and they called me and told me, "Sir, it has been a hard year. I'm not making money, my rent is due, my children are going to school, and I have no money. He was having an anxiety attack because he was calling me and saying, "Sir, we need to talk." I just called him, and he started talking to me." I have two children, I have a wife, and nobody is calling me. It has been a very hard year, business is not good," and I told him to relax. When people tell you they are not making money, especially in the design industry. A lot of time what they're telling you is that clients that want you to come and do design is not coming. So we always look at one channel of expression of design. So when the doing of design dries up, we begin to panic.

"The more vulnerable you are in your journey, the more people will feel comfortable with you, and the more they will remember you.."

That's why we panic a lot when our laptop crashes, or our laptop is stolen. Doing has been blocked, so you feel like I can't make money again as a designer but there are three expressions of design. There is the do, whereby someone hires you to create something, a brochure, a logo, a website, an animation etc., that's doing. And there are so many people inside that container of doing. Everybody faces that line, that line is so long but there are two other lines, and there is the teaching.

There is the teaching, people don't know that once you are able to do something, you can also teach it. It means that you also have the ability to teach somebody. Someone else is also looking at you, and saying "If I could do what she is doing, I will have clients, too". That means you have two sources of income now. If you put yourself out there and say "Who wants to learn how to do this thing"? At least one person will show up. You will be surprised that it can be more than one person. A lot of designers don't know that, if I can do it, I can teach, because a lot of people think that to teach, your expertise needs to be high. No, your expertise does not need to be high, it just needs to be higher than the person coming under you. When I started to learn Adobe Photoshop, the person who taught me could only change the colour of something, and he was my teacher. I was meeting with him every day, he would tell me to trace and change the colour. That was the first thing I learnt as a designer, and the guy who taught me that was the only thing he could do after that; he couldn't do that again, but he was my teacher. He didn't collect money from me, but if he had asked to collect money from me, I would have given it to him because I wanted to learn so much. He wasn't an expert, so after I learnt that, I looked for the next teacher who could do more than that. Even the next teacher who could do more than that could not do everything. So you can always teach. For some people, all they want to learn is the tools in Photoshop, the tools in CorelDraw. That's the first thing they want to learn, and if that's all you know," this is the brush tool, this is the eraser tool, this is the interface, and you teach people that". Do you know you can charge

people for that?

I have a friend who's working with a very big organization, and she's earning a lot of money. But how did she get in there? She started by teaching the owner of the place Microsoft Word and Excel. She was rich but wasn't computer literate and needed someone who would teach her privately, and that's all my friend could do. Microsoft! She taught the woman, and the woman learnt. My friend said, "I can also design," so she brought her to start designing for her charity. From designing, she's now the top person in that organization, and she's spending a lot of money. She started by teaching that small knowledge, some people will say, "Everybody knows how to use Microsoft Word," but some people cannot use it. So people don't explore teaching. If you are not making money from doing, think of teaching. The third thing that people don't explore at all is consulting, where you can give people advice, and this is where you might need way more experience. But you see, even experienced people don't think of consulting, and that's what I have been doing since 2020. I don't click the mouse anymore. I will not forget an experience I had, there was a guy who paid me to just look at his brand guide and just tell him what I thought was wrong, and in the end, you know, because it was my first time consulting for, and stuff, I was wrong. I didn't even charge him, but he was the

one who said “Would you, and would this be enough for you”? And what he was offering me was more than what I've ever charged for a logo design, He even paid me upfront before I even started. The only thing I did was I read their brand guide and say, “Okay, this thing is not okay, change this colour. This colour is not good because of this, use this colour instead, and I showed them other brands that use this. And I said, “If you want to stand out in this industry, look at other people” and stuff like that, and that's all I did.

For the first time, I made money by not clicking a mouse as a designer, just by telling someone what my opinion was. Some people will say “once I stop clicking the mouse, I can't work again”. No, you can always work, but you can work either as you doer, as a teacher or as a consultant. So I use football as an example. There are footballers and our Nigerian footballers fall into this, they play football and once they stop playing they can't do anything again. So twenty years later, you will realize that some will say “this is our ex-footballer, he is sick, he is this, we should raise money for him because all he could do was do. When you go abroad you realize that that guy that used to play for Manchester United, stopped playing but now you see him every Saturday. What is he doing? He is consulting, he's giving his opinion about what the match is like for each player. He goes there every Saturday

talking about it and saying, “Okay, I think this will play this, I think ..” and people tune in to hear him talk. We have other people, who have played and have retired so now they're coaching teams, they're coaching younger people, they are teaching. So there are three aspects to every industry and what I advise designers to do is to explore these three aspects; doing, teaching, and consulting, and you realize that money never dries up. Your relevance will never dry up.

Do you have any other thing you will like to say to other creatives?

The final thing I would say in terms of advice is number one, do what you love, love what you do is very important. It will help you not only to express yourself, but also helps to keep your mental health. You understand when you are doing what you love, you are a happy person. Do what you love, love what you do. Number two is sharing what you do, that you love. A lot of people market, don't focus on marketing, share. What sharing means is showing your work, even with its imperfection. Put it on your WhatsApp, and you say this is my first logo design. Put it out there, let them see, somebody will see this and say “let's encourage her”, and they will hire you. Not everyone that hires you wants you to bring ultimate value, some just want to encourage you, so you do that by sharing. Share your work, share your journey. Don't get too locked down on this marketing thing that let me put it out there so that they can pay me this amount. Share your journey. Number three, and finally do your best work for everybody that you agree to work for, no matter what they are paying you. As long as you agree, they ask, Can you do this and you reply yes. Once you say yes, always deliver value every single time and you would realize that you will have a successful career. Do these three things: do what you love, share what you love, and always give what you love to everybody that you agree to work with and it will help you in your career.



Meet **Bolanle Banwo Osadolo**

Bolanle Banwo Osadolo is a Brand Identity designer/design advocate from Lagos, Nigeria. She helps brands tell compelling stories through creative designs. Much of her work is centered around helping small and medium businesses create strong identities via good communication designs. She is the Founder of The Female Designer Movement, an initiative she launched with a mission to train and equip women with design skill-set and thereby help increase the number of women in the Nigerian Technology ecosystem. She is also the Founder of Geneza Brands, a branding agency based in Lagos and London.

Bolanle was listed as one of the iconic women in Hello Icon Magazine and in Coloured Layer Magazine as one of the leading women in tech. She was selected by the Mandela Washington Fellowship and is an official delegate to the UN. She has been interviewed and featured in several media outlets like the Cambridge University Press, BBC News, Business Day's CEO Magazine, and Women of Rubies among others where she shares her journey as a woman in tech and the work she has been involved in to increase the accessibility of tech skills and opportunities for women and girls in Africa.

In addition to her work in the design industry, Bolanle is a dedicated teacher, currently teaching design at the Geneza School of Design. She can be found on Instagram, @bolanle_banwo, where she occasionally shares her design projects and provides valuable insights into the industry.

