

Ink the future of here and elsewhere!

INKA

MAGAZINE

October 2026 #02



Dr Nkeng Stephens

Artiste, Film Producer,
Cinematographer, Director, Colorist.

13ans à vos côtés.



Moov Money,
SoyiMavô

MOOV
Money

Editorial

We often look back on successes from the vantage point of having reached our goal: a job, a project, a career, recognition. But behind every journey lie realities we rarely see: doubts, mistakes, rejections, fears, and those moments when we wonder if we're really on the right path. For this second issue of INKA, we've chosen to look behind the scenes. Through their stories, they talk about what we rarely see: the difficult beginnings, the moments of self-doubt, the failures, the fear of not measuring up but also the decisions, the encounters, and the convictions that kept them going. This issue, therefore, is not simply a collection of success stories.

It is, above all, a collection of human journeys. Because behind every title, there is a person. Behind every skill lie years of learning. Behind every success lie failures. And behind the confidence we admire today, there has often been a great deal of fear.

Through these stories, we want to remind you that there is no single path to success. Some journeys are straightforward, while others are full of detours, fresh starts, and changes in direction. Perhaps what matters most isn't always knowing where to go, but finding the strength to keep moving forward. Doubting doesn't mean failing.

Sometimes, it simply means you're in the process of forging your own path. This issue invites you to discover that unseen part of these journeys: the questions, the choices, the setbacks, the moments of clarity, and the small victories that shape who we become.

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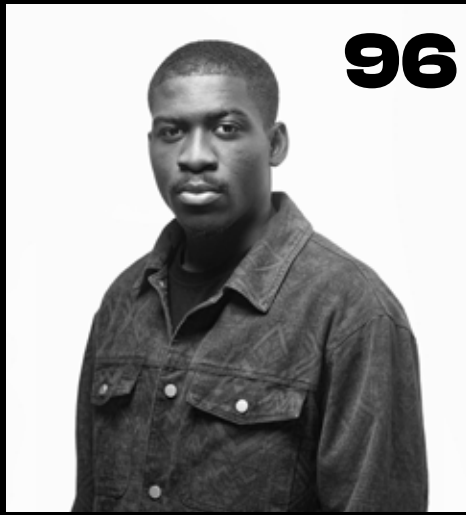
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Leadership



Gaëlle Stella ONANA OYONO

**Building brands, shaping visions,
transforming ecosystems.**

At the intersection of strategy, media, and institutional leadership, Gaëlle Stella Onana Oyono embodies a generation of women who do not merely communicate, but who shape, transform, and have a lasting impact on the ecosystems in which they operate. From Yaoundé to the pan-African arena, her career follows a clear thread: giving meaning to visibility and making communication a true driver of growth, credibility, and impact. As the founder of AELI Services, Director of Communications and Development at the Africa24 Group, and a consultant and trainer, she builds brands the same way one builds visions with rigor, method, and ambition. In this interview, she reflects on the choices, convictions, and experiences that have shaped a career resolutely focused on strategic structuring and influence.

If you had to summarize your career path in a single guiding principle, what would it be today, and why does that principle define you ?

I think the idea that best defines my path today is: structuring impact. For a long time, I thought I was just doing "communications." But over time, through experience, increased responsibilities, and above all, hands-on work in the field, I've come to understand that what truly drives me isn't simply making something visible. It's understanding how an idea, an organization, a project, or a vision can be strategically structured to have a real impact on its environment. For me, communication has become just one tool among many. A lever, not an end in itself. What interests me today is the ability to build sustainable dynamics, position projects, build bridges, develop ecosystems, and bring forth narratives that truly transform things.

You work across the fields of strategy, communications, institutions, and pan-African media : what, in your view, fundamentally connects all these areas?

What connects all these worlds is the power of strategic influence. The media influence perceptions. Institutions shape policy directions. Brands influence behavior. Leaders shape human dynamics. Ultimately, it all comes down to storytelling, vision, and the ability to rally people around a clear direction. I believe that Africa today needs people who are not only capable of communicating, but above all of crafting strong, coherent, and credible visions. And that is precisely where I find myself.

At what point did you realize that communication alone wasn't enough, and that you needed to move toward the strategic structuring of brands and organizations ?

I think I realized this while working on projects where communication was good, but the results didn't follow.

You can have stunning visuals, beautiful campaigns, and plenty of visibility, but if, behind the scenes, there's no clear vision, no solid organization, and no coherent strategy, it always ends up running out of steam.

Conversely, I've seen organizations with limited resources but an extremely clear vision succeed in building real influence simply because their positioning was spot-on. That's when I realized that the real challenge wasn't just about "communicating," but about thinking through the overall architecture of the brand, the project, or the organization.

You work with executives and institutions. In your opinion, what is the most common mistake leaders make when building their image today ?

The biggest mistake today is confusing visibility with credibility. Many leaders want to be seen even before they've built something truly solid behind their image. However, a strong image isn't built solely on photos, slogans, or a strong digital presence. It's built on consistency, perseverance, substance, and above all, the ability to build trust. An image without substance always ends up crumbling.

People often talk about "visibility," but you emphasize impact. How do you distinguish between a visible brand and a truly influential one ?

A visible brand attracts attention. An influential brand changes behavior, builds loyalty, and ultimately becomes a benchmark in its ecosystem. Today, it's very easy to be visible on social media. But being influential is something else entirely. Influence is measured by the ability to create a movement, steer conversations, bring a community together, and drive decisions, collaborations, and tangible opportunities. Impact isn't about making noise; it's about the mark you leave behind.

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You can have beautiful visuals, great campaigns, and plenty of visibility, but if there's no clear vision, no solid organization, and no coherent strategy behind them, it always ends up running out of steam.

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Your career has spanned a wide range of fields (media, public administration, consulting, and training). Which experience has had the greatest impact on how you think about strategy ?

Quite honestly, it was my hands-on experiences that transformed me the most. Having worked in pan-African media, institutional settings, strategic consulting, and nonprofit projects has given me a much more comprehensive understanding of reality. For example, managing large-scale media operations taught me about coordination, crisis management, dealing with pressure, and the need to plan ahead. But leading empowerment projects for hundreds of women, with limited resources, taught me something else: resilience, practical wisdom, the ability to mobilize people, and the capacity to make an impact, even in complex environments.

As Director of Communications and Development for the Africa24 Group, how do you balance media demands, editorial vision, and growth challenges?

It's a constant balancing act. A media outlet cannot grow on good content alone. But neither can it grow sustainably without editorial credibility. We must succeed in building a vision that allows the media outlet to be economically viable, while remaining true to its mission and identity. In a pan-African group like Africa24, this requires a great deal of coordination, foresight, and strategy, because we have to think about content, audience, partnerships, visibility, operations, and growth all at the same time.

With AELI Services, you help build brands and develop leaders. What is the first thing you analyze when you start working with a new client ?

The first thing I analyze is the clarity of the vision. Very often, people think they have a communication problem when, in reality, they have a positioning problem. So I ask: Who are you, really? What is your ambition ? What problem are you solving? Why should people trust you? And above all: What truly sets you apart ? Because a solid strategy always starts with a clear understanding of your identity and direction.

You are also committed to empowering young women. What does women's leadership mean to you in practical terms, beyond just rhetoric ?

For me, women's leadership isn't just a matter of representation or slogans. It's the ability to create spaces where women can truly access the resources, opportunities, training, networks, and confidence they need to grow. Women's leadership also means passing on knowledge, opening doors, fostering collective momentum, and, above all, helping women understand that they have a rightful place in spaces of decision-making, influence, and transformation.



In your experience, what distinguishes a “linear” career from a truly strategic and intentional one ?

A linear career often follows opportunities. A strategic career follows a vision. I believe that at some point, you have to stop simply accumulating experiences and start building a true professional identity. Every experience must serve a broader direction. Even detours must make sense. Today, I understand that all the experiences I've had even those that seemed unrelated were actually building the same expertise: that of strategic structuring and managing high-impact projects.

What are the unseen sacrifices behind a career marked by leadership and high-level responsibility sacrifices that are rarely discussed ?

We rarely talk about mental fatigue the constant need to think, anticipate, coordinate, shoulder responsibilities, and manage teams, crises, projects, and expectations, sometimes all at once. We also rarely talk about the loneliness of decision-making. And then there are the personal sacrifices, the time, and the balances that must be constantly readjusted. But despite all that, I think that when you're deeply aligned with what you're building, it remains an incredibly exciting adventure.



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If you had to convey a single truth to the next generation of African leaders, what would it be without any filters or beating around the bush ?

Don't build just to be seen. Build to last. Africa doesn't just need people who are visible. It needs people who are strong, competent, strategic, and capable of building sustainable ecosystems. Talent is important. But today, discipline, structure, the ability to execute, and an understanding of the real challenges will make the difference. And above all: don't be afraid to think big. Our continent needs ambitions that match its potential.

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DODJI MPOUL

Where ideas become unforgettable experiences.

There are those who see design as just pixels and colors... and then there's DODJI MPOUL, the man who transforms every idea into a digital experience that captivates, entices, and leaves a lasting impression.

