

# *Pitch*

ISSUE 028: PITCH SUPERPEOPLE 2023

**ANT JACKSON**

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**SUPERPERSON**

# Pitch

ISSUE 028, PITCH SUPERPEOPLE 2023



**BINAIFER DULANI**

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SUPERPERSON

# Pitch

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**JLOMI AWALA**

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**SUPERPERSON**

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**JOSEPH OGUNMOKUN**

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**ORIANA GAETA**

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**PAULETTE CALETTI**

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**PIPPA BHATT**

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**SUPERPERSON**

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**RACHAEL NAOME**

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**RENÉE DAVIS**

**SUPERPERSON**

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**SUNIR PATEL**

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**SUPERPERSON**

**PITCH SUPER PEOPLE**

**SUPER PEOPLE GET THINGS DONE AND ARE  
DOING GOOD FOR THE WORLD.**

# PITCH FUTURES

## INSPIRE THE YOUNG.

# PITCH

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PITCH OUR STORIES  
LET'S CREATE OUR FUTURES.

# SUPER ALUMNI 2023

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Our **Pitch Super Alumni** get things done and are doing good for the world.

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**Joseph Ogunmokun**, Producer at Mother

**Oriana Gaeta**, Design Director at Made Thought

**Paulette Caletti**, Executive Producer at Prettybird

**Pippa Bhatt**, Founder of Coterie and Co-founder of MADAM

**Racheal Naome**, Production Manager and Co-founder of Black Ink Cinema

**Renée Davis**, Founder of Out The Box

**Sunir Patel**, Head of Design, Freelance

Read their stories and let's celebrate them.

FREE JAMAICA AND FREE THE  
WORLD, CREATIVELY.

AND SAVE THE PLANET.

WE ARE IN A REVOLUTION.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

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PITCH SUPER PEOPLE

Each year we celebrate our **Pitch Super People**, those who are working in our creative industries getting things done. They keep our world moving, while being kind, empathic, inspiring, and uplifting and encouraging others.

They have passion and drive for their creative craft, while doing good for the world.

Let's celebrate them.

Best wishes,

Sherry Collins (her / us)

Jamaican Freedom Fighter

Fighting for the creative freedom of the Jamaican people.

# Ant Jackson

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT STONEHAVEN

While some prefer a Wordle, Ant Jackson, Creative Director at Stonehaven, catapults out of bed each morning buoyed by the prospect of solving the world's most complex problems. Balancing creative expression with an analytical mindset, Ant cut her teeth in marketing and advertising before pivoting to a wider world of creative comms, with the purposeful ambition of helping people and planet. Here she talks career highlights, challenging the status quo, and her creative superpowers.

How did you get into the industry?

We disrupted Cannes Lions with an attention-grabbing stunt, emailed 200+ Creative Directors, and tracked them via Mailchimp to find out how many times they opened the email. Peter Souter, Chair at TBWA London, had 7 times, so we emailed telling him we knew he was interested in meeting! Cheeky, and illegal now with GDPR, but it got us an interview.

What's been your career highlight so far?

Joining Stonehaven – a respected strategy consultancy at the forefront of cultural politics – to help build a unique creative comms model, capable of accelerating the critical change the world needs. And somehow convincing a very skilled Creative Strategy Director, with a rare and brilliant mind to join me.

We're a team of data + insight, sustainability, policy + advocacy and communications specialists, applying creative thinking to more areas to find more effective paths to influence.

You were nominated for your dedication to "improving representation and belonging amongst underrepresented groups", tell us more about that?

From creating a campaign for Omnicom's LGBTQIA+ network and marching in the Pride in London parade, to helping Rich Miles with the positioning of the Diversity Standards Collective, to working with the incredibly committed people in WPP Unite, Roots, and the PRCA's LGBTQ+ group, to being invited by Marty Davies (now CEO) to join Outvertising's board, it's all been a privilege.

