

The ANC's Loerie-winning integrated PR campaign

 By [Sarah Britten](#)

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Campaign: The Spear of the Nation

Brand: Goodman Gallery

Agency: ANC

Summary

Art is not something that gets talked about in a country where people care far more about sport, politics, celebrities or the business of survival. So how do you make art matter? Faced with a challenging brief, ANC developed an integrated campaign for the Goodman Gallery that achieved an outstanding return on investment and demonstrated the power of a big idea.

The brief

Remind South Africans that art matters.

Communication context

In a cluttered communication context, art receives little coverage in comparison to sport, politics or entertainment. Achieving high awareness levels with communication around a subject often perceived as obscure and elitist would be a major challenge.

The target market

Primary: South African adults LSM 4-6, current and lapsed ANC supporters

Secondary: South African adults LSM 8-10, media and influencers

The insight

Research showed that everybody has a different idea about what "art" is - but few South Africans actually understand it. *Saying* that art matters would not achieve the cut through the team was looking for: it would have to be demonstrated in a way that was simple and easy to understand.

For this reason, the decision was made not to tackle art generically, but to focus on a single work which exemplified the

power of art to make us feel and (in some cases) think.

Campaign proposition

The proposition needed to be simple enough to be memorable and compelling, but flexible enough to be tweaked for the needs of different target audiences. After exploring alternatives such as "art makes the world beautiful" and "art makes you think", it was decided that a provocative approach would be most effective. In consultation with the client, the agency felt that "art is offensive" was best positioned to cut through the clutter.

Key messages

Based on focus group findings, the team knew that for art to be made relevant to a broad cross-section of South Africans, messages relevant to their needs and aspirations would need to be deployed. Hot button issues guaranteed to provoke a public response were selected. For LSM 4-6, the message focused around racism and respect for African culture. For LSM 8-10, the key message was the link between art and freedom of speech and in turn with fears of the erosion of other freedoms.

The strategy

The strategy was simple: create a highly political artwork guaranteed to offend most South Africans, draw attention to it, foment public outrage and maintain the hype.

The creative concept

The key visual needed to be simple and easy to understand while attracting as much attention as possible. Many South Africans may have missed the historical references in Brett Murray's painting of Jacob Zuma as Lenin, but the addition of male genitalia made the offensiveness of the work obvious. Thus it required little in the way of interpretation, important in a conservative market with very low levels of art literacy.

The strong visual also provided a focal point for a campaign in which so many different elements were employed. When the campaign needed refreshing, the key visual was updated during an activation which in turn generated further conversation.

Elements

The team knew that traditional above-the-line advertising would be wallpaper. In order to ensure talkability, extensive use was made of events, flash mobs, activations and word of mouth to drive conversation. All relevant touchpoints were used, with television and radio debate, extensive coverage in print and online and discussion on social media. Events and announcements were carefully timed to ensure maximum media coverage and prevent wearout.



Example of activation. Image source:
[M&G Online](#).

[click to enlarge](#)



The refreshed creative. Image source:
[Eyewitness News](#).

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Timing

Every event was designed and timed to trigger further discussion, resulting in a highly efficient campaign requiring no ATL

spend.

- **Phase 1: build up**

Initially, awareness of the work built up gradually. "The Spear of the Nation" would have remained known only to South Africans already interested in art, were it not for the fact that it was published in the *City Press* newspaper. ANC drew public attention to it [by denouncing](#) the painting itself, the artist and the Goodman Gallery, as well as the newspaper.

- **Phase 2: rollout**

The campaign moved up another gear as the full messaging strategy was rolled out. Marches, flash mobs, activations and calls for "The Spear" to be destroyed focused on the culture and respect message, while online the focus was around threats to freedom of expression. Parodies of the offending painting began to appear and [#TheSpear](#) dominated Twitter.

To ensure that high levels of interest were maintained, the creative was refreshed with an activation involving two men who defaced the painting in front of a camera crew. To continue to hold the interest of a public distracted by many other messages, calls were then made to boycott *City Press*, which then became a symbol of [media freedom](#) and drove additional conversation.

- **Phase 3: resolution**

After initial resistance, *City Press* editor [Ferial Haffajee](#) ([@ferialhaffajee](#)) agreed to demands to take the image off the newspaper's website, revealing her reasons in a dramatic letter. The Goodman Gallery and ANC reached agreement and the [case was withdrawn](#).

Just as interest began to subside, a final element was introduced, as the Film and Publications Board ruled on the image, declaring it unfit to be viewed by children under the age of 16. "The Spear" continued to be a major subject of discussion at cocktail parties and is likely to stand out as one of the major news events of the year.

Results

"The Spear of the Nation" achieved awareness levels unprecedented in South Africa, as well as globally.

By 23 May 2012, [more than 108 million people](#) were exposed to the campaign.

As of 31 May, "The Spear" received over R48 million in equivalent advertising value, an impressive achievement in such a short space of time. The Goodman Gallery is now world-famous, Haffajee has entrenched her status as [our first celebrity editor](#), and the *City Press* enjoyed [good sales](#) while underlining its credibility as a bulwark of media freedom.

Importantly, art and questions around its role in society dominated news coverage and public discussion for more than two weeks.

Conclusion

After "The Spear of the Nation", no South African can be in any doubt as to the importance of art and its relevance to current debates. In terms of innovation, execution and relevance, "The Spear of the Nation" scores highly. It will serve as a benchmark for integrated campaigns for years to come.

For more:

- Bizcommunity Search: [Zuma Spear](#)

- Google News Search: [Zuma Spear](#)
- Twitter Search: [Zuma Spear OR zumaspear OR fbpspear OR fpbspear](#)

ABOUT SARAH BRITTEN

Dr Sarah Britten has 21 years of experience across various clients and multiple strategic disciplines, including social media and shopper. Her client experience includes Nedbank, Investec, FNB, Bothongo Group, Sanofi, Colgate Palmolive, Aspen, Adcock Ingram, Kraft Heinz, Citroën and Land Rover.

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