With over 8 years of experience crafting UX interfaces, creating powerful visuals, and collaborating with more than 50 brands, he has established himself as a leading authority in UI/UX design, recognized by his peers as the ACA's Best Designer of 2024. Today, he shares how his concepts come to life, how he transforms the most complex briefs into elegant and intuitive interfaces, and what truly makes the magic behind a design that works.

Can you tell us how you got started in UI/UX and graphic design ? What inspired you to pursue this path ?

I started designing without really realizing I was doing it. In college, I was already developing small interfaces directly in code. I didn't use design software, but I had that attention to detail, that appreciation for beauty and functionality. My friends and even some of my professors were already calling me "the designer."

In my first year of my master's program, I received my first real request from a client : to design an interface. I'd never done anything like that before. I remember locking myself away all night, downloading Adobe XD, and following tutorials until morning. It wasn't perfect there was a lot of feedback but the client was eventually satisfied. That's when I realized I wanted to take it further.

You've worked with more than 50 brands and on various types of projects (showcase web-sites, e-commerce sites, mobile apps, SaaS). Which project left the biggest impression on you, and why ?

One project that left a deep impression on me was the one I led with a very prestigious government institution in the country. It was an extremely challenging project and, honestly, at times very frustrating. We were dealing with a complex administrative process, with a huge number of factors to consider and constraints that were new to me at the time. It wasn't just a matter of designing an interface, but of understanding a cumbersome, structured system and then making it user-friendly. It was also a tremendous privilege to contribute to the project. Together with the team, we rose to the challenge. The user flows were designed, user tests were conducted and validated: everything was ready. But in the end, the project unfortunately never saw the light of day, for reasons I'd rather not discuss here. I still feel a bit bitter about it, because it was a solid, useful project that was also very rewarding on a personal level. But it's also this kind of experience that shapes a designer.

Your career path is impressive. How did you handle stressful periods so you could perform at your best ?

Honestly, it wasn't easy. There was a constant fear of not measuring up, especially at the beginning. And there was also financial pressure. In the very beginning, I took on almost every project sometimes for very low rates because I had to keep moving forward, pay the bills, and survive. What helped me was reminding myself why I was in this line of work. I learned to turn stress into motivation, to work harder, to keep learning, and, above all, not to give up when things got tough.

You were named the ACA's Best UI/UX Designer of 2024. In your opinion, what does it take to reach this level of excellence ? Are technical skills enough, or are there other key factors ?

The 2024 African Creative Awards were a wonderful experience for me. The event went off without a hitch, and at the time, I didn't really grasp the impact this award would have later on. Looking back, I realize that it's not just a trophy, but recognition of the work I've done over time. I'd also like to give a shout-out to Wilfried Assomo, who finished right behind me. He's a very talented Cameroonian designer, and competing against him was particularly inspiring. Ultimately, this level of excellence isn't based solely on technical skill. It's based on consistency, rigor, the ability to learn, to challenge oneself, and to persevere over time.



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Excellence is not merely a matter of technical mastery. It is built on consistency, refined through rigor, nourished by continuous learning, and revealed in the ability to persevere, day after day, over time.

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How do you manage to create interfaces that perfectly meet client briefs ?

I spend a lot of time listening. Often, clients don't clearly articulate their needs. My job is to read between the lines and ask the right questions. Once I fully understand the problem, the design almost comes naturally. The real breakthrough doesn't come from inspiration, but from understanding.

Of the tools you use (Figma, Adobe XD, Photoshop, Illustrator, Jira, Maze), which one is your favorite and why ?

Figma remains my primary tool today, especially for collaborative work and UX/UI design. But I also use Adobe Illustrator a lot, particularly for anything related to visual identity, as well as Notion, which helps me immensely in organizing my projects, ideas, and processes. For me, tools are important, but they're secondary. What really matters is the thought process and logic behind every decision.

Can you describe your UX process when you start a new project ? How do you go from the initial idea to a final prototype?

I always start by understanding the overall context of the project: who the users are, what the actual objectives are, and what the constraints are whether technical, business-related, or budgetary. This phase is essential because good design is based first and foremost on a solid understanding of the problem. Next, I work on structuring the information and mapping out user flows. Depending on the scope of the project, this may involve detailed wireframes or simply basic layout sketches when the scope is more limited. The idea is to lay a clear foundation before considering aesthetics. The prototype then serves as a validation tool. It is never an end in itself, but rather a means to test, adjust, and iterate. I refine the design as many times as necessary until I arrive at a solution that is simple, seamless, and truly effective for the user.

You've trained students to become "UX ninjas." What key skills do you consider essential for success in design today ?

When I was teaching students, I placed the greatest emphasis on the ability to think critically. Not just on producing mockups, but on understanding the problems.

I also placed a strong emphasis on rigor, curiosity, and the ability to handle feedback. My goal was never to sell a fantasy, but to prepare students for the reality of the profession: the constraints, the deadlines, and the demanding clients.

How do you go about sharing your creativity and expertise with your students while staying on top of the latest trends ?

When I was still teaching, I tried to instill a solid foundation rather than just the latest trends. I encouraged my students to justify their choices, to experiment, and to make mistakes. Today, due to a lack of time and my current commitments, I no longer teach, but that period greatly enriched my own practice and my vision of design.

In your opinion, what does the future hold for UI/UX design and graphic design in Africa and internationally ?

The trend is very positive. More and more companies now understand the importance of UX design. When I started out, that wasn't the case at all in Cameroon, for example.

The field wasn't widely understood, and some companies still viewed design as an unnecessary expense. We'd jump straight into development, which led to endless rounds of feedback and a lot of frustration. You had to work for a company abroad to earn a decent salary and receive the respect you deserved.

Today, attitudes are changing. Companies are increasingly bringing designers onto their teams and understanding the value of upfront planning and that's a great thing. In Africa as well as internationally, design is taking on the strategic role it deserves.



If you could change one thing about the way companies approach design, what would it be ?

I would like to make it clear that design is not just a final layer. It must be integrated from the very beginning of a project.

When design is viewed as an investment rather than an expense, the results are always better.

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Finally, what advice would you give to young designers who want to get started in UI/UX and graphic design today ?

Don't rush things. Be open to learning, making mistakes, and starting over. Work hard, keep learning, and, above all, be patient. Design is a marathon, not a sprint.

”



Impact



Bénédicte KOSSONOU YA

Turning challenges into growth opportunities.

Before headlines, markets, and numbers, there were on-the-ground realities, complex environments, and decisions made at times amid uncertainty. Bénédicte Kossou Ya's journey was not an easy one, but it was shaped by her ability to identify the flaws in a system in order to better reveal its potential. From her early forays into microinsurance to continent-wide expansion strategies, she has learned to navigate regulatory constraints, fragmented markets, and performance requirements. Where many see limitations, she sees opportunities.

Where structures slow things down, she structures growth. Her story is that of a woman who has turned every challenge into a stepping stone to build a broader vision: that of an African insurance industry that is more accessible, more agile, and resolutely forward-looking.

Let's go back to the beginning: What drew you to the insurance industry, and how did your early experiences shape your career path ?

I had a fairly general understanding of insurance, but my real interest was sparked when I had to choose my specialization after completing my preparatory classes for the engineering program.

It was out of intellectual curiosity that I turned to actuarial science, a discipline at the intersection of mathematics and risk management. I then enrolled in the engineering program at the Hautes Études en Assurance (HEA).

Very quickly, I developed a particular interest in microinsurance, especially its social impact. It addresses a critical need: protecting populations that are often excluded from traditional systems. My first experiences in the field were pivotal.

They reinforced a strong conviction I held: insurance can transform lives, provided it is designed with local realities in mind.

You've moved from technical positions to strategic roles. What was the most difficult transition in your career ?

The most challenging and defining transition in my career was the shift from a purely technical role to a strategic and business-oriented one. In technical fields, we rely on models, data, and certainties. Everything is structured using "relatively" well-known methods.

In strategy and sales, you operate in a climate of uncertainty. Everything is more nuanced : you have to convince, influence, negotiate, and above all, understand human dynamics. I had to learn a new language: human interaction, perception, psychology, and trust. It's no longer enough to simply understand your product or service.

You have to build buy-in and get decision-makers whom you must be able to identify to adopt it, in order to forge partnerships that take into account the specific characteristics of each market. It's a continuous learning process that requires both rigor and interpersonal skills.

Looking back on your early days, what was the biggest challenge you had to overcome to make a name for yourself in that environment ?

My main challenge wasn't technical, but structural. The insurance industry is highly structured, organized by business lines and types of risk... When you're just starting out, the paths are often already laid out.

But for me, I was looking for something different. I had a different ambition: to develop across different areas, understand multiple lines of business, connect different areas of expertise, and contribute to and influence overall decisions.

It wasn't always easy. I agreed to follow the traditional career path, while remaining open to opportunities that would allow me to broaden my scope of work. This enabled me to build a hybrid profile, which is now a real asset.

You've worked in several African markets. Can you tell us about a particularly complex or memorable situation you had to handle in the field ?