Before joining Outvertising as Co-director of their

Advocacy and Activism workstream, Marty and I discussed that while diverse representation is needed in ads, if brand media buy is funding divisive journalism, which in some cases, is linked to hate crime against marginalised people, then it isn't inclusive – it's indirectly funding hate. Since then, Marty, Jax, and the team have made brilliant progress engaging brands and campaigning organisations to challenge the status quo. I've been involved in the thinking, but the real credit goes to the team bringing it to life.

What would you say are your super abilities?

As an LGBTQIA+ neurodivergent woman, I've done lots of self-work to replace criticism with compassion and learn to love my unique strengths – and quirks! Many inventors and successful entrepreneurs are neurodivergent. Being less likely to conform to the norm, and more likely to see things differently and take risks where others wouldn't (in measured ways) are effective tools for innovation and evolution. Being aware of your own EQ is invaluable too.

What made you break away from advertising?

I see what we're doing as growing advertising's potential, rather than breaking away from adland. What if, instead of using our problem-solving abilities to make people buy something, with no other benefit to them or planet, we could use our abilities to solve bigger issues, and help brands fulfil a more purposeful role too?

Industries should be mindful of their own echo-chambers, and how these can, without intent, restrict our thinking, rather than develop it. I don't want to be one of the people with their heads in the sand, while deserts continue to expand. We're more powerful than we think. We just need to spend more time thinking, not just outside of the box, but outside of our industry's box too.

What's next in the pipeline for Stonehaven?

Tackling global issues such as air pollution, the green energy transition, more sustainable travel, and ED&I recruitment. It's going to be a very busy, but a very exciting (or should I say super) year.





# Binaifer Dulani

FOUNDING MEMBER OF TALENTED

"It feels like the best time to be in advertising," says Binaifer Dulani, founding member of creative agency, Talented and the Creative Director behind a host of award-winning campaigns - including The Unfiltered History Tour: a guerrilla guide to the British Museum's collection of pilfered artefacts.

Binaifer's approach to creativity is subversive. "When I look at any piece of work, I almost feel I have a hidden agenda," she says. "And that hidden agenda is either representing underrepresented communities or narratives that need to be spoken about more in mainstream media but aren't. If there's a way I can use marketing dollars not just to fulfil a business target, but also to make them work for my hidden agenda, then I'm going to feel really great about the work we're putting out. And maybe, a few years down the line, I won't have an existential crisis looking back at all the work I've done."

Binaifer, who was nominated by Ogilvy Chicago, Creative Director, Sakshi Choudhary, says creativity has always been a source of joy. At school she loved creative writing - "that was my biggest outlet and where I gained a lot of my confidence as an adolescent" - and at university she minored in psychology before pursuing a course in creative communication at MICA in Gujarat. She landed her first job at Dentsu Webchutney, in Bengaluru, where she stayed for five years. There she found mentors in Gautam Reghunath and PG Aditya, who were CEO and CCO at the agency at the time.

Their mentorship was critical, pushing her out of her comfort zone at every opportunity and fast-tracking her career. It was difficult at times, says Binaifer, who remembers experiencing feelings of self-doubt. "If you're doing something that doesn't come naturally to you, you will struggle through it, and it doesn't feel good day-in day-out. But I feel that it's ok, because eventually a big part of self-esteem, and great mental health, comes from going through things that made you feel extremely uncomfortable and a fair bit of anxiety. I feel a large part of the mental health conversation doesn't touch upon this enough."

Binaifer now works alongside her former mentors at Talented, which she describes as "a proud creative-first agency with a large heart". The ambition is to embrace the kinds of "radical" ideas that aren't often found in India's creative scene, including equitable pay, profit sharing, and a fair conversation about credit, and working hours. At Talented, Binaifer has tackled stereotypical narratives, making work for jewellery brand Tanishq that questions tropes of women as self-sacrificing superheroes, and rebrands the maternity break as a "bootcamp in life". She's also been able to reflect on India's cultural diversity, creating a campaign for Google's International Mother Language Day that featured 22 different languages - many of which are rarely represented in the country's advertising.

