

Robert dos Santos shoots for the stars... literally



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

15 Feb 2022

Following and reaching your dreams is a concept Cape Town-based creative Robert dos Santos is well versed in; having given up his safe career in corporate and commercial law just three years ago to follow his dreams of filmmaking.



Film and commercial director, Robert dos Santos

We find out from the award-winning director Robert dos Santos about his career change, entering the film industry and what he's currently working on...

■ ***When and why did you decide to change career paths, from lawyer to creative entrepreneur?***

One afternoon I was in the filing room of the law firm I worked at. I was sitting with my boss and we were chatting about things. The conversation progressed to the point where he looked around at the many tens of thousands of documents in the room. He declared quite proudly that he had “either written or read each one of those pages” and that that was his life’s work.

His sentiment to me was that his legacy was contained within the pages which surrounded us. While it is important to note that his work is extremely valuable and that he does an incredible job I knew at that moment, looking around at those many documents, that that was not what I wanted my legacy to be and that the pretending was over. I resigned the next day.

■ ***Growing up, did you have any interest in film?***

Stories have always been something that has interested me to no end. For the vast history of humans, stories have been one of the primary methods of teaching and learning.

“ *The ability to convey an idea through a story has always captivated me.* ”

Whether it is as obvious as films, novels, or photographs, or as subtle as a conversation, a colour choice, or a glance, stories are everywhere.

If you pay enough attention, the way someone looks at you can tell as much of a story as an epic novel. Due to my fascination with storytelling in all its forms, I have been telling stories of my own in one way or another from childhood. Everyone has their own way of conveying their ideas, I just found that mine happen to be through moving images and sound.

■ ***How did you then learn the skills to become a film and commercial director?***

There are so many skills that go into making a film. To list them all would take forever. You can go from something as wide as pacing to something as narrow as the manner of application of a specific tone of colour of makeup. The same applies to camera lens choices, intonation in dialogue, edit decisions, instrument choices in the score, the list is never-ending.

I spent years and years honing many skills but to be honest I don't think a filmmaker ever stops learning because how can you? Each story is different and will need a new set of skills. So the truth is that while these technical skills are all incredibly important, and which contribute to making anything with intention, the most important skill is to know who you are and what is beautiful to you.

At the end of the day if you know this with confidence then you have all the skills you will ever need. Film is a collaborative medium so if you can direct your intention through the talented people on set you will achieve what you want regardless of whether you are aware of what frame rate you are shooting at or not. You will feel if it's right or wrong because you know the difference.

■ ***How did you enter the creative industry?***

I left my 'safe' job and went in search of something more. I knew what I wanted to do, just not how I could do it. So I failed at a lot of things until I found something that wouldn't let me sleep at night.

■ ***Since you took the leap of faith, what has the journey been like?***

It has been incredible and I am beyond grateful for every second of it. Sometimes I don't sleep at night because I am so excited for the next day. Without a hint of irony, I consider myself to be the luckiest human that ever lived.

■ ***You've been awarded several local and international awards for your work. What are some of the most notable ones?***

The first award in Croatia is a stand out because it was the first after so many nominations so it meant a great deal. In addition, we were on set prepping for another shoot and was the best place to be on earth, it just made the day. The wins in Los Angeles (LA) were also amazing as the competition in LA is obviously massive so to be recognised there carries a different weight.

■ ***Tell us about your most recent project?***

My most recent project is a short film and commercial for Restonic. The story is about a young girl who has a dream of going to the moon. Through hard work, dedication, and rest she is able to achieve her dream and shoot for the stars.

[To The Stars](#) from [Robert dos Santos](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The advert has already gone worldwide and has been featured on the Ads of The World, the world's largest commercial advertising archive, as one of the best ads currently in circulation and is on display alongside global campaigns for Amazon's new Alexa and Lenovo's GTA. In addition, the short film has been nominated for awards in the Paris International and Sydney Short Film Festivals.



■ ***What was the inspiration behind this?***

My jump from law to directing was a big inspiration. For many years I was doing what my parents, friends, and people I had never met thought I should do. But then I went to follow my dreams. The idea that you can see your dream clearly and then follow it to its end is basically my story. The young heroine in our story realises this at an early age and goes for it.

■ ***Could you share more about your creative process when given a brief?***

As mentioned before the most important part of the creative process is knowing who you are and what you believe to be beautiful. If you know this you know what you can knock out the park while simultaneously knowing where your limitations

are. When given a brief the idea is to find out whether this is something you can turn into magic or whether this is something best left to someone more suited. When it is something that sparks your imagination it is a natural process. You can't stop it.

Ideas storm in from the ether to the point that you cannot sleep at night. The process is completely organic and one that consumes every waking moment. If it's not, then step aside and let someone else better suited take control.

▀ ***What do you have planned for 2022?***

I am in the midst of a project for a company in New Zealand. I have a few additional projects planned which are currently under wraps but I am heading over to LA in April and then to London thereafter.

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