I remember the microinsurance projects we were working on, which we were discussing simultaneously in very different contexts: an unstable regulatory framework and, above all, deep mistrust of insurers.

We had to start from scratch:

- Simplify the way we communicated;
- Adapt our products;
- Work with trusted local partners.

It was a challenge, but also a revelation. I realized that a good product isn't enough. Even the most brilliant technical solution is worthless without human buy in regardless of the market. It must be understood, accepted, and, above all, adopted.

Has there been a moment of doubt or failure in your career that has profoundly influenced the way you work today ?

Yes, I've experienced failures. And they've been essential. One of the most memorable involved an ambitious and costly IT deployment project in which we had invested heavily. On paper, everything seemed to be working.

A "copy-and-paste" approach seemed obvious, because the organizations were virtually identical. But we had underestimated one key factor: the human element.

The system wasn't sufficiently adapted to the context or the users. That failure had a profound impact on me and transformed the way I work. Today, I systematically take into account cultural, organizational, institutional, and human factors especially the needs of the users.

How did you establish your credibility in such a demanding and technical industry ?

It was built on a solid foundation: my technical training in the Higher Studies in Insurance (HEA) engineering program at INPHB, which allowed me to acquire the fundamentals of actuarial science and risk management. Next, I chose to steer my career toward a variety of opportunities in order to develop cross-functional experience.

This gave me a more comprehensive and strategic understanding of the sector, particularly regarding the challenges of insurance development in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, I also chose to contribute in other ways, by fostering discussions and sometimes challenging reflections on industry practices, with the goal of driving change in approaches. Ultimately, my credibility has been built on this balance between expertise, hands-on experience, and the ability to ask critical questions to drive progress.

You operate at the intersection of several industries (insurance, reinsurance, and assistance). How do you create value within this ecosystem ?

I work at the intersection of several fields insurance, microinsurance, reinsurance, and assistance which are still too often viewed in isolation.

For my part, I've chosen to approach them from an integrated perspective.

When I design a solution, I don't limit myself to the product itself. I analyze the entire value chain:

- Its economic viability,
- Its practical application in the field,
- and its real impact on the customer. This approach allows me to:
- Develop financially sound offerings,
- Optimize the customer experience,
- and ensure overall consistency among the various components.

The goal is clear: to go beyond a purely technical approach to design solutions that are truly relevant, accessible, and useful.

In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to the development of the insurance industry in Africa today ?

In my view, there are three major obstacles:

- **Trust** : Past experiences and unresolved claims have left deep scars in the collective memory and eroded trust ;
- **Accessibility** : Products are often too expensive or too complex for low-income populations; they are poorly explained and therefore poorly understood ;
- **And finally, a lack of mastery or utilization of distribution channels** : we are not where potential customers are, and we are not creating the conditions to attract new customers or "appeal" to new segments of the population; we remain disconnected from people's habits. These are profound challenges but also opportunities for transformation three areas where we must collectively make progress.

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Humility is the starting point.
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You have led expansion strategies in several markets. What is the key to successfully entering a new African market ?

Humility is the starting point. Every African market is unique, with its own cultural, economic, and sometimes even informal realities. Standardized approaches rarely work. The first step, therefore, is to take the time to gain a deep understanding of the local context:

- Local customs;
- People's expectations;
- Local constraints.

Next, it is essential to rely on partners who are familiar with these realities and who can help establish a local presence. Once this understanding is established, it's time to adapt: adjusting your business model, your offerings, and your tools. This involves, in particular, adapting IT systems and operational processes so that they align with the promises made to the market. Ultimately, the key remains simple: listen before acting, then adapt consistently.

Your approach combines actuarial expertise with business strategy. How do you balance these two aspects on a day-to-day basis ?

Humility is the starting point. I view these two dimensions as deeply complementary. On the one hand, actuarial expertise ensures the financial soundness and sustainability of products: it enables us to manage risks and guarantee the long-term fulfillment of our commitments.

On the other hand, business strategy allows us to align these products with market expectations and build genuine customer loyalty. My role is precisely to bridge the gap between these two worlds. In practical terms, this involves transforming a technical analysis into a clear and understandable value proposition for the client, but also, conversely, grounding business ambitions in the reality of the numbers and risks.

The real challenge, therefore, lies in this ongoing process of translation and balance.

Finally, I place great importance on adaptability: knowing how to explore the potential of each lever whether technical or commercial and adjust the strategy based on current priorities and the organization's vision.

The sector is evolving rapidly with the rise of digital technology. What major changes do you see emerging in Africa ?

Three revolutions are underway:

- Comprehensive distribution via mobile devices, which makes it possible to reach populations that have never been covered before;
- The use of data to personalize products and better assess risks;
- And the emergence of African insurtech companies that are challenging traditional models. This is not a threat it is an opportunity for those who know how to adapt.

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What message would you like to convey to the next generation of African professionals who aspire to build a career in this sector ?

Don't choose this industry for what it is today; choose it for what it can become especially with your fresh perspective and contributions. The African insurance industry is reinventing itself, and it needs young, courageous, and creative talent who are grounded in their local realities. Invest in your technical expertise, but never forget that behind every policy there is a person, a family, and a life plan to protect.

”



5 Questions to help you understand insurance: how it works, its practical benefits, and why it can truly change your daily life.

Many people are hesitant to purchase insurance because they don't always understand how it works. Can you explain, in simple terms, how insurance works and how it actually protects policyholders ?

Insurance is a mechanism of organized solidarity. In practical terms, several people regularly contribute a sum called a "premium" to a common fund. When one of them faces an unforeseen event covered by their policy such as an accident, illness, death, or fire they receive compensation from this fund.

The insurer, for its part, commits to honoring this promise in exchange for your premium. In short: you pay a small amount regularly so you don't suddenly lose everything.

Beyond coverage in the event of a claim, what are the tangible benefits that insurance can provide to an individual or a family on a day-to-day basis ?

Beyond simply providing compensation in the event of a loss, insurance plays an essential role in providing security and helping people plan for the future in their daily lives.

It serves as a tool for protection, risk management, and, in some cases, a means of financial planning. In practical terms, it offers benefits that are often underestimated. In the area of assistance, for example, it provides immediate support in the event of difficulties :

- Assistance available 24 hours a day,
- Direct coverage with certain providers, with no upfront costs,
- Access to preventive health services,
- Or legal support in the event of a dispute.

For a family, its impact is even more transformative. It ensures continuity of life in the event of a major unforeseen circumstance—for example, allowing children to continue their education despite the death or disability of a parent.

In reality, insurance acts as an invisible safety net, one that only becomes fully apparent when an unforeseen event occurs.



Some people view insurance as an extra expense. How do you explain to them that purchasing insurance is actually an investment in their safety and financial future ?

I understand this reluctance, especially in situations where every franc counts. But I always ask this question : **How much would a two-week hospital stay cost you without coverage? Or the total loss of your vehicle ?** The monthly premium pales in comparison to these scenarios that can happen to us and that we never expect at all.

Insurance is the most profitable investment there is one you hope you'll never have to use, but one that saves the day when life takes an unexpected turn.

In a world where the unexpected can happen at any moment, how does insurance help provide peace of mind and protect what matters most to a person ?

The unexpected strikes without warning. A sudden illness, an accident, or a premature death these are realities that no one can avoid. What insurance offers, beyond financial compensation, is the assurance that your family won't be financially destabilized the day you can no longer provide for them. That peace of mind is priceless. Knowing that what you hold dear is protected is a form of freedom.

Many people are unaware of the insurance products that might be right for them. What advice would you give to help people choose the right insurance and avoid common mistakes when signing up ?

Three essential tips:

- First, identify your actual needs before choosing a life, health, auto, or home insurance policy each one covers a specific risk.
- Second, read the policy exclusions, not just the coverage details: that's often where unpleasant surprises lurk.
- Third, don't base your decision solely on price; the insurer's financial stability and the quality of its claims service are equally important criteria. And if you have any doubts, ask questions before signing.



J'aime Lire 237

When reading becomes
a *collective experience*

In Yaoundé, a low-key but determined movement is restoring reading's role as a social bond. "J'aime Lire 237," an officially recognized nonprofit organization, has set itself an ambitious mission: to make reading a vibrant, shared experience accessible to all a far cry from the solitary image often associated with books.



A community that reads aloud

Founded in July 2025 by Laetitia Eloundou, the organization quickly grew beyond the scope of a simple book club to become a true community:



+500
Members



14
in-person
sessions



100
e-books
already shared

“

Much more than just a book club, J'aime Lire 237 offers a unique experience that celebrates readers, authors, and reading in general.

”

Laetitia ELOUNDOU,
founder



The concept : Discover. Share. Grow.

Each edition highlights a book—most often written by an African author who remains largely unknown to the general public and provides an opportunity for a friendly gathering where people can exchange ideas, engage in discussion, and, above all, get to know one another through the words of a book.

Every book opens a door.



How's it going ?

Each edition consists of three stages :

1



Registration

Each participant chooses their package (access to the event, buffet, book included) and receives a personal code to pick up their copy.