Designing For Emotion: Exploring the Impact of Creativity in Design in the 21st Century

The Source: **Geneza Team**

The 21st century has been marked by rapid changes in tech ethics and creativity has emerged as a crucial element and driver of innovation and success in design. In this article, we would explore the impact of creativity in design, how it has shaped the world and our views on design.

Creativity in design is just not about finding new solutions to problems. It's about pushing boundaries and challenging the status quo. It remains the foundation of innovation as it has helped designers think outside the box and come up with fresh new ideas. In today's world, and with the advent of new technologies and changing consumer needs, design needs to be more than just functional and aesthetically pleasing. It needs to be original, unique and capable of meeting the diverse needs of the customer. Creativity has helped designers create solutions that are emotionally resonant and impactful.

Creativity has impacted the way we consume design. With the rise of social media, both consumers and designers are exposed to a

vast world of ideas. It has made design more accessible and available to people from all works and this has made the design community have a more diverse range of voices and perspectives.

Another significant impact of creativity in design is its role in sustainability. Designers have become increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their work on the public and the aid of creativity has come up with ways to develop sustainable solutions and push for positive change.

In conclusion, the impact of creativity in design in the 21st century has been nothing short of inspiring as it has changed the way we view design and proven that it is a strategic tool that can drive innovation and growth. Most importantly it has helped designers push the boundaries of what is possible and create transformative experiences that have a lasting effect on the consumers.

For this reason, we at Geneza School of Design have created a platform to enable individuals to get started on their design journey by providing beginner-friendly courses on design and a community for continuous practice and learning.



Let's Simplify Your Design Journey.

All our courses are beginner friendly.

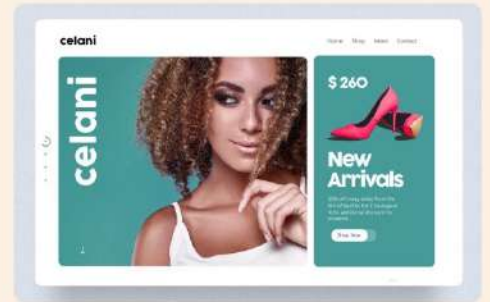
Price

₹29,500

~~₹40,000~~



Graphic Design for Beginners : From Novice to Pro



Introduction to User Interface Design using: Figma



Brand Design: From Conceptualization to Implementation



Canva for businesses: Creating brilliant designs using Canva



Meet **Oladimeji Ajegbile**

Popularly known as The Christian Creative, Oladimeji Ajegbile is one of Africa's most eccentric Creators raising the next generation of independent creators and curators through the delivery of simple and relatable resources deeply rooted in sophisticated digital strategies. With an endorsement from Pexels, Unsplash, Canva and more, Oladimeji continues to reach, engage and serve millions, with a reach of >10M individuals in today's creator economy.

With a background training in architecture, self-taught knowledge in design, and a burning passion for cultivating talents as a creative - Oladimeji continues to find ways to express his ideas as the Founder of UHD Visuals, [a video production company that is deeply connected to producing compelling narratives for innovative startups, tech enterprises and creative entrepreneurs] and the Managing Partner of CreatorSeed, an early-stage venture capital fund built for creators who intend to make a living, an impact and grow professionally in the creator economy.

Oladimeji has degrees and certifications from Bells University of Technology and Adobe in the field of Architecture and Design. He started his career working on renowned building projects as a Junior Architect/Design Software Specialist at DimFal Associates and crafting brand identities for startups within the Tech Ecosystem.

Till date, Oladimeji has mentored a number of communities, some examples being Naija Graphic Designers, Netpreneurs, Limitless Leadership Eversion, PatPro. He has also trained professionals in organisations like RED I For Africa, REDx, Elevate Consortium, and more.

This eccentric creative also enjoys speaking, cycling and visiting exciting places.

Oladimeji Ajegbile, known as The Christian Creative, is an African creator helping to raise the next generation of independent creators and curators. Through digital strategies. With endorsements from Pexels, Unsplash, Canva and more, Oladimeji has a reach of over 10 million individuals in today's creator economy. He has degrees and certifications in architecture and design, and has mentored numerous communities and trained professionals in organizations like RED I For Africa, REDx, and Elevate Consortium. In his free time, Oladimeji enjoys speaking, cycling, and visiting exciting places.



Can you give a brief introduction about yourself?

My name is Oladimeji Ajegbile. Most people know me as that Instagram guy that creates content and stuff, but outside of Instagram and social media, by profession, I'm an architect. I studied architecture at the university and practised for 2 years before I took a break to focus on exploring the creative world or the design world beyond architecture. Right from architectural school, I've been very interested in design because, literally, the same principles that guide architecture also guide design. Right from school, I got involved in creative art design. We're looking at banners, logos, flyers, and anything that talks about advertising and branding in 2011. Over the years, I grew into several different things. I became a brand and identity designer. I started and went full out, and that was the very first step in my freelancing. So I freelanced as a brand and identity designer for a number of years and got involved in human-centred design, which is like a way to not just look at how the design looks now, but how it affects the people. Then it was a human-centred design. Now they call it UIUX because you put people before other things, and while I was doing that, I was also the go-to person in church or any gathering for media works, photography, and videos.

So I became very interested in media as well, and I just decided to pursue all of these parts of myself, I mean, usually, they tell you to focus on one part and roll with it. But then I decided to explore every part possible because I knew there was more to me than just architecture, design, and videos, so I explored every single part. Four years ago, I came to the understanding that I'm a multi-disciplinary creative, so I needed to leverage that gift about myself as a strength and push it out there, and that was when I started active content creation, which has given me visibility today. I'm a jack of all trades, I'm not a master of any, but I'm doing pretty well with literally everything I put my hands on. Currently, I run a media production company called UHD Visuals. What we do is provide video services for brands, businesses, and individuals who want to leverage the benefits of video to scale their businesses or their brands

through video editing, video production, and home setups. You want to create a space for yourself where you can make videos, films, set designs, and all that. So that's what I do for that. And then, on the other hand, I found a way to blend architecture and visual design, which is human-centred design, and I created a company called Virtue.

Basically, what we do is create a bridge between visual design, branding, interior design, and architecture. So you step into a space, and you can literally see the relationship between the design of the space and all the branding elements that go into the space. It's a human-centred design, and you have a first-time experience of everything connecting together, not that somebody does this space; it looks nice, and people who do the branding do nonsense, so a merge of both gives a really new synergy. In my own field, it's called brand environment design. But then, taking it a step further, we do retail design and hospitality design. We also do normal interior design, branding, and identity work. I'm an architect, designer, podcaster, and video creator. I try to do so many things and excel at them.

What is creativity to you?

Creativity is like that ability to be able to think and bring whatever it is you've thought about into existence. "I'm just in the process of being able to think

of something and then do it." So it's like "think" and "do." You can't just think without doing. If I'm explaining it to a three-year-old, that's how I will explain it. Can you think of something? Yes. Can you do it? Yes. That's creativity.

