

Q&A with TBWA\ANGOLA's Miguel Reis



By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Miguel Reis is the Creative Director for advertising agency TBWA\ANGOLA. He has recently been selected as an official jury member for the the African Cristal Festival Awards taking place in Cairo later this year, which celebrates the cream of the crop of advertising creativity and communication on the African continent.

He shares his views on advertising in Africa, the importance of advertising festivals, and why he loathes industry trends.

■ ***What inspires you?***

Everything. What I recall since I have memory until this very second. I get inspiration from everywhere - ideas, people, culture, art, music, film, technology, love or even the news. Everything.

■ ***In your opinion, what is the biggest trend to note in advertising right now?***



Miguel Reis

I hate trends. It makes me think we are all doing the same things, looking for the same concepts or executions. It's like we're all reading the same book. I think the name of the game is creativity. If we have to have a trend then make it creativity. Everybody's talking about storytelling right now, I just witnessed that at Cannes this year, but we've always been storytellers. I think it's our essence, not a trend.

In our industry we always have to keep looking for new and creative ways to engage consumers with brands and build relationships. We have so many different cultural aspects and ways of looking at things around the world, and in our markets we have to explore all these differences and bring them up, from within, as new and fresh ideas. Not follow trends. Even the consumer thinks this way and wants to be treated uniquely, not like all the other millions of consumers. Different is new. Trendy is not.

■ ***How does TBWA\ANGOLA stand out above the rest?***

The work we create. We're a local agency in a special market. We have a lot of international brands that are not based in Angola and also some important national brands that are worked on by agencies outside Angola, or agencies that have an office in Angola but don't create here because their creative teams aren't here.

This reflects on the way these brands communicate and advertise. It lacks local flavour and consumers often feel that. We create locally and our work has local and creative relevance. Our creative force is based in Angola and our creativity reflects that. It comes from what we live, what we see and breathe in Angola everyday.

■ ***How do you think advertising on the African continent compares internationally?***

I don't think we're behind in terms of being creative; we are very creative in Africa. We have talent. You can see that at Cannes, Clio, D&AD, LIA Awards and other big international advertising festivals. There are African agencies bringing metal back home. What we don't have is the same amount of talent because we don't have the same dimension as an industry in our continent when compared to Europe or the American continent, for example. We don't have as many developed markets.

As I see it, it has to do with two things: talent and means. Talent is the magic part of the equation. The means are the sensitive part. So when you have talent and means, you'll make it big. I think in Africa we have talent and in some markets we have the means to combine with it. That's why I also believe we have a fresh page to write on in the international sphere

and a word to say in the future as our continent is growing and developing. If you look at the results of the African agencies at Cannes this year you'll get my point.

Africa's best creative work is being awarded on the same stage as other international markets, just not in the same quantity. I'm a creative, I know the power of an idea and I also know that Africa has lots of creativity and creative people, but it's just a matter of having the means to power up ideas, take risks, be demanding, have the will to make iconic work and keep working hard. As creative people we're believers, so we'll keep on fighting for ideas until our last breath.

▣ ***What are the biggest challenges you face in your role?***

There are a few. Our market is young. In many aspects our industry is still starting. However, the dynamic is hugely intense and the demand is very high. So this creates gaps that we have to fill with skills like multitasking, multidisciplinary teams and also a constant search for talent and solutions. This is a big challenge in Angola. We have to create conditions that give us the possibility to create competent and creative work in time for our clients.

So this makes us, as a creative team, have to extend our roles beyond what we're initially assigned. After this there's the 'make believe' part, making clients believe that creativity and disruption pays off is a huge challenge in a market where the demand is way over the offer but we are winning some of these battles, bringing us confidence for the future.

▣ ***Why do you think competitions such as the African Cristal Festival are important to the industry?***

Advertising festivals are a great way to measure the industry's creativity and also to create moments of inspiration and reflection about the industry momentum and future. We need to have these competitions in Africa and we need to have them with the view to raise the bar. Our industry work must show up; show to the markets and to the clients that we are here and we have a creative force. We also have to be able to do it inside our continent. That's why the African Cristal Festival is important. Our industry needs this.

Europe has a lot of advertising festivals, the American continent too. We have a huge market in Africa with millions of consumers, so our creativity and the best of our creative work around the continent must stand out. It's also good to have local perspectives when judging the work, such as having a multicultural international jury. This is very important not only for the credibility of the competition but also for the work itself.

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