2



The Reading Phase

One to two weeks to read, accompanied by a personalized reading guide the famous Bookclub Kit, designed to guide and enrich the experience.

3



Book Club Day

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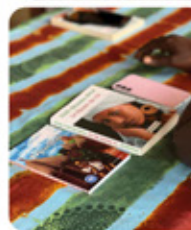
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Story2 Business



Chrystel EYAGA

Bring to life the ideas that leave a lasting impression.

Figure incontournable of motion design in Central Africa, Chrystel Eyaga, known as "The Muntu," has been transforming ideas and messages into impactful animations for over six years. A freelance graphic designer since 2013, he has collaborated with renowned brands and institutions such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Tartina, NFC Bank, Camtel, and ENEO. Trained at the Faculty of Plastic Arts and Art History at the University of Yaoundé I, and shaped by his experience in graffiti and fashion design in Mokolo, he has developed a unique style blending urban art, storytelling, and creative rigor. In this exclusive interview, he discusses his journey, his creative process, and shares advice with young talents aspiring to succeed in motion design.

When and how did your passion for motion design begin ?

It all started in 2018. I came across advertising spots by **Ramav Prod**, a Cameroonian filmmaker, on Facebook. I was so impressed by what he was creating that I developed a genuine admiration for animation.

As a graphic designer since 2013, that was when I first became interested in bringing static visuals to life. In 2019, I began seriously researching animation techniques, before creating my first animations in 2020. Another person who gave me even more motivation was **TJP FX**, a talented motion designer whose work also greatly inspired me.

Why "The Muntu," and what does this name reveal about your creative style ?

Muntu is a Bantu philosophical concept that refers to the symbolism of the human being in their spiritual dimension their almost divine essence, which gives them a certain metaphysical power and transcends them beyond their mere human condition.

I adopted this name in 2010, when I decided to embark on a journey of reclaiming and re-connecting with our ancestral values. Since then, cultural and traditional elements have been an essential foundation of everything I create.



How did your experience at the Faculty of Plastic Arts and Art History influence your approach to motion design ?

As someone who has always admired art and culture in general, I knew from an early age that I wanted to pursue a career connected to these worlds.

My time at the Faculty of Plastic Arts and Art History mainly allowed me to understand artistic concepts and develop a coherent conceptual approach, both in the creation of static and animated visuals.

Since I never received formal professional training in design, I developed my artistic sensibility through my relationship with culture, my studies in art, and my experience at Beauteau Mokolo, where I worked as a designer on clothing, walls, and various other mediums alongside **Boni**.

Street art and academic training helped me develop a strong artistic discipline, as well as a keen eye for aesthetics. Today, this sensitivity continues to shape my work, pushing me to create pieces that I want to be both visually compelling, coherent, and meaningful in motion design.

Which project with Chococam, NFC Bank, or another client has left the strongest impression on you, and why ?

Honestly, the project that has left the strongest impression on me, and one that I am particularly proud of, is **the presidential campaign of Idriss Déby Itno**. I was contacted by the SAO Media team as an art director and motion designer, responsible for creating advertising content for the candidate's campaign.

This experience allowed me to discover what it was like to work as part of a team, since I usually work alone.

Collaborating with people from different backgrounds and contributing to a project of such scale was an incredibly enriching experience.

To this day, it remains the most memorable project of my career. Above all, this experience made me realize that it is possible to go very far as a self-taught freelancer in Africa.

How do you turn an idea into a powerful and memorable animation ?

I always start by **understanding the main message** that needs to be communicated. A powerful animation must first and foremost tell or explain something in a clear and simple way. Then, I move into a research and visual development phase: I define the graphic universe, colors, shapes, and animation style that best fit the message and the target audience.

After that, I usually create style frames or a storyboard to establish the visual foundations of the animation. This allows me to make sure the idea works visually before I even begin animating.

Once this foundation is approved, I move on to the animation itself, working on the pacing, transitions, and fluidity so that every movement reinforces the message and captures attention, while synchronizing everything with the voice-over when one is present. After rendering, I add the sound design, and the project is then ready to be delivered to the client.

How does marketing guide your creative process to ensure your work resonates with and captivates the audience ?

Marketing is at the heart of my creative work. Before even starting an animation, I take the time to understand the target audience, their expectations, their needs, and what will genuinely capture their attention.

Every visual decision is part of the narrative: the choice of colors, animation pace, graphic style, and transitions is guided by a marketing objective: to inform, persuade, sell, or engage. I also make sure that the storytelling is clear and easy to remember, because a complex or confusing message immediately loses its impact. The animation therefore has to speak to both the viewer's eyes and mind.

How do you remain calm and productive when dealing with indecisive or demanding clients ?

Over time, I've come to understand that motion design requires patience and a great deal of focus. I always work with realistic deadlines because pressure often leads to rushing, and rushing inevitably affects the quality of the final result.

Some clients don't know exactly what they want, and that's perfectly normal. My role is to guide them in choosing the right style, message, and visual direction so that their ideas can be clearly expressed.

However, if this approach doesn't work, I prefer not to force the collaboration. Either I refer the project to a fellow creative, or I advise the client to look elsewhere.

What is your secret to staying at the top and continuing to excel under any circumstances ?

Am I at the top? I wouldn't say so. You know, one of the greatest strengths of being self-taught is that you're always looking for ways to push yourself further. Personally, once an animation is finished, I'm no longer particularly interested in it. When I look back at it, all I see are its flaws and mistakes, which pushes me to revisit my work and improve.

So I'm constantly learning: I watch tutorials, study the work of professionals, and try to recreate their techniques in order to progress.

They say you can never achieve absolute excellence, and I believe that. I still have so much to learn about animation, and perhaps one day, I'll be able to reach the "top."

What technical and creative skills are essential to stand out in motion design today ?

I believe that having a strong foundation in graphic design is a real advantage, as it makes it easier to understand color palettes, graphic styles, and design principles. After all, motion design is essentially animated design, so having a solid graphic design foundation is essential. It is also important to have a good understanding of modern marketing, to know how to capture attention quickly using today's digital codes, and to understand what works on each platform.

Of course, mastering the right tools and software is fundamental. It's a bit like a footballer who doesn't know how to use a ball: it simply doesn't make sense.

What are the main challenges facing motion designers in Africa, and how can they overcome them ?

Motion design is still not widely understood in Africa, at least not to the same extent as elsewhere. Ask ten people around you about it, and perhaps only three will be able to tell you what it is.

For a long time, we have been conditioned to view certain professions as the main paths to success: the military, teaching, civil service, and so on. Today, many African families still struggle to understand the value of pursuing motion design simply because they don't really know what the profession involves. I experienced this myself at the beginning, especially as a freelancer working from home. Some people even thought I was a scammer. It is only recently that people have started to understand what I actually do.

On the other hand, access to resources can be very challenging in Africa. Platforms can be expensive, software costs a lot, and sometimes we are not even eligible for certain freelancing platforms. Even when you deliver excellent work, some clients still try to undervalue it.

Then there are power cuts, limited Internet access, and other local challenges. Yet things are gradually changing. I remember that in 2017, there weren't many motion designers or generalist designers in Cameroon. Today, I see many talented young creatives emerging, which shows that the industry is growing.

And the best is yet to come. I know it is possible to make a full-time living from this profession because I do it myself, 100%.

How do you see motion design evolving across the continent in the coming years ?

This ties directly into my previous answer. I'm very confident about the future: the ecosystem is evolving rapidly, the profession is becoming more valued, and people are increasingly aware of what it entails. These are clearly careers of the future.

For those who still don't know what path to pursue, I strongly encourage you to learn motion design. It's a creative field that is growing rapidly and offers real opportunities for those willing to get started.





“

A mantra or piece of advice for those aspiring to excel in your field ?

I'll avoid the usual speeches about "working hard," because many people are already working incredibly hard.

I would say instead : work smart.

Many people in motion design try to do a bit of everything without ever truly mastering a specific style.

Motion design is a vast field, so specialize. Focus deeply on your chosen style and dedicate yourself to mastering it. The rest will naturally follow logically and almost inevitably.

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Story Strategist



Hélène CUNY-COULIBALY

Thinking Beyond Words : Creating Impact.

Between Europe, Africa, and major international institutions, Hélène Cuny-Coulibaly has built a career in which communication goes far beyond simply conveying messages, becoming a true tool for influence and transformation. From her early days at Orange to founding Agence Cordia, through strategic assignments with the African Union and, today, leading a European Union-funded campaign focused on youth, she operates at the heart of the issues shaping public policy and development. In this interview, she reflects on the choices, challenges, and convictions that have shaped her demanding career, guided by a clear vision: to make communication a powerful driver of lasting impact and meaningful change.

If you had to summarize your career path in one guiding principle, what would it be, and why ?

I'd say believe in yourself. No matter what happens. There are so many ups and downs in your professional life, especially when you're working toward making your dreams come true. Don't get discouraged; learn from your mistakes; and stay humble. I'd also say: make an impact through communication. From the very beginning of my career, I've always been drawn to projects that go beyond mere visibility or pure marketing. Whether in the private, institutional, or entrepreneurial sectors, I've sought to use communication as a tool capable of connecting people, mobilizing them, and changing perceptions. That's the common thread that ties all my experiences together today.