With such a solid body of work - and a long list of accolades including Creative Director of the year in the 2022 Cannes Lions Creativity Report - it's no surprise Binaifer is optimistic about the future. "The narratives have changed, and the audience is so discerning," she says. "I feel like at one point in time I was like, 'how do I get someone to watch my ad?' I feel that, today, if you have the right intentions and tell the right kind of story, there are people that actively want to talk about it."

# Jolomi Awala

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT OGILVY NIGERIA

Creative Director at Ogilvy Nigeria, Jolomi Awala has devoted the last 15 years to making work that makes a difference – not just for brands, but to real people's lives. A storyteller with heart, he's created campaigns for the likes of Guinness, Google, and Coke, however Jolomi's real passion lies in mentoring emerging talent; at advertising schools in Nigeria and the creative bootcamp, The One Club For Creativity. Last year, he was nominated as a Pitch Super Person.

Were you creative from a young age?

I grew up in a creative home. My pops was a Director, so I've always been around storytelling. Rumor has it I featured in one of his movies as a baby, no one has been able to confirm or deny... Maybe because no one wants to pay my appearance fee.

I think it introduced me to the world of creativity. Even though it wasn't till another 20 years before I professionally entered the industry.

What's been your career highlight so far?

Not the awards...not the campaigns for Heineken, Google, Visa, and many others. Not the industry mentions, or Jury appearances either.

My biggest highlight would be the emerging talent I've been able to mentor and inspire to do their best work. That stands out for me.

What would you say are your super abilities?

I think my gift for listening. As a leader, you should listen more than you speak. I've heard the reverse is the case for many in our industry, but I've always believed this skill has helped unlock magic within people. The ability to hear what's being said, and most importantly, what isn't.

Also having a keen attention to detail, though basic, has helped me avoid a lot of pitfalls.

You've been in the industry for over 15 years, but according to your nominator, you're still "super passionate". How do you keep this alive?

I don't think there's anything special I've done over the years. None. It's just a genuine love for the art of storytelling. If you have that, it will translate to passion or what some people call fuel. Or maybe it's the money...?

Where do you take your inspiration from?

It's not in one place, but experiences... as a storyteller, you must intentionally put yourself out there. At the end of the day, that's what will come in handy.

You were nominated for your energy and your leadership skills, what makes a good leader?

Having heart for people. Everybody is going through something, real life issues, things you can't even relate to. They're also in the place you were 5 /10 years ago, so try to remember that and have some empathy.

You started as a Copywriter, but you've also got a "real eye for design". Is that something that you've always been interested in?

I studied art at university. So, there was the need to see design as a form of communication.

My people are not trained to see only in words or pictures...they are meant to see both. They're first creatives before Copywriters or Art Directors etc. I'm a big advocate for all-rounders.

How do you see the creative industry changing in the future?

The future? The future is already here, now. AI will be of immense help to how creativity is expressed. We've seen the rise of Midjourney, ChatGPT, Dall-E. It's evolving and I think it's something we must embrace. One thing is certain, machines are never going to replace humans. But I believe the people who will thrive are able to infuse their creative process with AI / machine learning. Embrace change, to create your desired output.

What would be your dream project?

To create a platform that enables African children to master the art of storytelling from an early age. We need to tell more of our stories as a continent, so furthering this cause is something that I'll find fulfilling.



# Joseph Ogunmokun

PRODUCER AT MOTHER



Joseph Ogunmokun's advertising career began in the summer of 2012, the same year as the London Olympics and a time he jokingly describes as "the peak of our powers". But work for Joseph – who's now a Producer at Mother – started long before this. He landed his first job in his teens, after his mum was sectioned and he was kicked out of school and forced to fend for himself – an experience he's reflected on more as time goes by. "I defaulted to autopilot in order to survive for me, my mum, and my younger brother," he says. "I don't remember how I ate, how bills were paid... all I remember was I would go to work, go to the hospital, come home, and I repeated that for a couple of years.