What inspired you to be a creative designer and a content creator?

I think it is that natural, inquisitive nature that I have." If I see anything, I want to know, "How does this thing work?" Why is it like this? I'm going to get to the root of whatever it is. Growing up, I was that child. Usually, we have that kind of child in every family who will break something and try to build it back up. You carry the television and break it down. You carry the radio, tear it apart, and try to see what is inside the back of the TV, even though I got some pretty good beatings. But then, growing up in that kind of situation and being that kind of a person, I could fix it if it went bad and was left. I feel like if people can create things like this, then I can do the same thing too. So, I started researching how they make these things, and then one defining moment for me that I still remember to date is that it sort of changed my whole idea of what being somebody who is good enough to create was. I grew up in Ibadan, and my dad and I were driving through a place called Cocoa House; in those days, it was one of the tallest buildings in West Africa or in Africa. We were driving through, and I was just looking

out the window at that very tall building, and I told my dad that one day I'll be able to do something like this, but he just smiled, and I forgot about it.

I didn't remember until I was about to enter the university and was trying to do exams and choose JAMB first and second choice when he told me, "Do you remember you said you wanted to become an architect?" and I realised that everything I'd done up until that point had actually prepared me for that, including technical drawing and other things, and that was where everything started. It was just that natural inquisitiveness desire—to know how things are being created and what's behind this thing. Why is this sounding like that? Even in music, someone is playing a musical instrument. I want to know, "How are you doing that thing?" It sort of just grew into exploring things. I realized that getting into architecture was limited to just buildings, and my inquisitiveness got tired of buildings alone, so the same inquisitive nature wanted to understand more and realised there was a different world outside of buildings that I could explore. I realised that creativity is actually meant to be a lifestyle, not necessarily a job or a degree kind of thing. You live it every day—the colour of the clothes you wear, the composition of how you arrange your space. Some of us, when we are writing notes in school, arrange them in a very planned manner. It's still part of the entire process. So, I was trying to go deep into all of that, and my very first point of connection was to have conversations with people who are doing things and get into their minds

“Creativity is like that ability to be able to think and bring whatever it is you've thought about into existence.”

about the demise of print, and then I started a podcast. That is how content creation really got started.

During NYSC, I met a couple of people who were from diverse backgrounds, and I was sitting down with them just discussing different topics, and I was like, people have different ideas about different things, and their minds are very vast. So I started recording most of our conversations on my phone then, and when I get back home, I'm going to play it, listen to it again, and jot down some things I can learn from it. And then, after four months of doing that, it just dawned on me that you can actually share this thing with other people. Don't be selfish with the knowledge that you received, because within those 4 months, I grew really fast and really well, based on my conversation with other people. and that was when I realised I thrive better in communities, or where people are around, even though I can learn a lot by myself. So I was like, "You know, maybe I'm going to try to build a community or try to share all these things with people. And then I started on Instagram, trying to build a community. I started sharing my workspace journey, how I entered the empty space, turned it into a good workspace, and all of that. I realised that people were resonating with it, and it became a thing. Then, a month later, I started the podcast, interviewing people from different backgrounds—fashion designers, graphic designers—I mean, anybody. There was even someone who studied economics and then dared into design, so people like that interviewed them, and I sort of saw that there is a connection between your everyday life and creativity and if you can balance both of them. It just sort of works. So that's what really inspired me. That very naturally inquisitive nature makes me want to know why it is like this and why it just became everything.

What is that must-have gadget, tool, or software for a creative designer or content creator?

I don't think a brain is a gadget; I would have said the brain. Then I'll just say two things. One is a normal everyday gadget, and the other is sort of an intellectual thing. Your

phone is literally everything you need. I started with my phone; I just mentioned that I would record conversations on my phone and then go and play it back at home, and by the time I was starting my podcast, I did not have the money to buy a camera, so I was saving up, and I saved up for like 4 months to buy a camera, and after that, I had an emergency, and all the money just went into it. So, will you wait another couple of months to buy a camera? So I just picked up my phone, which was an LGB 20, put it on the window sill in my bedroom, and I made the first video. The first video was terrible, but I didn't mind. I posted it that way and later started learning about how to position, lighting and all of that. So the phone was very instrumental. I'm proud to say that I was on the same phone when I got access to Canva.

My laptop went bad for a period, and I had clients on my neck; there was nothing I could do, so I was searching online that day and I found Canva, and I started designing business cards in 2017 and 2018, then I started designing banners, ebooks, and a couple of other things in Canva, all those kinds of freelancing jobs I used to do with them, and just on my smartphone, I was able to do all that in Canva, and that was where I learned that I actually don't need a laptop to do all of these things and that I can get all the things done. I remember the very first design class I held; I did the

about the demise of print, and then I started a podcast. That is how content creation really got started.

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I don't think a brain is a gadget; I would have said the brain. Then I'll just say two things. One is a normal everyday gadget, and the other is sort of an intellectual thing. Your

phone is literally everything you need. I started with my phone; I just mentioned that I would record conversations on my phone and then go and play it back at home, and by the time I was starting my podcast, I did not have the money to buy a camera, so I was saving up, and I saved up for like 4 months to buy a camera, and after that, I had an emergency, and all the money just went into it. So, will you wait another couple of months to buy a camera? So I just picked up my phone, which was an LGB 20, put it on the window sill in my bedroom, and I made the first video. The first video was terrible, but I didn't mind. I posted it that way and later started learning about how to position, lighting and all of that. So the phone was very instrumental. I'm proud to say that I was on the same phone when I got access to Canva.

My laptop went bad for a period, and I had clients on my neck; there was nothing I could do, so I was searching online that day and I found Canva, and I started designing business cards in 2017 and 2018, then I started designing banners, ebooks, and a couple of other things in Canva, all those kinds of freelancing jobs I used to do with them, and just on my smartphone, I was able to do all that in Canva, and that was where I learned that I actually don't need a laptop to do all of these things and that I can get all the things done. I remember the very first design class I held; I did the

design on my smartphone, and that was what we used for publicity to teach people to learn design, and I mean, it was great, it was interesting, and I just sort of found a way to continue that. That's what added to my consistency as a creative, because if you have to sit down to design something, you know how long it'll take, but then I'm on the bus in traffic, right on my phone, on Canva, and I'll put together a draft, design it, share it, and the design is live within 30 minutes.