You have worked in Europe, Africa, and high-level institutional settings. What has shaped your vision of strategic communication ?

Having worked in very different contexts has taught me that good communication can never be purely "aesthetic." Above all, it must be tailored to a specific human, cultural, and political context. Europe has given me a strong foundation in structure and methodology, while Africa has taught me agility, a hands-on approach, and the importance of understanding realities on the ground. Today, my vision is based on this balance between strategy, creativity, and local understanding.

Quels ont été les tournants décisifs qui ont influencé votre trajectoire professionnelle ?

One of the first turning points was my international experience, which allowed me to develop a much broader perspective on careers in communications. Next, my experiences in institutional and multicultural settings profoundly influenced my way of working, particularly when it comes to managing complex and sensitive projects. Then, my move to Côte d'Ivoire in 2019 opened the door to entrepreneurship for me. Here, everything seems possible, and the possibilities are endless.

The creation of the Cordia Agency marked a real shift in approach: moving from an implementing role to a decision-making one, and developing a long-term vision.

At Orange, you worked on large-scale global campaigns. What skills or expertise did you gain there that still serve you today ?

Orange taught me discipline and how to organize my work. Working on global campaigns requires extremely precise coordination across multiple teams, countries, and objectives. I also developed a strong focus on results and performance measurement there. Even today, this greatly influences the way I manage projects: a creative campaign must also be designed in a strategic and measurable way.

Your experience with the African Union and international projects places you at the heart of public policy issues. What challenge have you found most difficult to manage in this institutional environment ?

The most complex challenge is often making institutional topics accessible and engaging for the general public. In these environments, it is necessary to strike a balance between diplomatic requirements, multiple rounds of approval, and the need to create messages that remain human and understandable. This work requires a great deal of active listening, educational skill, and strategic thinking.

Building a communications agency from scratch is an ambitious undertaking. What was the most difficult part of building Agence Cordia ?

The hardest part was probably the phase when we had to build credibility, the team, and financial stability all at the same time. When you launch an agency, you have to learn to juggle multiple roles simultaneously: strategy, sales, production, management while maintaining a clear vision. It requires a great deal of resilience and the ability to keep going even during times of uncertainty.

Between team management, customer acquisition, and strategic positioning, which aspect of entrepreneurship has been the most personally challenging for you ?

People management, without a doubt. Technical skills can be learned relatively quickly, but learning how to bring a team together, manage different personalities, maintain momentum, and help employees grow is a much deeper process. That's also what has helped me grow the most as a leader.

You are currently leading a European Union-funded campaign focused on youth. How do you craft a message that resonates with such a diverse and demanding generation ?

Today, young people expect messages that are more authentic, more direct, and, above all, more in tune with their realities. Building a campaign for this generation first and foremost requires a lot of listening: understanding their habits, their language, their frustrations, and their aspirations. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, we're reaching a very young, extremely connected audience that primarily consumes video content on mobile devices. The challenge, therefore, is no longer just to communicate, but to successfully create a genuine connection.

Throughout your career, what was the riskiest decision you've ever made, and what did you learn from it ?

The riskiest decision was certainly leaving a more stable career path to start my own business and found Agence Cordia in Côte d'Ivoire. At that point, I had already worked in structured international environments with relatively secure career prospects. Returning to Abidjan to build an agency from scratch was therefore a real leap into the unknown.

I especially remember the early days, when we had to convince major clients to trust a young agency, all while building the team, establishing processes, and establishing the agency's credibility.

There were times when we had to manage several major projects with still-limited resources, and that required a great deal of adaptability and resilience. Looking back, this experience taught me that the most uncomfortable decisions are often the ones that help us grow the most. It also taught me the importance of patience, perseverance, and, above all, the ability to keep moving forward even when everything isn't quite in place yet.

What are the hidden challenges in international strategic communication that few people realize exist ?

Many people see only the visible part of campaigns, but there is a great deal of behind-the-scenes work involving coordination, diplomacy, and foresight. In international projects, it is often necessary to manage complex approval processes, different cultural sensitivities, political constraints, and very tight deadlines. Strategic communication therefore requires both interpersonal and creative skills.

How have you grown as a leader, particularly in managing multicultural teams and high-pressure projects ?

Over time, I've learned that good leadership isn't just about control, but also about listening and the ability to trust. Working with multicultural teams has taught me to adapt my communication style, to better understand different ways of working, and to create a clear framework while allowing for autonomy. Today, I believe I've become a more strategic leader—but also a more compassionate one.



“

Looking back, what advice would you give to a young woman or man who wants to build a career in communications, impact, and international organizations ?

I would tell them not to limit themselves to developing only technical skills. Curiosity, adaptability, and the ability to understand human and cultural issues are just as important. I would also advise them to dare to make themselves visible, to build connections, and above all, to stay true to their values. Opportunities often come from the relationships we build and the way we position ourselves.

”



NZOME Aimé alias Ndolo L'amour **Telling our stories with humor and authenticity.**

In a rapidly evolving African comedy landscape, some artists no longer simply make people laugh: they capture an era, translate emotions, and give a voice to an entire generation. Through his authenticity, keen sense of observation, and distinctive energy, Ndolo L'amour, whose real name is NZOME Aimé, has established himself as one of the rising faces of Cameroonian comedy.

Behind the laughter and the everyday characters, however, lies a journey built with patience, discipline, and vision. In this conversation, the comedian reflects on his evolution, his doubts, his artistic identity, and the way he transforms everyday realities into stories that have the power to bring people together, move them, and inspire them.

When you look back at the young man you were before the spotlight, what do you think already hinted at the artist you would eventually become ?

I think it was my ability to observe people and make those around me laugh. I already enjoyed telling stories and turning everyday situations into funny moments.

Comedy is often perceived as something spontaneous, almost instinctive. But behind every great comedian, there is a process of development. How did you shape your own artistic language ?

I developed my style by observing everyday life, writing extensively, and regularly performing on stage. Over time, I found a way of storytelling that truly reflects who I am.

Your evolution seems to have happened step by step, without taking shortcuts. What were the turning points that changed the way you see your profession and yourself ?

The most important moments were my first performances, my first videos that gained traction, and the encounters I had with more experienced artists. They taught me to take my profession seriously.

In your journey, what has been the most difficult: finding your place, believing in your vision, or staying true to yourself despite audience expectations ?

The hardest part was believing in my vision. At first, not everyone necessarily understands what you're trying to do. You have to keep going despite the doubts.

Why did you choose the stage name "Ndolo L'amour" ? What story, emotion, or vision lies behind this artistic identity?

I chose the name Ndolo L'amour because the word "Ndolo" means love in our culture. I wanted a positive name that felt close to people and was easy to remember.

Your comedy draws heavily from everyday life, emotions, and human relationships. Why is it important to you that people see themselves in your stories ?

Because comedy is even more powerful when people can see themselves in it. When someone tells me, "That's exactly what I'm going through," I know I've succeeded.

Today, social media can provide quick but sometimes fleeting visibility. How do you build a lasting career beyond the buzz ?

I'm not just looking to create buzz. I'm focused on building a community, developing my shows and videos, and strengthening my stage presence so that I can build a lasting career.

Was there ever a period of doubt or silence in your journey when you seriously questioned your future as an artist ? And what gave you the strength to keep going ?

Yes, there have been moments of doubt. But each time, my passion, the support of the audience, and the belief that I still had so much to say have kept me going.

There's a clear drive in you to constantly evolve. How do you work on your discipline, creativity, and ability to reinvent yourself ?

I keep a close eye on what's being done elsewhere, I read, I write, and I stay curious. Above all, I try never to rely solely on what has already worked.

Beyond comedy, what kind of legacy do you hope to leave for young Cameroonians and Africans ?

I'd like to show young people that you can succeed while staying true to yourself, working hard, and turning your differences into a strength.

If your journey had to pass on a single lesson to a generation dreaming of success in the arts, what would it be ?

I'd tell them that talent matters, but perseverance matters even more. It's not necessarily the most gifted person who succeeds—it's often the one who refuses to give up.

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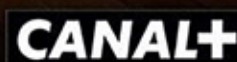
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The founder



Audrey Ludivine BAHA Building Africa's Future Through Innovation

In a generation that now refuses to wait for solutions from elsewhere, Audrey Ludivine Baha embodies this African youth that turns obstacles into grounds for innovation. Between academic excellence, immersion in the world of research, field experience, and entrepreneurial ambition, she is building, step by step, a vision deeply rooted in African realities: creating solutions that are useful, accessible, and sustainable. Founder of Nofey, selected into elite ecosystems such as HEC Paris and Station F, Audrey moves forward with a strong conviction: French-speaking Africa must no longer wait to build its own future. In this interview, she speaks candidly about her journey, her doubts, her inspirations, and the mission that guides each of her choices.



When you look back at the young Audrey before HEC, before Forbes, before Nofey... what do you think was already quietly taking shape within you ?