"It was a lot of responsibility, but I've come to terms with it. It allows me to share a sense of empathy as a human being for other people and walk through life with an understanding that you don't know what anyone else is going through, and you should treat people with kindness and consideration. It's the lessons I was taught anyway, but when you go through these sorts of things, it gives you an even gentler way of applying that practice."

Life had a few more twists and turns for Joseph before he was inducted into adulthood, including a stint on an event management degree, work experience at a boutique comms company in London, and some time spent in Cape Town, working at a friend's family's nightclub. Joseph left the city in 2010 and returned to find London still mired in the financial crisis. He spent a few years working as a removal man before taking a junior production role at Grey, where he learned his craft before moving onto Havas and then Mother.

"It's incredible that there are people who are such great communicators, and tell stories within this medium of advertising," he says. "As a Producer, and therefore their

facilitator, I'm always impressed by what they're able to do, particularly at Mother. There's a sincerity in terms of how we bring things to life, and weave real life into what could be the mundanity of advertising. That's where the real skill and craft comes, because it's very easy to make an ad and just say, "Hey, I'm going to sell you x, y and z, and you should buy it. It's how you elevate that into something that's emotive."

Emotion and connection is all-important for Joseph, who believes wholeheartedly in the way storytelling can celebrate interconnectedness. "It's that energy, the spirituality – in the non-religious way – of our day-to-day interactions," he explains. It's something that carries deep personal resonance for him, having been the only person of colour in the production department at the start of his career. He says things have definitely improved since then, but explains that he often felt he was lacking "invisible skills" – for example the ability to understand and navigate the secret politics of things. "I think I'd always been quite observant and aware of situations, and going through my life experiences gave me an immediate sense of maturity," he says. "When one is dealing with hierarchies, particularly when you're young and inexperienced, that maturity, and challenging your peers and superiors, can land you in a bit of trouble and at times it did."

Now, Joseph is keen to help the next generation of creatives thrive, and he wants to do so with as much empathy as possible. "I truly believe that my attitude in terms of being kind and sincere has allowed me to move through this industry. What I would like to do in some shape or form is cast that energetic field onto future generations. I see myself as a facilitator, and I will always do my utmost to help create and facilitate stories and ideas."

# Oriana Gaeta

DESIGN DIRECTOR AT MADE THOUGHT

"As designers we have the power to make change and to do it beautifully. We can help get society to a better place. Design and communications can point people's attention to the right things and change behaviours. It doesn't have to be major. Small constant gestures can help." Made Thought Design Director Oriana Gaeta speaks with vision about the possibilities of her profession. What makes design unique from art is the opportunity to solve a problem "with style."

Oriana's personal aesthetic is considered and daring. Her minimal designs strip back to the essentials to ensure longevity and relevance. "I'm detail obsessed. Taking the time to craft and research each element makes the outcome more meaningful. By the end you become an expert in whatever you're working on!" Client work allows Oriana to adapt her style and take an eclectic approach. In projects ranging from design installations and systems to user experiences and brand identities, the Design Director has worked with an enviable list of clients. In her formative years at R/GA these included Nike, IKEA, and Moncler and now at Made Thought, Adidas, and Google.

Over the years, Oriana's contributions have steadily attracted industry recognition with invitations to speak at conferences, jury awards and also win them. When recalling her career milestones, some of the most rewarding were the smaller pro bono projects that were inevitably labours of love. When working on R/GA's Venture Studio programme, that supported sustainably-minded start-ups. Oriana remembers the emotional responses of founders seeing the message of their projects come to life through bespoke brand identities. Another project that speaks to her legacy was R/GA's Woman Up initiative. Through work with colleagues to transform the programme into something more inclusive, the UK based project was taken up by teams at R/GA's US offices. "It changed policy, not just awareness."