People are already commenting on it and saying "This is nice". So, the smartphone is a go-to for recording audio and making videos, I could literally place the phone anywhere and make a video; the only issue then was sound. But then, after a while, I just got another microphone. Your phone is a very good enabler to get started. And then the second thing is a can-do attitude. Many people think I have to get a camera. I have to get this, I have to get that. We don't necessarily need those things. A creative mind is able to operate, create things, or make the best of whatever situation you are in. You know, when I was defining creativity before, I said, "If you can think and do, that's creativity." But then the act of being creative means you can use whatever means, whatever avenue, and whatever resources are available to still get the best result. You will see artists who would pick just one colour and create a monochrome

artwork that would be mind-blowing from the same colour. All they're doing is changing the stroke of the brush, the way it is being arranged, the intensity of application, and all that, and that's the only thing they have access to. People use charcoal to make art. So whatever you have at your disposal, if you can use it and manage it well to get the best results, you are creative. That's proof of creativity, as you said. It's about the mind behind it. So if you have that kind of attitude of "I can do this no matter what resources you have," you still get the results you need. A smartphone, or whatever it is you have available right now, and the attitude to want to do.

Which aspect of your field do you think is yet to be tapped into in Nigeria or Africa?

I think that this multipotentiality aspect, which is the same thing, as being a jack of all trades, is something that people see as a terrible thing, and that versatility allows you to go places. I mean, I have spoken at design and creator conferences. I've been invited to events that, if I'm just a designer, I won't be able to get into those places, if I'm just a content creator. I've spoken about business events. I've facilitated companies to train about podcasting, big companies. There are a lot of places I've been able to get access to, but if I'm doing just one thing, I wouldn't get access to any of them because I will only be fixed to that single space and nothing else. So I feel like many people are hiding their skills and their versatility behind a desire to niche down, which is not a bad thing. If there is much to you as a person, then why suppress it? When we were younger, when we were kids, we did everything. You are in sports, you are in a music group, you are in everything, and then you grow up, and then you just scatter it. It's just a mindset thing because I've never been employed from 9 to 5. I tried to do one, even though it was like on-and-off freelancing or contract staff. But then, I just knew that this life wasn't mine because if I stay fixed in one place, I'm going to go crazy only God knows. So I feel like it hasn't been tapped into yet, and I feel like independent creators are the future of work because the tech ecosystem is

This doesn't mean you should stick with just one video every month for the rest of your life. No. That means you're being complacent with whatever it is you're creating. So you still grow, and then you grow after you've done it. maybe for like three months, and you can see that, oh, I'm actually doing better. You can start doing two every month and simplify the process of creating them. And then, after a while, you can say, "Oh, I can make it one week, and then you've simplified it a little bit better." So basically, learning to simplify the process without losing the quality of the same thing. It helps you become terrific.

Consistency is more about the track record you have than necessarily what you produce; it's more about the process of achieving these things. I can make four videos in a day, and the quality will still be the same and they will not look bad. I'm going to do the best for every single video, not because I want to be doing four videos, but because I've learnt how to simplify a process and how to create the same quality in a repetitive manner, like every time you see it you just wonder, "How does this guy do this thing?" It's not magic. It's just growing over time. I mean, I started with creating just one Instagram post every week—all these posts with quotes or bible verses, things like that. That was what I used to start on Instagram, and then after a couple of weeks, I started doing two every week



. And then I added a new style instead of just quotes, I'll probably do voiceovers with subtitles on the screen, and then, later on, it became a podcast. From the podcast, I started sharing daily vlogs, where I would, you know, do a speed video of me walking every single day, and I'd put this video on Instagram at the end of the day. And gradually, I started posting two to three times a day. So I started little by little, and I got good in a way to simplify and streamlining but then the quality still remains the same or even improves. That's why I don't see consistency as you're posting every day, and the way you are posting is just not it, but then you do what feels convenient to you and you grow in the process with time you get better.

So I think that is the main one I want to just correct. But then, if I would add an additional one to this. I would say the whole idea of comparison and overnight success, nobody is competing with anybody. Even the people you are competing with don't know you are competing with them. They're just doing their own thing and living their life. So follow your own path, because somebody is having one million subscribers and you people started at the same time, don't think of it that way. You might be in the same in different fields and might have access to different things. Even if the person started before you or after you, and has grown, don't let that be your concern. Your concern should be, what you have to create and do the best you can and push it out there. I mean since 2019 my account remained like maybe 1,200 to 1,300 for a year, all through. It grew from 600 to like 1,200 to 1,300 and I was pushing out content every single day, and I had over 800 content on Instagram at the end of 2019. In 2020, the same thing will continue, it may be increased to like 3,000 and I can't remember what month it was in 2,019, maybe August. I made a video that I didn't want to even make. I felt like people would not like the video. And then I just published the video. I went into my room and came back after like an hour. I realised that the video had gotten like 10k views. "What's going on?", and then my account hit about 10,000 in, like four to five days and I have about 1,000 posts on Instagram. In 2021 things started going still and then I made a couple of funny videos, all those dancing ones, and then my account reached about 30k. And then 2022 came, and it continued the same way, it grew to about 35, 34, 37 38, and then in September, I made an introverted video, and the account just went from 30 to 120 in like twenty days. So you can see that it's not about the contents but it is about the consistency, how long you can keep doing it without getting tired. Sometimes it's not fun honestly, it gets tiring. But then, because I just got to share that part of myself and let people just learn, I didn't mind whether the numbers were increasing or not. I mean this past month, all through December I had over 5,000 people unfollow me and my account dropped from 127 to like 124, and I mean I

really didn't care. I just kept pushing out the videos, and I was checking this morning. A video went viral some days ago, and now the account has gone back to 127. So I mean, it is just figures. Focus on the people that you are serving that make up the numbers, and you would sort of be fine. So don't focus on the numbers for the things you have to share, and the people involved. I don't know if you've noticed it before, but if you comment on my post, I'll respond, maybe like with two or three comments and even mention your name sometimes, because I want to connect with the person I'm talking to, not just a number. So yeah, 2 things: the comparison with the past and looking at numbers, and then consistency. These two things need to be corrected for creators if they want to grow and get the best impact from whatever they're doing.

What are your key principles of work and operation?

One guiding principle, that sort of puts everything together and makes it solid is that I don't separate my faith or my work with God from my work, they go together. I mean, if you check my bio, you will always see Christian creative, and that was intentional because people need to be able to know that whatever this guy is doing is not coming from him, I'm inspired by the things I learn from God every day. God is the ultimate creator. So that's like one thing that guides everything I do because most of my ideas that are

actually solid come from either studying the Bible or meditating on something, and the idea just pops. Some people will say ideas come in the bathroom, when you are in the loo or when you are walking. It is usually most of the time when I'm opening the Bible. I'm like, "Aha, this thing makes sense," then push it back to one side, write it down, and then continue to study. And then, after I'm done, I go back and sort of add flesh to whatever it is I got in that place, so that really guides me a lot because I can't separate it. They work together. If I can't think about what brought me into existence or how I became who I am, then I don't think I will be able to create things. So that's like the foundational principle for me. But then others are, respecting people and their ideas.

