

with... Ross Chowles

This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with Ross Chowles, creative strategist at The Jupiter Drawing Room Cape Town...



Chowles in his Bright Day studio. The old face with the young ones.

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Chowles: I live in Cape Town's most boring suburb: Bergvliet. It's lawnmower and church territory. I work in Observatory and I play at Bright Creative Space, a studio I own in Salt River.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Chowles: Helping other people come up with awesome ideas that made me famous.

3. Describe your career so far.

Chowles: I started as a junior art director in 1980 at a Johannesburg agency that no longer exists. There was only Letraset, bromides and Magic Markers. 'Social media' was the society pages of the newspaper, Apple Mac was a dessert at McDonald's and 'retouching' was a second date. I worked on M-Net during the glory days: Launched 'We Won't Stop The Magic', KTV, SuperSport and the like. Then I came to Cape Town to take over as create director at Y&R Cape. In 1994 I started The Jupiter Drawing Room with Kevin Aspoas and Joanne Thomas. I started to get the hang of Freehand then they changed it to InDesign. I was appointed to the International Board of the [One Club \(One Show\)](#) last year.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Chowles: 50th anniversary collector's edition of Miles Davis's [Kind OF Blue](#). Whisky. Sometimes both are consumed at the same time.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Chowles: The magic moment when a team 'crack' an idea. It's orgasmic.

6. What are a few pain points your industry can improve on?

Chowles: Clients should stop cutting the budget. We are an ideas business. Less money means less thinking time. Not good for us nor the client. We need to spend more time thinking of ways to solve clients' marketing needs.

7. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Chowles: 7am at my desk, rush, panic, present, cry, sympathise, eat lunch, present, rush, panic, coerce, sympathise, cry. Leave the office around 6 or 6.30. Sometimes I leave at 5 and go to Bright to run a figure-drawing class.

8. What are the tools of your trade?

Chowles: Paper, pens, PPT, Google, brain.

9. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Chowles: I don't think any agency is getting it right. We are all struggling with a digital revolution while going through transformation, revolution and a recession, all at the same time. I could talk for an hour about this subject alone. However, I do think Joe Public is getting the 'agency vibe' right.

10. What are you working on right now?

Chowles: I've just exhibited [10 paintings I collaborated on with a poet](#). That was scary but lots of fun. Ad campaigns but that's confidential.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Chowles: These days *digital* is the most overused (and least understood) word. Of all the buzzwords, I hate "all on the same page" the most. I mutter the f-word almost every hour.

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Chowles: Early morning at my desk with a cup of coffee.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

Chowles: If I spend 30 minutes with someone, I'll pry all their secrets out. Do NOT sit next to me at a party!

14. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Chowles: Photos of Lulu (my toddler), paintings and the odd note from workshops. Nothing dodgy. Dodgy stuff is in my head, not on my phone.

15. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Chowles: Run for your life! Actually, I'd say 'Be interesting'. We need interesting people in marketing. I'd tell them to face their fears as we also need fearless people. Interesting and fearless people.

16. Plug your contact details, punt yourself - list all the places people can find you/your work online...

Chowles:

[BrightDaySA](#) on Facebook and my [Pinterest page](#).

You can read more about Chowles and Bright Day by [clicking here](#).

*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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