Long before the distinctions and visible achievements, there was a deep conviction: I refused to let my circumstances define my limits. I grew up without a great deal of resources, but with an immense thirst to learn, to understand the world, and to make an impact. What was quietly taking shape within me was this capacity to believe in the improbable, even when nothing around me seemed to confirm it.

Your journey blends agro-industry, research, entrepreneurship, translation, innovation... At what point did you realize your path wouldn't be linear, but instead deeply guided by a vision ?

For a long time, I thought I was simply moving from one field to another. Then I realized that each experience was answering the same question: how do I create useful value for others ?



Whether in research, translation, or entrepreneurship, I've always sought to solve concrete problems. That's when I understood that my path wasn't scattered it was guided by a vision bigger than any job title.

You often say you want «French-speaking Africa to stop waiting.» What was the emotional or personal trigger behind this mission ?

The trigger came from frustration—frustration at seeing extraordinary talents lose years because of a lack of access, information, or opportunities. I myself benefited from opportunities that changed my life. That's when I understood that our continent doesn't have a problem of potential, but a problem of access and trust. I want to help close that gap.

Before becoming an entrepreneur, you worked as an intern, an assistant, a freelance translator... How did these sometimes low-profile experiences shape your discipline and your leadership today ?

These experiences taught me humility. They taught me to serve before leading, to listen before speaking, and to execute before giving directions. Being freelance taught me rigor. Being an intern taught me continuous learning. Being an assistant taught me organization. Even today, these lessons deeply influence the way I lead.

Building a startup within the African ecosystem takes as much resilience as strategy. What was your strongest moment of doubt, and how did you manage to keep going despite it ?

My biggest doubt came when the ambitions were enormous but the resources were limited. There are moments when you sincerely wonder whether you're the right person to carry such a big vision. What allowed me to keep moving forward was returning to the mission God gave me. When you understand that the project is bigger than yourself, giving up becomes much harder.

Your journey paints the picture of a woman deeply focused on excellence. Looking back, how did you learn to turn pressure into a driving force rather than a burden ?

For a long time, I linked my worth to my results. Over time, I've come to understand that excellence isn't perfection. It's the commitment to grow a little every day. Pressure becomes a burden when it's tied to fear of failure. It becomes a driving force when it's tied to a mission bigger than ourselves.

Between the diaspora, technology, and local impact, you embody a new generation of African builders. In your view, what sets this generation apart from previous ones ?

Our generation has access to networks, knowledge, and tools that didn't exist before. We can learn in Paris, collaborate with Nairobi, and build for Douala in real time. But above all, many of us no longer see leaving as an end goal. We want to build bridges between the world and Africa rather than choose between the two.

“

Over time, I've come to understand that excellence isn't perfection. It's the commitment to grow a little every day. Pressure becomes a burden when it's tied to fear of failure. It becomes a driving force when it's tied to a mission bigger than ourselves.

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At Nofey, you're working on trust between individuals and technicians. Behind the technology, what human problem are you really trying to solve ?

Trust. Today, millions of people aren't simply looking for a tradesperson; they're looking for someone they can entrust with their home, their money, and their peace of mind. Behind every breakdown or job site, there's often stress, fear, or frustration. Nofey exists to restore a sense of calm in those moments.

You now move in prestigious environments while keeping a message deeply rooted in African realities. How do you preserve your identity as you scale up ?

By never forgetting why you started. Titles, awards, and institutions are platforms, not identities. My identity comes from Christ, from my values, from my story, and from the people I want to serve. As long as I stay connected to that, scaling up doesn't mean changing course.

In ten years, what would you like young African girls to see when they hear the name Audrey Ludivine Baha ?

I'd like them to see proof that it's possible to start from humble beginnings and build something great when you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. I'd like them to understand that they don't need permission to dream, create, or lead. If my journey can broaden their sense of what's possible while bringing them back to Christ, that will already be a victory.

If you had to pass on a single entrepreneurial truth to a young woman just starting out today, what would it be?

Don't wait to feel ready. Very often, opportunities arrive before self-confidence does. Start with what you have, learn as you go, and accept that growth is uncomfortable. Courage isn't the absence of fear; it's the decision to move forward despite it.





Digitals Minds



Yannick BOKA

Making Digital a Growth Engine

In a world where digital and social media set the pace for brands, Yannick BOKA stands out as one of the most influential strategists in digital communication in Africa. An expert in performance-driven social media marketing, he turns every piece of content into a concrete lever for business goals, all while training the next generation of talent through the Social Media Room. In this exclusive interview, he shares his methods, his experiences, and his advice for successfully navigating the demanding, ever-evolving world of digital.

Yannick, what was the trigger that led you to turn your passion for digital into a career as a communications and social media marketing expert ?

When I discovered the world of social media professions, there was an immediate pull. I sensed right away that this was exactly what I wanted to do with my professional life.

In this field, I found several things I was already naturally passionate about: communication, human psychology, marketing, creativity, and the ability to influence behavior.

I quickly understood that social media wasn't just «posting on Facebook.» It was a genuine growth lever for businesses a tool capable of helping a brand sell, position itself, build a community, and even transform its image. And honestly, it fascinated me.

I also saw social media as a strategic gateway to more senior roles in marketing and communications. Because when you understand how to capture attention, create engagement, and generate business results, you understand a large part of how the modern market works. Deep down, I think I found in digital a profession that blends thinking, creativity, and concrete impact. A bit like a football coach: you don't score the goals yourself, but you build the system that lets the team win.

In an ocean of content, how do you create a digital presence that doesn't just charm people, but genuinely serves business goals ?

I always start from a simple question: «What is this content actually going to do for the business?» Awareness? Sales? Trust? Leads? Recruitment ?

Because content that gets 50,000 views but zero business impact is like a wedding with a big orchestra but no food: it makes noise, but people go home frustrated.

I focus a lot on strategy, emotion, and understanding African behaviors. Here, people often buy with their hearts before they reach for their money.

What KPIs do you monitor to turn traffic and engagement into concrete, measurable results ?

Views and likes matter, but what I really look at is :

- the real engagement rate,
- clicks,
- inbound messages,
- conversions,
- cost per result,
- retention,
- and above all, the business return behind it all. Because at the end of the day, the boss doesn't pay the bills with likes.

How do you manage to align communications, marketing, field operations, and leadership to create real, lasting impact ?

The biggest problem in many companies is that each department plays its own game.

Digital alone can't save a poorly run organization. If the field team promises A and communications sells B, the customer ends up feeling misled.

I always try to build a common language between teams. Social media has to listen to what's happening on the ground. The field team has to understand the marketing objectives, and leadership has to understand that digital isn't magic.

A digital marketing strategy without internal coherence is like attiéké without fish: technically, it exists... but something essential is missing.

With the Social Media Room, you're shaping the next generation of digital professionals. What profiles or skills are essential today to excel in this field ?

Today, just being a «graphic designer» or a «community manager» isn't enough anymore. The market is becoming highly competitive. The profiles that will dominate tomorrow are those who understand :

- **business,**
- **human psychology,**
- **data,**
- **content creation,**
- **advertising,**
- **and artificial intelligence**

But honestly, the rarest skill today is the ability to think.

Many people know how to post. Few know why they're posting.

At the Social Media Room, my main goal is to train professionals who can solve problems, not just add stories with trending music.

Among your work with BICICI, CANAL+, Jumia, or Big Five, which project challenged you the most, and why ?

Every project taught me something. But the hardest projects are often the ones where you have to manage a lot of pressure, a lot of expectations, and very different audiences.

When you're working on well-known brands, every post can become a national topic within minutes. African internet users can turn a small detail into a presidential debate.

These experiences taught me to work fast, keep my composure, and above all, understand that in digital, perception is sometimes stronger than reality.

What strategies do you use to turn a brand's online visibility into a real lever of influence and trust ?

Visibility alone isn't enough anymore. Today, even fake accounts can rack up plenty of views. The real question is: « **Do people actually believe in you ?** »

To build that trust, you need to:

- be consistent,
- show what happens behind the scenes,
- bring value,
- listen to your community,
- and above all, stay human.

People connect more easily with brands that feel human than with brands that talk like call center robots.

How do you build content that grabs attention, builds audience loyalty, and drives conversion in an environment saturated with information ?

Today, the phone has become a boxing ring for attention. Every app is fighting for just a few seconds of focus. So if your content is slow, confusing, or lacks emotion... people leave before you've even finished your introduction.

I focus a lot on :

- hooks,
- storytelling,
- emotion,
- cultural closeness,
- and people's real frustrations.

The content that performs best in Africa is often the content where people immediately recognize themselves.

What are the secrets to optimizing social campaigns and getting the most out of Social Media Optimization for your clients and brands ?

The first secret is testing.

Many people launch a campaign like they're playing the lottery: they simply hope it works. Yet digital is largely about analysis and adjustment. I often test:

- several visuals,
- several messages,
- several audiences,
- several formats.

And above all, I pay very close attention to human behavior.