I don't trivialise anything anybody tells me that is intellectual or idea-driven because each of us has this uniqueness about ourselves, and if I don't see that in you, I feel like I am belittling whatever it is that you have to do. I think I already shared it before everything started. Everything started from conversations with people, like when this person shared it with me, and I'm learning from it, Let me share it with others, and that's how everything started. So I see that people are the ones who make things really interesting for others. All these ideas we have that we share in all this content didn't originate from you per se. There is nothing new under the

sun, so knowing that just gives me the freedom to learn from anybody, no matter what background you are from or who you are, as long as I can learn something from you. I'm telling you I mean, I'm all good. That is something that also guides me to be able to draw and get better at my work. I'm talking to a client, I mean, sometimes you need to draw boundaries between your clients, but then the relationship between me and my clients is usually a sort of friendship, even with their boundaries in such a way that we can share things outside of work and not bridge work contracts and still be able to get the best results. Imagine it's just work, work, work, and one of those days I'm not feeling too well and I have to deliver something, and the client is asking me, and I reply, I'm so sorry, I'm really sick." The person understands. But if it just works, works, works, and everything is rigid, the person won't understand. It is one of those things that guides, respects, and honours people because you never know when it will come back to you in some sort of favour. The last thing now is understanding that life is in phases. It's in stages, because I'm doing things this way doesn't mean I'm going to remain that way forever.

This morning, I was just thinking last night that, you know, I'm tired of this Instagram checkers kind of feed, and I'm going to change it even though I've been doing it like that for like two years. I'm going to change it. I'm tired of it, and I've changed it. I'm excited to see what that would become. So life is in different stages, things change, and things

"I don't trivialise anything anybody tells me that is intellectual or idea-driven because each of us has this uniqueness about ourselves, and if I don't see that in you, I feel like I am belittling whatever it is that you have to do."

happen. Let's go with the flow. You know that I have this newsletter that I write every day called "Figuring Life Out with Dim, and the acronym for that is FLO. So just flow with things, you will figure it out as you go. Don't be all rigid and say it must be done this certain way. Now the flexibility allows you to learn more, learn better, and explore more. So those three things—there are a lot more—are very foundational for me. If I keep feeling like things have to be a certain way before they can happen, it is just going to get boring eventually. So be flexible and explore.

What are the challenges you've faced so far, and how did you overcome them?

This is a broad one. So the first is support. So in this part of the world, any creative quest or endeavour doesn't seem to be a good one. We live in this area where lazy artists are a prevalent thought. Everybody thinks, anybody who is trying to get into art, is wasting their life. So getting started, was very hard because how do you open your mouth to parents who have paid your tuition, your school from university to Master's degree, and all of that to study architecture for six years, and then you say, I want to be doing content. It was then I got to understand, I found other persons like me who were in the same space, who had the same experiences and by just sharing my story, they resonated with it. Then we started cross-pollinating ideas, we found the community, and we built on that. So I feel like early on, the support wasn't there because getting started as a designer, I didn't really have a lot of Nigerians teaching tutorials on Youtube, or on all these platforms in 2011. There was nobody making tutorials in Nigeria; it was just people like Roberto Blake on Youtube, and a couple of other people. People who do Photoshop tutorials. So there wasn't really a good place to learn, because the system over there in the US is different from Nigeria. So learning was hard, and I had to go through the process of doing it myself, learning myself, practising, going to Pinterest to look for designs, and reproducing them to just learn the basics. We didn't have that community.

So getting started, that's what I faced, and I think now the issue with the same support thing is that people think the moment you figure it out that this is what I want to do, everybody will come and be behind you. No, you will be lonely at the beginning. It might just be you who has the ideas, just endure over time, and it gets better. You'll find your community or tribe. They'll rally around you, and things will get better. I mean, the moment I switched from architecture to design and creativity, I lost all my followers and people who cared about architecture who were following me. So it was like starting from scratch. And then the next thing is the limitations—the natural, everyday limitations of being in Nigeria. How you earn, electricity—I mean, there are a lot of them, but with the Nigerian factors, what's key is to know that your skills and your talent help you on a global scale. So don't shortchange yourself. I mean, the very first time I got paid in dollars, it was like, "Oh, my God! I have arrived! It was just \$50, but I felt like, "Oh, my goodness! because when I convert it to naira, wow, somebody's paying me this for a logo design. Well, I saw an opportunity there when I was talking about respecting people's opinions and honouring your clients. The person who paid me just told me, "You know you have some potential." Why not? Let's work together. I mean a place where he's in Canada and I'm in a place where people require services like this, so I will get you more jobs like

this and tell me what you want to earn, and I'll put my own charges on top of it, and you get paid your own normal fee, no issues there, and I told the person, \$200 and he was like "That's too small, Do you know how much this person wants to charge normal people"? So he told me to really think about it, do my research, check online about how much freelancers charge in dollars, and all of that, and I was able to get the actual fee. I was like, "Oh wow, that's almost ten times." So I told the person, and he was like, "Now that you're talking, don't worry, I'm going to add an extra \$500 on top of it."

Eventually, after like TWO years of me talking to him later, he was like, "What I was charging, he was charging three times for those people. So he didn't have a problem paying me. Don't shortchange yourself, and don't think small in this regard by saying, "I'm limited to Nigeria" and all of that. Your skills can actually take you to different places. I mean, I've worked with people from all over the world, and as long as you have the skills and are confident enough to request what you're worth, they don't have a problem paying you.

What is your advice to creatives wanting to thrive in the industry?

"Don't try to compete with the people you should be learning from." You are getting into a space identified with top guns and understudying them, learning from them. Don't go into their

DM asking for mentorship, from a distance; instead, consume everything they are pouring out. Now, this is something you should understand every person in the space and industry who has sort of made a name for themselves is deciding to share with you what they know. Whatever it is that they are sharing with you, these things are valuable, and they are gold, because these are things that they have learned over the years, and they are giving them out on a platter. So you have not effectively consumed that, and now you're going to ask to be a mentee. That's not such a good approach, so exclusivity is not a thing anymore because knowledge is everywhere.



So I would say, "Let me give you a practical example of what I did when I started content creation.". So I knew that there are people who have started before me and set a standard in the industry. So what did I do? I went to research all of them. I went back to their first set of posts. I mean, imagine going through over 300 posts on Youtube, over a thousand videos, or a thousand episodes of a podcast. So just kind of listen to the beginning of these things. You know, I studied Gary V, Madievella, Joe Rujan, Tyler Storman, and a couple of other people; let me know

how it started. I realised that, Oh, this is Madievella, a Netflix documentary personnel award winner. He used to be a filmmaker; he studied filmmaking in school, and I studied architecture, and I want to be competing with this guy. Come on! What's wrong with you? So, knowing where they started from allowed me to know where I fell and my level, right?

