

M&C Saatchi Abel on the power of creativity to change the world

 By Leigh Andrews

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M&C Saatchi Abel's founding partner and ECD Gordon Ray shares the power of work "rich with local insight and executed with heart," while founding partner and chief executive Jacques Burger explains how M&C Saatchi Abel is motoring ahead in 2018.



Gordon Ray and Jacques Burger of M&C Saatchi Abel.

The year kicked off on all the right notes for M&C Saatchi Abel. We're only three months into 2018, but they've already had a welcome leadership shakeup, with Makosha Maja-Rasethaba appointed as partner and head of strategy for the Johannesburg agency.

At the time of her promotion, Maja-Rasethaba shared: "I have been so inspired by the agency's growth – from start-up to a powerful force within the industry."



Makosha Maja-Rasethaba named new partner at M&C Saatchi Abel

M&C Saatchi Abel 30 Jan 2018



They've also seen a slew of important new account wins in the past few weeks, from big automotive blue-chips Lexus and Automark to M&C Saatchi PLC's mid-2016 acquisition, Dalmatian's win of the Protea Hotels by Marriott advertising account.



Dalmatian tops off new business streak with Protea Hotels by Marriott win

M&C Saatchi Abel 23 Feb 2018



Proving they're firing on all cylinders, the agency has also already had a successful start on the 2018 award track, picking

up seven awards at the IAB Bookmark Awards, which celebrate excellence in digital.



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Then of course, there are their 2017 successes to consider.

Their 10X Investments' 'car rental' work, featuring local comedians Nik Rabinowitz and Siv Ngesi also proved funny wins when done right, as it was awarded experiential silver in the Creative Circle's combined September – December 2017 awards.



Creative Circle announces monthly award winners

5 Feb 2018



Looking at their Loeries wins in particular, they were responsible for 'PR & media communication' campaign gold for their work on Nando's Reconciliation Table.



Nando's SA invites local bigwigs to put all beef aside on Reconciliation Day

M&C Saatchi Abel 10 Feb 2017



They also jumped up from 18th to 17th spot in the Loeries Ranking per agency 2017: South Africa, with client Nando's in joint-ninth position in the communication design table based on the communication design category and Gordon Ray, founding partner and ECD of M&C Saatchi Abel Cape Town since the agency's inception, is ranked 17th in the executive creative director 2017 table.

Ray, says he's currently working on other "hot and exciting new business pitches," to be set up this year, and shares a few insights into their latest Loeries' accolades...

■ **What do you attribute this year's successes to?**

We're focused on doing work that's rich with local insight and executed with heart.

■ **What plans are already underway to better your ranking this year?**

Every year our clients trust us more, and we get to push the thinking a little more.

■ **How does your latest Loeries flock differ from your haul over the previous year?**

We had success on a wider spread of clients than the last year.

Most notably, we were recognised on our blue-chip clients, which is often more challenging, but always more rewarding.

■ **Tell us two people you personally admire in the industry in 2017 – both an established mentor figure as well as a newcomer making waves.**

I've always liked the work King James do, they don't dabble in scam.



Campaigning to #DefeatDayZero

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I think Pete Khoury is doing great things at TBWA Hunts, and I respect how consistent Mariana O'Kelly has been over the years.

M&C Saatchi Abel is motoring ahead in 2018

Jacques Burger, founding partner and chief executive of M&C Saatchi Abel, explains the Lexus and Autmark pitch process, as well as how to ensure your automotive advertising takes the high road...



M&C Saatchi Abel joins with Lexus and Autmark to start 2018 in the fast lane

M&C Saatchi Abel 18 Jan 2018



■ **Talk us through the recent Lexus and Autmark wins – what was the pitch process like for these?**

I believe the best pitches are the ones where the clients get to choose an agency based on them sharing their expertise and their historic experience or work in an environment that allows the client to meet the team and get a sense of chemistry – do they like the agency, does the agency have the requisite skill-set and do they have the relevant experience?

Make a bad decision from time to time

Adam Weber, M&C Saatchi Abel 16 Aug 2017





It's a far better way than asking the agency to deliver a creative solution in a fake environment with little client collaboration, and then choosing an agency on how well they guessed on the day. This pitch was run in the former way, not the latter, so we loved it!

■ **How does this complement your existing stable of brand accounts?**

It's the automotive category and we love automotive brands and have a long history as individuals of working in the category. It's also retail, a category which we have deep experience in, but also one which means it's measurable and you know if your solutions have worked quickly – you either move metal or you don't.

So, in many ways, it's the perfect mix of two categories that we are very passionate about. But it's also a prestigious blue-chip global brand with big local ambitions, and we love a challenge!

■ **Excellent! You've mentioned before that your team are car fanatics. Please share some points on getting automotive/motoring advertising right.**

Buying a car is a huge decision – it's so much more than ticking a set of boxes – it talks to who you are, where you are going – it says so much about you and it's probably the biggest branded investment you can make.

“Great automotive communication therefore needs to be not just about the head, but also the heart. I always say you don't watch a great car ad, you ‘feel’ it.”

■ **What's your overall agency highlight from the last year?**

We started this business to create beautifully simple solutions for what is becoming an increasingly complicated and complex world. So for us, it has been very rewarding to see fantastic growth for our clients, who have been with us for a long time. When your ideas are so powerful that they crash websites and almost break Twitter – those are proud moments.

Nando's, Heineken and Hollard taking the top slots in the *Sunday Times Most Loved Brands* was a really proud moment. Hosting the 700th Streetstore for World Streetstore day was also amazing.

■ **What's next for M&C Saatchi Abel? What you're most looking forward to from the coming months?**

Fresh, exciting, resonant work in the SA automotive category has to be on the agenda for sure. We've always believed in the power of creativity to change the world, so we are looking forward to work with our clients to harnessing a renewed optimism and energy around our country.

■ **What trends do you see as the biggest to come in 2018?**

Watch creativity move upstream as more businesses realise the value of creativity in delivering business solutions and the power it has in building distinction and differentiation for businesses. Ad agencies that have the right people and tools to shift their creative offering from ads to ideas, will be well positioned.

Lots to look forward to from 2018! [Click through](#) to our Loeries' special section for more, [here](#) to visit the M&C Saatchi Abel press office, and be sure to follow M&C Saatchi Abel on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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