Sometimes changing a single sentence can double a campaign's performance. Digital is a bit like chili pepper in a sauce: sometimes a small amount changes the whole flavor.



In your view, what trends will revolutionize digital marketing, and how can brands start preparing for them today ?

Artificial intelligence is going to profoundly change the industry. But be careful: the tools will keep evolving, while human creativity will remain a very powerful weapon.

The brands that win tomorrow will be the ones that manage to blend :

- technology,
- emotion,
- data,
- and authenticity.

We'll also increasingly see:

- ultra-short content,
- private communities,
- specialized content creators,
- and content centered on trust.

Tomorrow, people will follow the big «perfect» pages less, and credible, human voices more.

With a constant stream of information and a workload that can sometimes be overwhelming, how do you cope with information overload, moments of doubt and the pressure of day-to-day life ?

To be honest, the digital world can be mentally draining. You might spend a whole week working on a strategy... only for a simple viral trend to completely change the conversation in a matter of hours.

Over time, I've learnt to take a step back. Not everything warrants an immediate reaction and, above all, I've realised that you need to conserve your mental energy. Because a tired brain often makes dangerous decisions.

In this line of work, you sometimes have to learn to switch off your phone to let your ideas recharge.

“

What advice would you give to those working in the same field to help them remain effective, high-performing and relevant in their work ?

Don't just chase trends.

Build real value.

The African digital landscape is evolving rapidly. These days, someone can go viral overnight... and disappear two weeks later. Work on your skills. Work on your credibility. Work on your mind-set. Because ultimately, the hardest part of this job isn't creating a buzz.

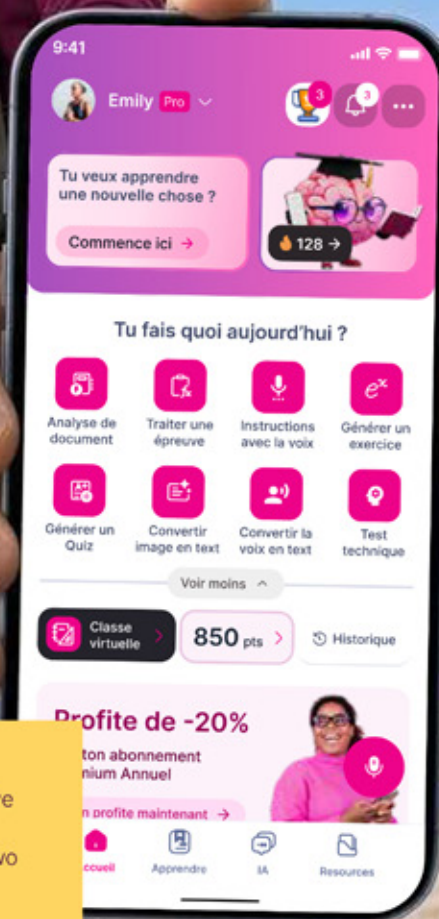
The hardest part is lasting.

”



ImaginAi

With us, every student has access to the best support.



- Founded in 2024, ImaginAi is an inclusive digital learning ecosystem powered by artificial intelligence and comprised of two platforms.
- The first is a **mobile application** designed for young learners (**high school, middle school, and university students, as well as self-learners**) to support them in their revision and exam preparation. It offers personalized quizzes, customized study programs, learning guides, and past exam papers with answer keys, all at a price significantly lower than that of a private tutor.
- The second is a **multi-platform web application** designed to assist **teachers** in their daily teaching activities: lesson preparation, marking, and virtual classrooms. The goal is to provide every student with equal opportunities for success and to combat educational inequality.

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Creative Queen



Sandy KÉZAKO

Turning ideas into visual emotions.

Behind every visual that captures our gaze lies a story, a hand, a mind that transforms an idea into emotion. For Sandy Kézako, creation is not just a profession it's a journey. From her first sketches in Abidjan to international campaigns, from the precision of graphic design to the freedom of illustration, she has shaped a unique, bold, and inspiring universe. In 2023, this passion and mastery earned her the title of Best Female Creative at the African Creative Awards, a recognition that crowns a career marked by curiosity, perseverance, and creativity. In this interview, Sandy opens the doors to her world: her beginnings, her challenges, her creative process, and the vision of a woman who turns every project into a living work of art. A vivid portrait of an African creative whose talent speaks far beyond images.

Can you take us back to your beginnings: the exact moment you realized visual creation would be part of your life ?

For as long as I can remember, I've always had a natural love and talent for the arts: drawing, painting, modeling clay, beading, and more. Coming from a family where all my brothers are in IT, I was heavily influenced by my brother, who is a 3D graphic designer. Watching him grow in this field and learning alongside him, I knew this was the career for me.

What did your formative experiences teach you, particularly at Les Signes CI and Groupe Défis et Stratégies ?

Les Signes CI was my very first experience in a 360° communications agency. It was a hugely enriching adventure, where I discovered the realities of the field, advertising, and my love for packaging design and branding. As for Défis & Stratégies, it was one of my first experiences on the client side, working solely on the company's own communications. That pushed me out of my comfort zone, exposed me to a field very different from my own, and gave me a real taste of pure corporate work. All in all, these two completely opposite experiences helped strengthen my versatility.

How did your time at McCann Worldgroup transform the way you think about creativity and communication ?

My time at this organization, which I'd describe as having an international dimension, helped polish my skills. I was faced with projects that were as varied as they were demanding, along with the constant pressure to deliver ever more creative work.

In 2023, continental recognition arrived. What happened inside you the moment you were crowned Best Female Creative at the African Creative Awards ?

This award is a great source of pride, and this recognition gave me a huge boost to keep pushing myself to do even better.

With YESWECANGE, you're building something long-term. How have these five years shaped your artistic maturity and creative identity ?

These past five years have clearly marked a major turning point in my career.

I learned to manage a team of creatives and to develop leadership skills, even though I didn't initially feel cut out for it. I gained confidence in myself by being there to share my knowledge, provide direction, but also to learn from my colleagues.

Of course, years of practice have added to my experience, bringing me to where I am today: a creative I'd describe as «more seasoned and versatile,» even though I still have a lot left to learn.

What doubts, obstacles, or hardships have marked your path, and how did you overcome them ?

In a graphic designer's career, there are several obstacles: the trivialization of the profession, the lack of recognition for this work, the lack of markets and, as a result, the lack of means to buy suitable equipment, and so on.

But for me, the biggest obstacle remains the lack of inspiration to create original and impactful concepts, all within sometimes very tight deadlines and for highly competitive fields. It's a recurring obstacle, and each time, a lot of focus, staying informed, and even, in extreme cases, a slight «sacrifice of my social life» (laughs) is what it takes to find the concept or idea that will make the difference.

The second obstacle, for me, is the trivialization of our profession, which is sometimes relegated to the status of a side job or hobby, especially with the rise of generative AI. It's a daily fight, one I stay committed to by taking part in panels and conferences, to advocate for this profession and show the value of trained, professional creatives. Because design isn't a pastime it's a career that deserves respect and fair compensation in its own right.



Your work blends graphic precision with illustrative sensitivity. How has your personal style developed through your projects and encounters ?

My brother's graphic design influence was a key factor in building my personal style. Then, through my various experiences at agencies, on the client side, and as a freelancer, I had the chance to work on numerous projects, which also greatly contributed to shaping my approach.

And of course, one point not to be overlooked: constant industry watching, along with the trainings and tutorials I continually draw from, have forged the graphic sensitivity and precision I have today.

Can you describe your creative process for us ? Which steps do you consider most important ?

My creative process is fairly simple :

- **Brief/request analysis: reading and/or discussing with the client**
- **Ideation: industry watching, a lot of it, exploring different approaches, brainstorming, sketching**
- **Focus**
- **Execution**

For me, ideation is the most important part.

Being a woman and a creative in Africa also means writing a different story. What realities have you experienced, and what battles still feel necessary to you ?

Being a woman and a graphic designer in Africa is quite challenging. And it was even rarer when I started out: 12 years ago, in 2014, it was considered a «masculine» profession, and I was one of the only Ivorian women publishing my work on the various social platforms.

People doubted my skills, and sometimes several people would say my creations were actually made by a man. There was always that surprise of realizing, «wow, it's a woman.»

Times have changed. More than a decade later, more and more young creative women are daring to step into this still male-dominated profession.

There are still many who do not dare to publish their work or showcase their skills. And that is where the current challenge lies: encouraging them to assert themselves, but also to undertake proper and ongoing training.

Today, looking back. Which version of Sandy do you see in the rearview mirror, and what makes you proudest of this journey ?

In the rearview mirror, I see the Sandy who followed in her brother's footsteps, full of doubts, but very, very passionate.

What makes me proudest of this journey is that, despite everything, the passion never left me for a single second! That's really what's been my strength what allows me to overcome obstacles, to keep training again and again, to adapt, and above all, to become a better version of myself.

“

What new chapters do you dream of writing, and what message would you like to leave for the next generation of creatives ?

Personally, I'd love to one day move into the chapter of global recognition and become an African reference in the field of food packaging design and branding.