There's no comparison here. You learn from these people, and then from him, I learned how to create minimalist, high-quality videos from Joe Rogan, how to interact with your audience and your guest, and from Gary V, consistency and being bold, Tyler Storman, making quality videos, making the best of what you have. At that moment, he started making videos with his iPhone 6. So all of these people, I just learnt things about them and then brought everything together, and told myself, "You know what these people are good at? That is what they do. They have their faults, too, but then I looked at their strengths, learnt from their faults, and applied them to what I was doing; it became a thing for me. It was successful to a great extent, so I mean, it would have been a weird thing to be competing with somebody else who started like three years before me or somebody who has recorded one thousand episodes of a show, you know. So don't compete with people you should be learning from, and all of these people, if they are really good in the industry, it means that you can find resources about them everywhere. So interviews they've done before, articles they have written before, whatever it is that they put out as a body of work, go and consume those things, because everything about them they are principles, the things that guide their life, how they started. Everything is in those things, and you can literally learn from all of them.

So if you've not done that and you are asking to be a mentee then you're getting it all wrong, because if I'm sharing my experiences and my everything about me every single day. and I've shared over two thousand posts. It should give you a clue that if you go and really read

all these things that these guys have been talking about, you will literally learn how he does his things. That is how I learned and I feel like that is one of the fastest ways to learn because that person is standing, and I'm like, "Oh, nice! Let me start trying and not copying, learning from this person, and an interesting bit of it is that this is the same person I learned from three to four years ago, and we got to a time where we collaborated on things together, people that started way before me, and now in the industry, it seems like, oh, there is no competition. I feel like I can work with them, and we can do things together. We can all stand on the same stage, and despite that, we can learn from others. I've been able to grow myself to become somebody who can also be in the same room with them and still be able to deliver. I mean, sometimes they recognize my work and are like, "This guy is good; well done." and all of that. So all of that won't have happened if I'm sort of feeding under them. They've put out things, studied these things, and you see yourself grow exponentially. So it's just one thing, a creative person, you want to thrive in this space. You have the skills you've learned, but when it comes to growing, don't go and compete with people you should be learning from. It's a very weird trap to just fall into.

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Exploring Creativity in the 21st Century

By **Designers Hub**

The 21st century has been marked by technological advances that have never been seen before, changing social values, and more people traveling around the world. Changes like these have had a big effect on how we live, work, and make things. In this situation, being creative is more important than ever. Being able to come up with new and original ideas has become an important skill in many fields, from business and technology to the arts and humanities.

At the same time, the creative process itself has changed. In the past, creativity was often seen as something that only a small number of people had. Recent research, on the other hand, has shown that creativity is a skill that can be learned and improved over time. Because of this change in point of view, schools and workplaces are now paying more attention to creativity.

Design thinking is one way to boost creativity that has become more popular in recent

years. Design thinking is a way to solve problems that puts people first and focuses on empathy, experimentation, and iteration. It involves finding a problem or opportunity, coming up with ideas, making a prototype, testing it, and making changes to the solution based on what people say. Design thinking has been used in many different fields, such as technology, healthcare, and education, to come up with new ways to solve difficult problems. Empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping and testing are different aspects of Design Thinking.

Empathy is one of the most important parts of the design thinking process. Having empathy means putting yourself in someone else's shoes to understand their needs, wants, and problems. This method can be used to be more creative by trying to figure out what the audience or user needs and wants. By putting themselves in the shoes of the user, designers can make solutions that work better and have more meaning.

Experimenting and trying again and again are also important parts of design thinking. Instead of trying to

come up with the best solution right away, designers are told to come up with a lot of ideas and then test them with prototypes and feedback. This method allows for quick changes and improvements, which can lead to better and more creative solutions.

Collaboration is also an important part of creativity in the 21st century. As the world gets smaller and more people work from home, it's more important than ever to work together. Creativity is no longer the sole domain of a single genius. Instead, it is now a group effort that uses the strengths and points of view of many different people and teams.

Design thinking stresses the importance of cross-disciplinary teams as a way to encourage people to work together. By getting people with different backgrounds and areas of expertise to work together, designers can come up with more creative solutions that take into account a wider range of points of view.

Lastly, to be creative in the 21st century, you have to be willing to take risks and be okay with failing. In a world that changes quickly, you can't rely on what worked in the past or play it safe. Instead, creativity comes from being willing to try new things, make mistakes, and learn from them. By accepting that failure is an important part of the creative process, designers can become more flexible and better at dealing with change.

In conclusion, exploring creativity in the 21st century requires a design-centered approach that focuses on empathy, experimentation, collaboration, and a willingness to take risks and accept failure. By following these rules, designers can come up with new ways to solve difficult problems and make the world a better place.



Meet Itabiyi Oluwatoniloba

Itabiyi Oluwatoniloba Aka The media girl is a content creator, social media manager, influencer, and community manager with over 5 years of experience in Marketing.

The 26 year old graduated from Covenant University with a bachelor's degree in mass communication. She runs a community page on Instagram called The Media Girl and is known for her hilarious, witty, and relatable content. She is passionate about telling stories about lifestyle experiences such as money, relationships, love, sex, and living the soft life.

Toni enjoys working as a marketing professional, as she holds a certificate in CIM (Applied Marketing from Simon Page). She has worked with many brands, creating strategies and managing their social media pages.

The Media Girl enjoys the soft life as she enjoys dancing, swimming, eating, hanging out with friends, and creating content. She also loves to inspire women to be self-aware, confident, hard-working, and attractive.

What does creativity mean to you?

When I hear the word "creativity," what comes to mind is "gifted" and "talented." When I meet or see creative people, I see people who have super powers. people who can create anything with their minds, hands, mouth, or bodies. Everyone, in my opinion, is creative. You just have to unlock that side of yourself, and it requires patience. People who have discovered their creative side don't know the power they hold. They can be anything and anyone they want if they set their minds to it.

What inspired you to be a content creator?

Omo! I can never forget the day I started creating content. It was triggered by the time I was unemployed. I started creating content on May 6, 2020. That period was when COVI-19 began fully, and the organization I was working with was behind on its salaries. I just packed my remaining dignity into my purse and resigned. When I resigned, I didn't have another source of income or anything else to do.

One thing was certain, though: I knew there was no way in the world that I would be idle. I mean, I'm a pack of talent; there's nothing I cannot do if I set my mind to it. I can sing, dance, make hair, and write, so I decided to pick one skill, which was writing. I created a blog and started writing erotic stories, and from there I started working on growing my Twitter page. Growing my Twitter page was a bit stressful, so I dropped it and focused on creating on Instagram.

I spoke to my mentor and told him my plans of becoming a content creator on Instagram; he gave his blessings and helped kick-start the journey. The rest, as they say, is history!

How did you determine your value as a content creator?

First of all, being a creator isn't easy. It's a lot of work. My time, effort, and ideas are gold. Aside from being a creator, I know how valuable I am as a person. My journey, lessons,

“If you want to succeed as a creative in the field, you must embrace change...”

and qualifications are A1. So I'm aware that I'm a force to be reckoned with.

Also, I put out great pieces; I see my engagements, reach, and community. This gives me assurance that I'm doing something great.

How do you deal with creative blocks?

