

The virtue of BS

By  Adelaide Potgieter

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The mad men and women of the adworld are all a cast of sharpies. A troupe of tricksters, hucksters and scamps. A mob of charlatans, hypocrites and great pretenders. To quote Chris Rock, 'I said it'.

As the cliché goes, we sell ice to Eskimos. Easter eggs to priests. Are we the televangelists for the salvation of the brandless? The architects of a house of lies? The catcher in the rye, free to romp around like little children in the subconscious mind of our prey? We come dressed as impresarios, bewilder with our illusions, lull them into comfort with our soothing baritones, tempt them with our eye candy and hook them with white smiles. Isn't that what we are - ersatz?

Phonies, fakes and forgers? I name my daughters Chagall and Monet, when their momma is a Walter Keane. Is this what we are... the shallow leaching on a superficial sentimentalist naïve consumerism? Are we the "cult of the amateur" in which "the monkeys are running the show?" Can the enemy pick up our intellectual pollution from afar? I am having a profane moment.

Why are they staring at me in that manner? For God's sake people, just come out with it and say what your uncomfortable contorting physical spasms are attempting to keep sweetly concealed! Granted it is past midday and the drowsiness could be the result of those turkey sandwiches, whilst others are probably 'Noaked' out by the carbonated cans of watery fructose and cane sugar they have been guzzling down all day. Nope, that ain't it. They are just judging me on my credentials and my coattails, although on this occasion it happens to be a damn fine piece of jacquard-a-la-mode. To put it bluntly, they think me a 'bullsh!tter'!

What I have to say is utterly irrelevant because my cover has been blown. Of course, none of these cadaverous folks will have the courage to call my number. They are sitting on a good odd. They are the house. What they say is truth. So my BS, which I have paraphrased for the sake of the advertising complaints commission, will not baffle these buffoons! I needed a card turner. You don't break brick-hearts with jokers and I had no time to slow roast these meatheads. What I needed was to apply reverse psychology, to call their bluff, to really and truly feed them the biggest and baddest load of BS ever served in a corporate morgue-room, such as this I found myself in!



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In a world in search of the truly original and the 100% authentic, us (m)ad men and women are seen as the hoax. We are the sacrificial stereotype for being baloney sellers. There are many pundits who believe that us advertisers can no longer

tell the man on the street anything he would honestly believe. But is this fair? I'm all for taking labelling off cans, but this business of advertising can be pretty brutal in its preconceived notions about itself. Sure, we all have our ways to be creative: from speeches to gimmicks, from storylines to parodies. Sometimes you find our game crude and crass, sometimes sensuous and voyeur, and often corny and trekkie but hell, we know our sh*t. And it ain't BS.

I hear the classic American critic's disdain for the professional speakers, and sure as an ad person I can sometimes also become so swept up in "the sound of his own voice and the applause of the groundlings" that I speak nothing but just hyperbole. But this is the exception. This is the virtue of BS. It makes you realise that you have just crossed onto the ledge, that slippery slope that you're gambling. What it doesn't do is make you a fraud. It only makes you realise that creativity isn't always conditioned. It exists out of bounds and it comes from within. Sometimes one must with Forster also say 'Logic! Good gracious! What rubbish!'.

Our dexterity, our ingenuity and our flair must be allowed to be the paradox of sometimes being a flight of fancy, a fish called Wanda or cock-and-bull. We are professionals. We work like slaves. We believe in good things and we actually dream, if you would know, of people running in streets celebrating, the pope dancing, dogs speaking, beggars winning the lottery and presidents being honest. When we bullsh*t, we do so with virtue. We do so to get people to see the bigger picture.

Our work places are carnivals. We play music loud. We scream and shout. We do what we need to find inspiration in life and we find it all around us. But we also have to-do lists, we do research, we know business, we understand the world, we think, question, analyse and we problem solve. We just stop short of turning ourselves and our fellow people into algorithms and statistics.

Granted, some of our worst moments can be pretty damn dreadful and we have the ability to turn Eskimos into priests, but we add colour to life. We bring a difference. We are not outliers or want-makers. We are just the mad men and women of the adworld: A cast of trailblazers; a gang of eggheads, crackerjacks and oddballs; a circus of jugglers, lion tamers and clowns. Not bullsh*tters.

There 'I said it'.

And so I jumped right up onto the table and made them nearly fall off their chairs. Then I shouted: "Let's cut the crap. You think I'm a bullsh*tter? It's OK I'm not offended; it takes one to know one! But tell me to my face that my ideas aren't good and I'll get off your table and leave you be!"

They didn't say anything. So I just got off the table, said my goodbyes, and left. You can't win them all and that's no bullsh*t!

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ABOUT ADELAIDE POTGIETER

Adelaide Potgieter is the founder of Cape Town based creative agency, Mad Advertising. Known for achieving the impossible, Adelaide lives the philosophy of "what we dream we can create". With an intriguing background in law, marketing, eventing, PR and broadcasting, she brings to MAD a wealth of knowledge, wisdom and passion. Find out more at www.madworld.co.za contact Adelaide on email adelaide@madworld.co.za. Twitter: @MadAdelaide

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