What is most refreshing about Oriana is that inclusion in a given. Her ability to lead never fails to reach back and acknowledge the teams she has worked with. One example is the Nike Sync project in 2021, that helped women understand the power of the menstrual cycles and stay in sport. What was most satisfying for the designer was the opportunity to direct a core team of women and non-binary people. Viewed initially as a novel idea, Nike Sync's insightful editorial featuring myth busting NAQs (Never Asked Questions) allowed the project to take the Grand Prix at Cannes in 2022.

Without noticing Oriana's goals for the future mirror her design aesthetic - daring and considered. They combine a commitment to crafting and exploring life with balance and working with design that works to make a difference. "I'm lucky to do this work at Made Thought and with some very cool clients. At this stage in my career, I'm interested in working with initiatives that give more than they take from the world."





# Paulette Caletti

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AT PRETTYBIRD U.K.

When Prettybird Executive Producer, Paulette Caletti, returned to the industry after a seven-year hiatus to raise her two children and focus on filmmaking, the changes were very clear. There was a shift in the barriers to entry and career progression. As a writer-director, Paulette has been commissioned by B3 Media and ventured into 360 filmmaking with an immersive film on disabled patient care for King's College London that screened at Cannes XR in 2019. Her short film *Enter The Preacher* was also an early screen appearance for popular UK comedian, Jamali Maddix.

Is there any overlap between filmmaking and motherhood? It all comes together in a set of super abilities, being organised, forward-thinking, and caring. The qualities combine to form a work ethic. "It's about how you do things as well as what you're doing. You have to set your stall out, what kind of person you want to be and what kind of atmosphere you want to create on set as the Producer. I want to make sure we have a good time in a safe environment. When your children are small parenting is a 24hr job, with film you can sign off!"

Paulette's ethic was the motivation behind Prettybird Co-founder Juliette Larthe's nomination. "From the get-go, Juliette has supported young talent and people from different backgrounds. She's a colleague and a friend. Juliette looks beyond and with experience. Prettybird is a unique space where you are permitted to just go for it."

The award-winning writer-director hit the ground running, returning to produce the iconic Preen London Fashion Week show, Sindha Agha's BBC 3 series *Body Language*, and a range of commercials and short films in Prettybird's signature style. Time away allowed Paulette to sharpen her abilities. During that time, she hit a big milestone by completing her first feature *The Cake Maker*, a gangster film shot in Brixton. "I'd just got married, was pregnant, and my brother passed away. It was a difficult time with mixed emotions. The film gave me focus. Even though it was small and we had no money, it fulfilled a lifelong ambition."

For Paulette, her greatest career achievements are yet to come. She also raises important questions about how and what we consider achievement. Small wins like completing a tough project or acknowledging moments where you've worked well as a team are also valid. "Achievement seems to be all about gain. I've realised we often want things quickly but everything happens at the right time. There is time to get to where you want to be. It works better to enjoy the experience you're in."

Pitch Super People are people who get things done, are super creative, and want good for the world. Paulette sweeps away any great mystery to attaining this. "Just get them done. Some things are harder than others because of the emotional attachment to the task. Like writing. There is a fear of failure. But once I've decided on something, it's happening. I focus on the practical task and trust my instincts."

# Pippa Bhatt

FOUNDER OF COTERIE AND CO-FOUNDER OF MADAM

Super Alumni Pippa Bhatt means business, new and otherwise. She's a powerhouse in production, matching people with passions, and has been described as a formidable creative fixer. Here, she talks super abilities, how her soon-to-be B-Corp MADAM came to be and shares her passion for elevating women in industry.

How did you carve out your career in the world of New Business?

I worked hard to learn everything I could about my clients, how they worked, what they needed and the product I was marketing. It has always been about understanding strengths and weaknesses – getting to know people and how to make their jobs easier.