Honestly, creative blocks are the ghetto. When I have them, I just relax, watch a movie, or watch YouTube Tick-Tock videos for inspiration. I check Google and some nice websites to give me ideas and references for an idea or project I'm working on or sometimes I decide to wash plates.

How do you keep up with evolving trends in the industry?

If you want to succeed as a creative in the field, you must embrace change and discover a subtle approach to

incorporate trends into your content. I said subtly because you still have to own the content and try to make your content stand out from the rest.

What are the challenges faced so far and how did you overcome them?

So far, I'd say the biggest challenge I've faced is timing. I still have a 9-to-5, and with that, I haven't been able to maximize my content prowess. There are so many content formats I'd like to experiment with, but I don't have the time. I really love marketing as well as creating. But I know that eventually I'll have to make a decision about what works best for me in the future.

Another challenge will be getting my content out there. you know. picked by viral blogs and all. I used to wish for the days when people like Yabaleft or Tundeednut would pick up my content and amplify it on their pages. But then I realized I could not keep waiting for that magical day, so I decided to start promoting my content, running ads, and doing what little I could.

I've gotten to the point where I just want to create and not worry about whether my work will go viral or not. I know I do well by creating master pieces every time. My consistency will speak louder in the long run.

How do you ensure productivity while working on various projects?

I have good time management skills. I

can multitask alot. especially if it's bringing in funds. productivity will show by force. Lol

What do you think is the future of content creation?

The future of content creation? Hmm, honestly, I really can't say. Content creation will keep on happening; the only thing that might change is the format or tool through which the content will be amplified. I see video content thriving more and more compared to others. For tools, I'll say AI might be taking over, which might be a good or bad thing. I see it as a good thing for writers like me; we might be lucky enough to get a tool to turn all our ideas into a full-blown strategy. It will be mad. I can be lazy sometimes, so I will really love a tool like that.

In a world full of creatives, how are you able to stand out and be successful?

Mehnn... I just do my thing. I don't see anyone as a competitor. I have my goals, such as reaching a particular follower count or community size, and I work towards them because, as a creator, you might easily get carried away by another person's progress.

I do me, I focus on me, and I mind my business. There can be only one Toni, and I will show the world how awesome I am. It might take 5 years or 10 years, but it will go down in history that there was this lady who just knew how to get people hooked.

What is your advice to content creators wanting to thrive in the industry?

Want to thrive in this industry? Keep doing what you're doing. Keep evolving; keep learning; keep growing. There's no manual for this thing. don't rush. All the creatives today with over 50-200k followers worked hard for it. They didn't get there in one year, or even two years. It's a process. Enjoy the journey so you can tell stories. I'm very big on growth. I'm still growing. Never give up and never compare yourself to other creators. never ever... own your journey, there's only on YOU.



Meet **Miracle Michael**

Miracle Michael is a creative entrepreneur and business experience designer with expertise in visual design and branding. He has over a decade experience in both fields and have also consulted and created winning brand identity systems and programs for both local and global brands including the likes of BAT, Cars45, Daytona 24/7, Rural Farmers Hub amongst many other brands.

He is also the host and founder of DeZign Series, an African design community for young budding creatives with the sole purpose to provide direction and clarity to succeed and make impact. Before founding Inkandcodes, he was also a direct-sales veteran with over a decade experience and has facilitated trainings for key direct-sales brands from Asia, America and Africa on peak performance, customer service, personal effectiveness, leadership, team building and business ethics. He is a strong believer in the universal principles of work, service and servant-leadership.

Can you give us a brief introduction about yourself?

My name is Miracle Michael. I'm a designer and also an entrepreneur. I've been in the design space for over a decade and I currently manage a brand I founded which is a creative agency, Inkandcodes. I love to support brands with solutions that inspire brand growth and also make the world better.

What is creativity to you?

I think the source of creativity is God. I will make reference to someone's words, he is someone who I respect in the industry, Chris Doe. He said God is a designer and it is a statement I have adopted. God is the mastermind of whatever it is we think we can create. The world itself is his creation. When we look at animals, plants and around, there is creativity. Creativity is an expression of the person of God through man. We are continuing the process he started from the beginning. Creativity comes in different forms, from using your hands to your mind. The brain house of creativity is the mind. You can't create if your mind is not functioning. That is where creativity begins to spill into other things.

What inspired you to be a creative designer?

At first, I discovered that it's something that seems to be genetic. When I was growing up I remember vividly my cousin way back then when we come back for Christmas, they do a lot of

drawing, he and his younger brother. So for me, I admired their work because it was really amazing with the blue bic pen. They use that to do a lot of sketches, and it's so perfect, and I later found out that I could do the same. Back in high school, I got to help my classmates do their biology assignments, the reproductive systems and the amphibians, all those drawings and I started discovering that something actually exists in me. I'm actually quite unique but at that point, I couldn't say how the coming years of my life will turn out. But I knew actually, that I love what I do. As the days go by, I try to improve what I was doing, and I had the opportunity to grow up in a family where my dad pushed me. I never loved to use the computer, he had a school which was a computer school way back then and I could remember him telling us to go learn from the tutors but I was quite laid back doing that. But one day came and I choose to try that out, and it was actually a very interesting experience for me. It was the adventure that inspired me, and the ability to become better. So, it was just a journey to get better at what I already knew was resident in me. The journey started evolving, and we are here today.

What is the must-have gadget or tool and software for creative designers?

If you're a graphic designer, you being a designer, the tools are actually channels of expression. They are not the design itself, they are not what makes you a good designer. You being a designer starts from your person. What do you think? because you are expressing your thoughts through various tools. I've not really been on the design side of things for a while, I've been more on the talent leadership operational side of things, building structures. Way back, I started with CorelDraw 9 and then moved to 10. Today I am hearing 20, that's how far I started. For designers, the first thing is to look at what works for them and how best they can express themselves and solve problems. You may be using the best Adobe software but you are not solving a problem. The first thing that should drive you is problem-solving. How are you solving problems for your

clients? How are you making the world better? How are you changing society? Then we can talk about tools. Talking about standard practice, the Adobe suite seems to be what is up there. For most of the work I've done, I used CorelDraw and it has worked for me. When I give full brand guidelines, the software used is not asked. You are already seeing a solution to a problem. At that point, the software doesn't matter. That is what is relevant to me. For instance, if I'm a real live painter, and I do all the paintings on canvas. People won't ask what brush was used but praise the output.

Which aspect of your field do you think is yet to be tapped in Nigeria or Africa?

The industry is actually evolving, but we have not gotten to some stages. For instance, in Dubai, when you look at what's happening over there and what's happening here, it's clear to you that a lot is yet to happen in Africa, and that's an opportunity. So that is why creativity is very fast and based on the way you think. That's why I said everything starts in the mind. Our ability to think, our ability to see things from several perspectives, is still required in this part of the world. Many years ago, women were not really involved much in the graphic design space, but today that has changed. I knew when Bolanle Banwo started the female design movement, and you see what has happened—she's no longer the only one doing it. There are lots of people advocating for this.

