

Top student nominee: Jason Walden

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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Jason Walden, a visual communications student at Vega School of Brand Leadership Johannesburg, was recently announced as one of three finalists in the student category of the 2017 AdFocus Awards. I caught up with Walden to find out what he is expecting from the gala evening taking place on this evening, Wednesday, 22 November 2017 in Johannesburg.



Jason Walden, a visual communications student at Vega School of Brand Leadership Johannesburg.

Walden says the nomination gave him more confidence in himself and his work than he has ever had before. "It honestly means the world to me because it's assured me that I'm entering into the right career choice because I was a pretty directionless student coming out of matric," he says. "AdFocus is also the perfect platform to propel my name out into the industry so it's going to be an invaluable experience."

Walden entered a total of five projects from his second and third years at Vega and says his work is very honest. "For example, my self-branding project titled, 'Overdose' is all about the medication I take to help me deal with my chronic anxiety levels. I like to challenge the norms of society too. One of my projects titled 'Foil Hat' concerns itself with the unrealistic beauty standards that the media places on women, and another project titled 'The Dumbest Project' is all about the world not taking the teacher crises seriously enough."

A love for the power of digital technology

He says his focus at Vega has always been integrated campaigns, and thus the majority of his projects, like the ones mentioned above, are always transformed into campaigns with three or more different elements. "I have a love for the power of digital technology and its influence too. I always try to cleverly use already existing platforms like Twitter (for example, tweeting from prison (My 'How to rob a bank' campaign)), fake click bait ('The Dumbest Project') and virtual reality technology ('Jack')."

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He says he is inspired by his peers. "I love seeing other people's work, which pretty much blew mine out of the water. It inspires me to be better and better. I'm an incredibly competitive person; so naturally, other students in the same situation, inspire me." Walden says his mom is also a big inspiration. "We're such polar opposites, but the support that I've gotten from her over the years, when I've been melting down over stress and deadlines, have really been invaluable to me."

Design icons

In terms of whom he admires the most in the industry, Walden shares that he practically worships Stefan Sagmeister. "He's based in New York, but his work is just absolutely mind blowing. I hope to one day be on the level that he's at, because he has, without a doubt, had an amazing impact on the advertising industry and influenced many, many people."



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Another of Walden's icons is design legend, Susan Kare. "She knows how to sell herself," he says. "For example, when Apple asked her to design the original Mac icons, they asked her if she had any knowledge on icon design. She replied yes, a vast knowledge; meanwhile she had never designed an icon before in her life. And she pulled it off in the end. That to me is really inspiring. My entire second year portfolio was a tribute to her."

Walden shares that his ultimate goal would be to eventually become a senior art director in a hot shot agency. But says he knows that will only come later. "For the time being, all I really want to do is slowly climb the ladder like other newbies in the industry whilst making some kick ass work that hopefully has the power to influence people and change the world for the better."

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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