What's been your career highlight so far?

I feel lucky to have traveled the world with my job, for shoots or ad festivals, and to spend my time meeting people and being immersed in creativity. However, being Co-founder of Madam Films with my partners Carly Stone and Michelle Stapleton is such a huge part of my life and I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved and learnt so far.

You were nominated for your passion, what are you most passionate about?

Women in industry, definitely! I'm energised seeing women collaborate and rise together. I love working within a creative environment and experiencing the creative process unfold. It's such a privilege to be here and I'm trying to do the best I can for those around me. It's a WIP!

In your words, what would you say are your super abilities?

I don't think I'm fazed by too much and have a blind belief that it's all possible. I think it may be a "Hell yeah! Let's do it!" attitude. I like people and I'm so interested to know more. On a good day, I hope that my positivity is contagious.

You've been described as a "fixer", who connects people and their passions. Can you share an example of this?

In new business roles, bringing the right people together for the right project is magic. Pre-pandemic, I hosted the Coterie Chow Pow-Wow, a quarterly(ish) drop in breakfast of women in advertising – creative and production. It was a place to build your network of champions and supporters – find them, be one, and come away with a richer reach of talented women.

What led you to Founding Coterie and Co-founding Madam Films, how do the two go hand in hand?

MADAM came from a desire to balance being a parent with our careers. My partners and I all love our jobs and wanted to continue being a part of the industry and raise families without having to sacrifice.

Before MADAM launched, there was time to make the move and start Coterie, I was the breadwinner, and this gave me the opportunity to continue working in a field I loved whilst MADAM took shape.

Coterie was one of the early adopters of the US style repping system – multiple creative companies represented by one house/person, a departure from the trad in-house. I was interested in representing a variety of curated talent that provided more choice and opportunities. MADAM naturally became part of those same Coterie conversations I was having with clients as a production offering.

What would be your dream project to work on?

Projects with scale and impact excite me. Talented teams of people working in harmonious collaboration to achieve a lasting legacy. Now that sounds like a great place to be.

What are you working on now? What's next for you?

MADAM's B-Corp journey is huge for company development. It is bringing every aspect of our business and how we conduct it under the spotlight. It's proving to be an intensely valuable and educational process, showing us how we can do business well for everyone involved and the positive impact we make across people and planet.





# Rachael Naome

PRODUCTION MANAGER AND CO-FOUNDER OF BLACK INK CINEMA

When asked about her career achievements, a milestone for Rachael Naome, Production Manager and Co-founder of Black Ink Cinema, was quitting a comfortable job. "It wasn't the worst job in the world. I just knew I wasn't happy and it wasn't for me. I've always been a person to do something, instead of continually complaining." While it may sound counterintuitive and a decision Rachael would not advise lightly. Her proactive attitude at the start of her media career speaks to a personal philosophy that has allowed Rachael to steadily rise in the ranks in Television and found one of London's most exciting cinema clubs.

"What I've discovered is that people want to celebrate Black cinema, if a story is captivating everyone wants to enjoy it. I think the industry limits who the audience can be for Black cinema." Launching in 2020 with a screening of Spike Lee's *Inside Man*, Black Ink Cinema's remit is to create an interactive space for audiences to enjoy classics and new cinema releases of films by, and that feature Black people. The platform offers an enjoyable way to bridge the gaps between audiences and the industry. "70% of the audiences haven't seen some of these films. With *Set It Off* people didn't even know Jada Pinkett-Smith acted!" Another unique element to Black Ink is that Rachael founded the platform with her sister Sharon Andrews, "we have the same work ethic and on the same page of what we wanted to execute, so starting Black Ink with her was an easy decision." In just three short years the siblings have supported major Hollywood releases including *Black Panther*, *CREED III*, *The Little Mermaid*, and partnered with Thomson Reuters, Adobe, and L'Oreal.

