

Talking African inspiration with Trevor Stuurman

By  Leigh Andrews

10 Nov 2017

One of the highlights of WGSN's Futures Cape Town was an inspirational talk by 24-year-old Trevor Stuurman - in effortless digitally savvy youth fashion, this Christmas Day baby is an entrepreneur, photographer and multimedia visual artist with a verified Instagram account and over 156,000 Twitter followers - here's why his fresh ideas resonate so deeply.



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Louise Marsland 9 Nov 2017



Stuurman was announced as [best male influencer](#) at the 2016 Youth Influencer Awards (YIA) and winner of the [Elle Style Reporter](#) search in association with BlackBerry in 2012, when he was just 19. As a result he has already worked with top fashion magazines and retail brands with an ever-growing following.

One minute he's snapping away at supermodels Kylie Jenner, Gigi and Bella Hadid, the next he's awestruck at being snapped himself, meeting British *Vogue*'s newly appointed editor-in-chief Edward Enninful.

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Amazing Grace. Greatest honor meeting one of our own and the newly appointed @britishvogue editor in chief @edward_enninful. @thecoffeetographer thank you for capturing this monumental moment. #NYFW #StuurmanStyleDiary

A post shared by Trevor (@trevor_stuurman) on Sep 13, 2017 at 11:58pm PDT

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No two days are the same for Stuurman but 9 November 2017 was another big one – he presented his WGSN Futures Cape Town session that afternoon and went on to be announced as Best-Styled Male at the Feather Awards that evening.

Little wonder as it seems he's snapped in front of the camera just as often as he works the buttons from behind the lens.

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Meanwhile back in Jozi... Just won the best styled male in South Africa according to the Feather Awards. Unfortunately I couldn't be present to personally accept the award as I am currently in Cape Town for the @wgsn Futures Summit but thank you for the honor and recognition.

#StuurmanStyleDiary 💎💎: @buka_andile

A post shared by Trevor (@trevor_stuurman) on Nov 9, 2017 at 11:19am PST

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Described by others as an African Renaissance man, Stuurman describes himself a 'global African' with elaborate personal style, as his work is authentically from the continent yet has definite global relevance. He spoke at WGSN Futures Cape Town of the concept of 'home' – also the title of his recent exhibition at Hazard Gallery – and explained just how his work explores home in terms of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. Stuurman himself spends more time away from home than at home, so what *is* 'home', really?

Home: Present, past and future

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Today's Agenda; @wgsn #wgsnfutures Summit: The Future Consumer. The Future African Consumer. African Wealth: resources vs culture. Emotions 2.0. The Future of Brand Collaborations. The Future African Brand. The Future Brand and more... "By staying ahead and informed; you can create the future you see - and want - for yourself, your business and consumers" It was an absolute pleasure sharing my point view on the future of Africa alongside global thought leaders and trend experts. #ReframingTheNarrative #BeyondNative #StuurmanStyleDiary #WGSNinAfrica

A post shared by Trevor (@trevor_stuurman) on Nov 9, 2017 at 7:59am PST

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Stuurman says we have to be comfortable or 'at home' with ourselves and each other. As he feels country borders are merely imaginary lines created to keep us apart, he loves physically crossing the border for fashion shoots across the continent.

Much of that work involves creating a space for black African bodies to be celebrated and not censored – yes censored even today. While Stuurman has a huge following on Instagram, a video he posted of the Himba tribe was removed from the platform and he was told he was lucky his account wasn't blocked as that specific content supposedly 'didn't conform' – ironic as just last year Instagram, endorsed him for the way he portrays modern Africa.

Stuurman says this experience inspired him to build more on the work and creating a space for conversation where censorship doesn't feature. Looking to the past, Stuurman points out that black history has for the most part been written by The Other – it's time to celebrate this. As his studies at Afda focused on visual communication, Stuurman also incorporates a sense of video and motion in his work, as life is always on the move.