You see a lot of young ladies coming into the space and doing things. So I think it's the way we use our minds—the way we imagine things. Graphic designers are imaginers. We have to be imaginative in our thinking. You have to see things that don't exist. We need to bring design leadership into the political space. We need to begin to see that countries are actually designed. It's not about flyer designs, but how do you design a society? How do you influence people to act in a certain way as a designer? Is it possible that within the cabinet of the President, there is a chief designer who sits down and is part of several cabinet

meetings on designing the nation? I watched a movie about the Japanese recently, and I could see how detailed they were in every single thing they used. The way they speak and the way they uphold their culture is design thinking. The culture has existed for years, and they ensure to pass it down to future generations. That is what we should begin to look at in Africa. How do we begin to design who we are? How do we begin to reconstruct the influence of colonialism? How do we uphold our identity and integrate it into the very core of our society? How do we design our values? During the World Cup, there was trash everywhere, and the Japanese picked up trash bags and started picking up every piece of trash on the floor. That is a culture that has been designed.

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Culture is expressed in many ways, from strategy to visual. In Nigeria, the system is in disarray, and it is not difficult to fix the nation. We need to see ourselves as people who shape society. I think that is where we should be headed, just like in Dubai, where they don't do things anyhow. They have a culture. It is the people you see expressed in the architectural strength that you see all over the United Arab Emirates.

Which misconception would you like to change about the creative industry generally?

It is a misconception that being a creative leader makes others little or makes the growing ones voiceless. This is why I respect Tola Alabi. There are a lot of creative designers, but he is a very exceptional person. I saw someone who understands the power of selflessness and giving. I saw someone who understands the

ins and outs of every single action that you take. He is a seed that can germinate to become a forest. It is that humility that I actually love about him. So when you grow, your responsibility expands; there's no doubt about it. Most times, you may not be able to have that opportunity or have the time to be able to coordinate every response to every single person around you, but when something becomes the norm, it becomes a culture. So it's difficult for most creatives who have actually succeeded to allow the young ones to have access to them. That's my point, and I think that needs to change because you cannot always sit there forever. When you have the opportunity to sit there, try as much as possible to help the ones who need help. We have millions of designers who are looking for clarity, looking for direction and want to understand exactly what their purpose should be. It could just be a single word that you share that can transform that. So I think that's what I hope to see evolve in the industry.

What are your key principles of work and operation?

It could be in two parts: my personal life and being a leader of a team in the business. My key principles are structured around my core values. So it is my value system that determines what forms my principle philosophy. I believe in dedication. I believe in dedicating my time to things that are tied to my vision and mission as a person. I believe in sharing. I believe that people can actually be better if you give them the opportunity to. Something happened recently in our organization. We hired fresh creatives, so they joined our team, and one of them is a lady. When the clients we were working with came to our official onboarding session to introduce our new designers. The man was shocked. He said

he has worked for this brand for so many years with this brand and he has never seen a lady or worked with a lady designer. We said “Well, we are changing that norm, we are working with one” and he was laid back. And truly she gave us reasons why we shouldn't take her, we already sent a mail that she didn't qualify and she can't join our team but we called her and she was surprised. I told her from all indications, you shouldn't be on this team, but we believe in you. We want you to prove us right, we don't want to judge by a book. We believed she could be who we wanted her to be. Honesty is important, as is being true to your team and yourself. I believe these are principles that drive what I do.

What does a perfect day look like to you?

I know what the opposite looks like, that is a day that is not perfect. All days will not be perfect. I always try as much as possible to schedule my day. My day begins at 2 a.m. on some days and at 4 a.m. on others. Some other days, it starts at 8 a.m. A perfect day for me is the day I have my to-do list checked. When I go back to look at it, everything is checked. It tells me that I have achieved something and am doing well. It tells me you say you will do this and you did it. That is what it does to me, and it is my perfect work day. It pumps my juice even more.

What are the challenges you've faced so far, and how did you overcome them?

We had a challenge that we faced when we got on board with a client of ours some years ago. It is a big brand. We were working with our old standard of operation; we didn't know what the client would have to pay us because our work policy states that we take 75% upfront for projects. We didn't know it would be a different scenario. We got on board and finished the first month before we realised we were on a sixty-day invoice. What that means is that at the end of the month that you have worked for the brand, your invoice begins to count sixty days after that. Your payment comes on the ninetieth day, so it was a crazy one. First, we saw it as a big opportunity to learn, grow, and work with a

big brand with a strong global structure, but we had not experienced such before. We were tasked with solving that problem and figuring out how to pay the team. This was just one month out of the twelve months in a year. What do we do, and how do we go back?

It was a very tough situation for us. We had to come back to the table to discuss; prior to the beginning, we sent an email asking about their payment services, but we didn't get feedback so we questioned that and it was reviewed. I told my team there are two things that will drive us for the period of time and how we serve our clients, and those are serving and learning. So we try as much as possible to focus on serving and learning because there are things you will learn that you can't buy. It was how we were able to overcome that, speak to the team, and clear debts. Now, it is like we have a smooth journey because no one knew we went through that rough patch. This is one of many challenges we have faced over the years.

What would be your advice to upcoming creatives wanting to forge into the creative industry?

The first thing is to gain clarity. The clarity assures them that they are in the right place. A lot of people like the creative industry, maybe because they saw their friend designing a flyer and liked the design. So they need to have that clarity that I am in the right place.

Maybe you are called to be a woodworker or an architect. Architecture also relates to this industry, so you need to be clear. Maybe you are called to be a stand-up comedian and you are trying to struggle within this space. So how do you find clarity? Find people who have gone before you in the industry and services, find people you can call mentors not people who don't recognise you as a mentee. Come into their space and be close to them and willing to learn. When I niched down to branding, I studied like a crazy person, my browser had a hundred tabs open for reference because I needed to know. Someone said what you know gives you an edge. You need to be ready to learn and unlearn. You also need to be willing to stay true in your journey so you must be able to build your stay in power. It means that when things are not making sense, you have to stay.

Some years ago I wanted to quit, I told myself this thing is not making sense. I came from a trading background so I understand, I grew up in Onitsha and Igbos are known for the trade. I told myself "why are you doing this, your guys are counting hundred of millions. You're wasting your time, leave this and go and hustle and that was a very exceptional and successful trade. People move early in the morning and someone is on the laptop, doing what? It doesn't make sense way back then but something inside excited me was telling me" this is what you love to do, whatever it is that you think that you're going to be blessed with, it's going to start from here". So I have that conviction. The first thing is clarity, you need to be certain you are on the right path and you are not in the wrong place. So you have to be able to find someone who is going to guide you to give you that clarity. The next thing I want to say is, you have to be unique. Find your voice, stick to your voice and speak out loud. Don't be bullied. That's why you need to find people who uplift your mind, who uplifts your spirit. You need to find a circle, one that relates to you. People who make you feel important, and people who believe in you, are going to go a long way in your journey.



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