Black Ink allows Rachael to unleash her creative side through screenings with talks and themed goodies for audiences to enjoy in the relaxed atmosphere. The Black Ink podcast, produced by Rachael and Adam Horton, has also been another natural creative progression for Black Ink hosting UK talents such as Axel Blake, Destiny Ekaragha, and Aml Ameen.

"The most interesting conversations happen at our screenings and those conversations don't happen if the space isn't created. We debate every year about diversity at the Oscars. What Black Ink became was our little protest where we could celebrate our peers instead of waiting for "them" to celebrate us or wait for that pat on the back."

The philosophy of proactive protest flows into Rachael's work in TV production. To counteract the performative solidarity that sprang up in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Rachael is super proud of being part of the driving force behind BT Sports' first-ever Black History Month programming, the series' three-week run featured an array of athletes including England Lions and Lionesses, pioneer Arthur Wharton, Anthony Yarde, and Christine Ohuruogu.

When quizzed about her super abilities, Rachael cites adaptability, positivity and humility. "I believe in paying things forward. My goal is to work on the content that I am passionate about. To find a better work-life balance and support more people from my community to pursue their career in TV."

# Renée Davis

FOUNDER OF OUT THE BOX

Out The Box is an organisation that supports the progression of Black creatives, entrepreneurs, and professionals by connecting them with resources and opportunities they need to thrive in career and business. Spearheaded by Renée Davis, who founded the business ten years ago, it's gained momentum particularly post-pandemic and after Black Lives Matter, because of its prioritisation of networking and practical training to accelerate Black personal, business, and professional development. With clients and partnerships as varied as Google, M&C Saatchi Saturday School, and Mentor Black Business, Renée shares her reasons for her commitment and why she's so passionate about this work.

What prompted you to launch Out The Box in 2014?

I wanted to create a space for young Black creatives to tap into their greatness. But the idea and format for the initiative came when I was studying for my media and journalism degree – the frustration of not feeling understood by my lecturers. My writing didn't "make sense" to them and I felt "boxed in". So, I started a blog on Blogspot and called it "Out The Box" to keep my craft sharp and write about my passions, which mainly related to creativity within Black culture. I interviewed creatives and entrepreneurs who I believed deserved a platform and to have their work showcased. Life got in the way with the project, but God kept nudging me to turn it into something serious and the 2011 London riots was my wake-up call. Eventually, I bit the bullet and started the site in July 2014.

You've been running Out The Box for almost 10 years, what have been the biggest developments made to the organisation since its birth? And how have these reflected changing cultural needs and attitudes?

Time flies! We went from being a website filled with inspiring stories and interviews to an organisation that connects Black creatives and professionals across career and business prospects – that they often fail to get because of systemic inequity. In 2015, we launched various networking events – beginning on Google Campus – for our community to learn and grow, with follow-ups taking place at Workspace group, Havas, and M&C Saatchi.

We also offered practical training, such as our 2018 partnership with Quaker Street Coffee which offered

monthly interactive workshops that helped our community achieve their business goals, switch careers, or perfect their craft for the industries they were interested in.

During the pandemic, we offered Google Digital Garage collaborative webinars, tailored to get people set-up for working and functioning under the newly exceptional circumstances. George Floyd's murder confirmed the lack of workplace safety for the OTB community, highlighting ongoing racism, micro-aggression, and stereotyping experienced by Black professionals. It led to the creation of Black at Work, an event series equipping Black employees with how to navigate workplaces and provide reflection and suggestion for allies to make necessary change. Out The Box organisation is "for the people" and continues to shift according to the needs of its community.

Why do you think it's so important, particularly now, to nurture, support and equip Black creative talent to seek out their dream careers?

Young Black children aren't encouraged to pursue their dream career or follow their passions in mainstream education and a lot of mainstream media continues to push the narrative that they are lazy. Technology enables us to all have the relevant tools at our disposal to create whatever we can dream of – but Black creative talent still needs support and encouragement for them to prosper and seize the opportunities presented their way. Paying it forward and being an active role model where possible is vital for that progression.