Celebrating culture rather than censoring it

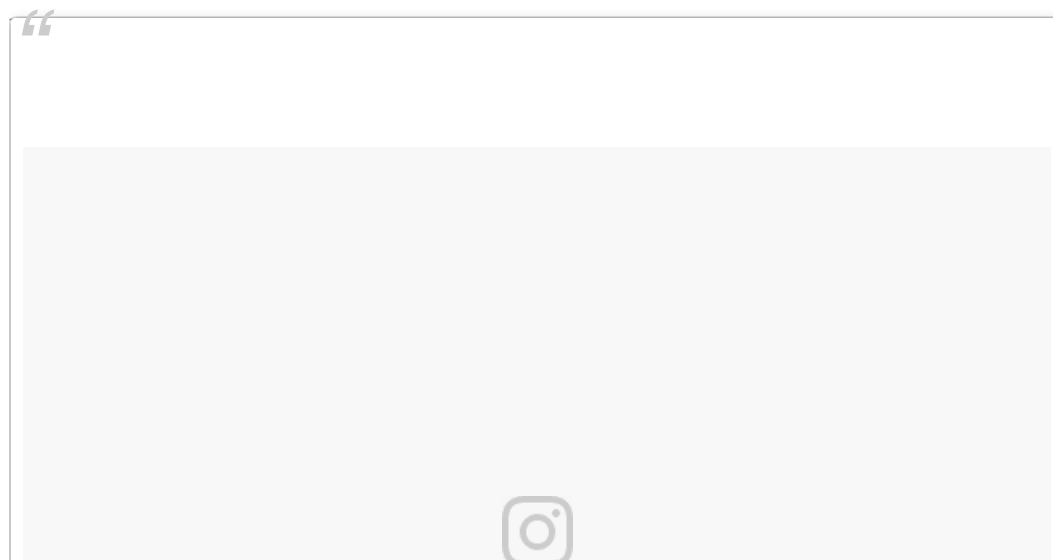
That's where the Ndebele initiation rite slots in. It's a sacred ceremony held every four years and Stuurman wanted to unpack all that it entails, because all we see in the media is that 'so many boys died in the mountains' so the ritual itself is feared rather than celebrated by broader society. Stuurman then juxtaposed how the male and female form is seen, as the bare-chested male body is seen as a symbol of hope while for females, the same would be hypersexualised – equality is important. This leads to the conversation on cultural appropriation.

Africa itself is the biggest ghost writer and even inspired Picasso. Stuurman says his current task underlying all his work is to change the narrative. He says, "Africa has been having it and Africa *is* it." We have to properly appreciate our own culture before we enter the cultural appropriation debates.

Getting personal, he shared that while his surname is 'Stuurman', he confessed that no one in his family actually speaks Afrikaans well, they merely inherited the name from the apartheid era. Stuurman decided to take ownership of the name as part of his culture.

Stuurman has translated this into visual representation, through the love language of traditional beads. From the traditional bracelets to the more unusual fez hats and beaded bicycles he's designed, he believes that Africans are strong consumers of luxury. He also wants to change the perception that in Africa we're all about crafts and not design. Just think of all the weaving and beading that goes on here. Think about how much emphasis is put on a swing tag from Europe – there's a big imbalance there. That's why Stuurman says we need to restore African pride and identity.

“ Africa is not just about aesthetics, it is also about beliefs and sharing and bringing a vision to life. ”



Proud to present The STUURman Bike for the @standardbanksa Avant Card Art Installation. The beaded bicycle was inspired by my grandmother who used bead as a child. I wanted to celebrate her progressive and resourceful nature. She has an innate ability to repurpose and refashion any object or circumstance for the better. The prefix of our surname, Stuurman means steer in Dutch and as a family we always shared the same values as @standardbanksa; moving together forward.

#StuurmanStyleDiary #StuurmanBike

A post shared by Trevor (@trevor_stuurman) on Jul 25, 2017 at 2:28am PDT

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Through this project, Stuurman explained that a bicycle is representative of the continent as Africans do so with their own energy, without any additional ‘engine power’ – he didn’t work alone on the piece, though.

As a result of the help and support he received, he’s going back to those ingrained African values of the daily practice of being kind to each other and empowering and boosting others where you can so we can rise and grow together. The space is so saturated that few actually make it, said Stuurman, and there’s huge importance in protecting and preserving culture.

Stuurman concluded that as Africans, our greatest wealth is not our minerals but in understanding who we are.

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As Africans our greatest wealth is not to be found in our mineral wealth but in our selves. Our culture, our way of life. In our greatest understanding of self. My purpose is to share that with the world. Visit @hazard_gallery to see more... #trevorstuurmanHOME @kholisa

A post shared by Trevor (@trevor_stuurman) on Aug 28, 2017 at 5:23am PDT

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Such an influential, insightful and inspirational way of living life. Follow Stuurman on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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

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