And what's next in the pipeline for the organisation? How do you envision its growth?

We always listen to our community for feedback on how we can improve. Currently, we're not in the space to create anything new because we're focused on building Black at Work, our event and training arm that provides solutions, resources, and industry opportunities – as well as training for allies who want to make the workplace fair and equitable for Black employees. We're also developing work for other brands and organisations, and I hope that long-term we will enlist more young Black creatives in our decision-making processes, they are the future after all.





# Sunir Patel

HEAD OF DESIGN, FREELANCE

After eight fruitful years at Grey, Sunir Patel has left for pastures new. We sat down with him to look back at his career highlights, to find out how he got his industry start, having gratitude for the people he's worked with and the importance of ever-changing design processes. He has gratitude for his previous professional experiences and shares tips for career progression, as well as revealing some of his work traits and love for designing creative blogs.

Did you always know you wanted a career in the creative industries and what was it about them that appealed? From a very early age, I always sought out creativity. So, the minute I found out that I could make creativity my job, I thought "What could be better than working in an industry where you can truly showcase your creative flair and express yourself freely?" I was sold!

With a background in art, design, and illustration, tell me about your first foray into advertising? I entered the industry through 3rd Edge Ltd, a stand-alone design studio that services larger businesses. It's run by amazing brothers Martin and Gary Lee, and it's still going strong today.

I learnt so much during my three years there, including how to use industry programs, create design foundations, compositing artwork and retouching to name just a few of the skills I gained. It was the best place for cutting my teeth in this industry. They took the time to nurture my skills and educate me and I am so thankful to them for taking me on as junior. I truly believe I've only reached where I've got to today, because of the foundations they provided me with.

Looking back on your career, what were your initial aspirations for your profession and do you think you have achieved these?

I set my sights on becoming Head of Design or Design Director at a world-famous global agency. Starting my career in the early 2000s, I never saw anyone that looked like me in a position of management or leadership role. I was determined to become that figure, that juniors from minority backgrounds looked at. Allowing them to know that they too can flourish in this industry. It takes hard work, but it is achievable.

What was the most impactful piece of professional advice you ever received?

Never burn a bridge. No matter how hard done by you feel, hold your head high and thank the people you've

worked with for their support and the opportunities they have given you. Leave with your respect and keep your legacy intact. This industry is incestuous. It doesn't matter what company you end up at, there will always be someone that knows someone you worked with previously. And word spreads like wildfire.

You've worked at big agencies and various independent studios, how did the work ethic at both differ, if at all? Whether they are big, small, independent or corporately owned, all companies demand the same work ethic from me. The "that will do" mentality has never sufficed, and I expect everyone I work with or manage to push for more too. After all, we have a common goal – to produce great work together.

And what are your favourite aspects of overseeing a design job and bringing it into fruition?

I enjoy pushing the boundaries of what's possible. I want to create work that forces a reaction from the public and makes them buy whatever we're advertising. But it runs deeper than that.

I like to share my thought process with my clients and account teams. Everything we create as designers is carefully considered. Nothing is ever randomly positioned or accidentally coloured. Once others outside of design understand our process, things become clearer, so inviting them in is vital.

Working in advertising and within a design capacity, tell me what does the collaborative process look like and how important is your team for excelling creativity? Design now falls under the creative department, so it's increasingly common to use designers as people in a creative team. You'll be tasked with your own concept, words, and visuals, as design is being brought further up the process – changing the course of conceptual thought for the better.

What do you do to maintain and fuel your inspiration? Design blogs. It helps with easily seeing what we're creating and forecasting trends for the year – such as fonts, colour palettes, and styles. But most importantly, it's a language to talk with fellow designers and sharing references.

Now that you've left Grey, what's next for you creatively? It's time to take my learnings and help establish another company's design department. Watch this space...

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