To the new generation, I'd like to say :

The future is here, and it's being written through innovation. Generative AI is revolutionizing the image and advertising professions as a whole.

I'd like to leave them a message of hope and encouragement: don't be discouraged by how fast these technologies are evolving. They won't replace you they'll « augment » you.

At the same time, don't let them take up too much space. Don't let the automation these technologies offer make you completely dependent.

Keep training, cultivate your uniqueness, your artistic sensitivity, and your personal style.

That's what makes you unique.

”

From Roots to Global Screens

In Cameroon, few creators embody the dialogue between local identity and global ambition as powerfully as Dr. Nkeng Stephens. First recognized for music videos that helped modernize the aesthetics of the country's urban music scene, he gradually expanded his creative universe into filmmaking and storytelling capable of resonating beyond national borders. From Buea to film sets, his journey reflects remarkable boldness: leaving academia to pursue his passion, transitioning from music to visual storytelling, and building an ecosystem dedicated to production, knowledge sharing, and talent development through Cameroon Phase of Entertainment Ltd and the Hand In Hand Movement. The recipient of several awards and distinctions, he does more than create impactful works; he actively contributes to the rise of a new generation of African creators driven by the belief that cinema rooted in local realities can fully engage in the global conversation.

Your father gave you the nickname 'Doctor' because he dreamed of you becoming a doctor. When did you realise that you would instead be healing emotions through images ?

The moment I realised I didn't want to become a doctor, but rather a sort of "doctor of video" or cinema, dates back to my school days when I was 13 or 14. Ever since I was very young, I've always been passionate about films. Even at school, I used to do drama with friends: we'd write little scenes, put on plays and perform in front of the other pupils. Little by little, all these experiences sparked something in me. I realised that telling stories, creating emotions and captivating people through images was something I was deeply passionate about. But even before I got into video, it was music that was my first gateway into this creative world. I started by producing, creating beats, hanging out in studios... and that environment gradually led me towards video and film. Over time, I realised that it wasn't just a hobby, but a genuine way of expressing myself and the path I wanted to follow.

Originally from Lebialem, born in Buéa... In what do roots and your environment shaped your perspective as a director?

Yes, I come from Lebialem, more specifically from the village of Banwa, in south-western Cameroon. To be honest, I've only been back to my village a few times.

I grew up in Buea, and it was that city that really shaped and inspired me. Back then, Buea was a real hotbed of creativity. Many of my older brothers and uncles were getting into filmmaking. I particularly remember Fonte Collins, the creator of "The Cobra", who even had what was known as the "Cobra House". Seeing him make films had a profound effect on me and sparked something within me. So I sought to get closer to him, to learn from him and gradually discover his world. At first, I mainly went to the studio as a musician, keen to learn how to produce beats. Then, over time, I began to observe his editing work, to understand his creative process and, little by little, I learnt editing from him as well.

You started out as a musician under the name 'Decobra House'. What made you decide to step away from the stage and move behind the camera ?

Music was my first connection to the world of creativity. At first, I mainly went to the studios to learn how to produce beats and develop as an artist. But over time, I began to observe the editing and directing work going on around me. I discovered the world of cinema and realised that behind the camera, I could tell stories and convey emotions in a much deeper way.



Dr Nkeng Stephens

Artiste, Film Producer,
Cinematographer, Director, Colorist.

You put your studies at the University of Buea on hold to pursue your passion. Looking back, was that a calculated risk or a leap of faith ?

Back when I was at university, I eventually stopped attending classes because I really wanted to pursue my dream. The main reason was that I didn't feel I belonged there. I was studying visual arts, so, in theory, I was already in a creative field, but I found the teaching very boring. I felt we spent more time talking about history and theory than actually creating or building projects that would help us achieve our ambitions. I remember suggesting to the head of department that we launch programmes where students could produce content, shoot comedies or develop real audiovisual projects. I was told that the school was already planning such initiatives and that I would be kept informed when the time came. Over time, this lack of action began to discourage me and made me less and less keen to attend classes.

At the same time, my music teacher would sometimes come to my studio to teach me music production and beat-making. Yet, at university, that same teacher mainly taught us music theory. This contrast really struck me. I realised that what I was learning practically, in the field, was far more rewarding than what I was experiencing in the classroom.

That's when I realised I had to devote myself fully to what I truly loved doing. Deep down, I never saw myself following the traditional path: going to school, getting a degree, then falling into the usual routine. I've always wanted to do things differently and forge my own path. So, for me, dropping out of university wasn't running away, but a conscious decision. I knew it was risky, but I've never been the sort of person to live according to the community's expectations or what others think. When I want something, I throw myself into it completely. That's just how I am.

You've collaborated with major figures such as Stanley Enow, Locko, Maahlox le Vibeur and Mr Leo. How do you adapt your artistic vision to each artist's world whilst retaining your own signature style ?

When I work with an artist, I first try to understand their world, their energy and how they experience things. Then, my role is to transform all that into images.

For me, a good visual must reflect both the artist's identity and the director's perspective. Even though every project has its own atmosphere, my signature remains present through the aesthetics, emotions and cinematic approach I bring to each production.

You've made several music videos... What is the aesthetic or emotional thread that ties your entire body of work together ?

The common thread running through my work is the constant pursuit of quality and emotion. I place great importance on detail, aesthetics and the visual power of the images. My music videos often have a very cinematic quality, with a genuine narrative, strong emotions and a distinctive atmosphere. This way of telling stories through powerful images has become my artistic signature.

Your short films Amigo (2016) and Caesar (2017) marked an important milestone. What did they teach you about long-form storytelling compared to music videos ?

My short films were, above all, a testing ground where I developed my storytelling, framing, editing and ability to convey emotions. This progression gave me the confidence needed to produce our first feature film, Axe Lourd. My filmmaking experience also influenced my music videos, to which I brought a stronger narrative and visual dimension; I always felt as though I was making a film.

Axe Lourd (2023) was a notable success and was selected for the Romford Film Festival in London. What did you want to say to the world through this film ?

With Axe Lourd, I wanted to show that Cameroon was capable of producing ambitious action films with genuine visual and artistic quality. I wanted to prove that Cameroonian filmmakers could compete with international standards and produce modern, powerful and professional works. Above all, this film was a statement to the world about the potential of Cameroonian cinema.

From AFRIMMA to the Canal 2'Or, via the Cameroon International Film Festival... What do these accolades mean in your career: validation, added pressure or a driving force for excellence ?

These awards are, above all, recognition of the work I've done. I don't see them as extra pressure, but rather as encouragement to keep going and push my limits even further. Above all, they remind me that discipline, perseverance and hard work always pay off in the end.

At what point did you feel that you were no longer just a music video director, but a true leading figure in Cameroonian cinema ?

Deep down, I've always been a filmmaker. From the very beginning, this passion for cinema has always been within me. Music videos simply became a means of expression through which I incorporated a cinematic approach, blending the aesthetics of film with the world of music. Even in my music videos, there was already this desire to tell stories just like in the cinema. But after *Axe Lourd*, I really understood and fully embraced that identity. That project confirmed to me that I wasn't just a music video director, but a true filmmaker. I also wanted the general public to understand this clearly: beyond music videos, my vision went further, towards cinema. It was from that moment on that I decided to commit myself fully to the world of film and to pursue this path even more seriously.

Through Cameroon Phase of Entertainment Ltd and the Hand In Hand Movement, you invest in training and supporting young talent. What is your vision for the next generation of African filmmakers ?

My vision is to see a new generation of African filmmakers emerge, capable of telling their own stories with authenticity and ambition. Through my initiatives, I try to support young people, pass on my experience to them and show them that it is possible to create great things from our reality.

The whole movement I'm building has one goal: to inspire young people, to help them understand that even if the path seems difficult, it's not impossible. If we've managed to do it, then so can they.

If you had to sum up your mission in one sentence today as a filmmaker, entrepreneur and mentor, what would it be ?

My mission is to tell our stories with ambition, style and authenticity in order to inspire Africans, and particularly Cameroonians. Through my films and my images, I want to create works capable of having a real impact on society, of transforming mindsets and of encouraging people to believe more in themselves.

The world of film and creativity is often marked by doubt, pressure and instability. How do you deal with these moments, and what personal strategies enable you to remain consistent in your effort, quality and excellence despite the challenges ?

As with any journey, I too face challenges and difficult times. But over time, I have come to understand that obstacles are part of the process. They build character, strengthen determination and drive you to become better. Every difficulty then becomes a step that prepares me to go even further

“

You inspire many young people who dream of success and recognition. What message or advice would you give them so that they can build a solid career, stand out through their work and achieve their ambitions without losing their authenticity ?

I would tell young people to believe deeply in their vision and not to be afraid of being different. The creative path is never easy, but perseverance, hard work and discipline always make the difference in the end. You have to stay true to your identity and develop your own way of creating, rather than simply trying to follow trends.

”



Damaris KOCOBOU

Crochet : a blend of tradition and modernity

When crochet becomes a fashion signature... In a world where fashion moves at breakneck speed, some designers are choosing to slow down and restore the artisanal gesture to its full value. From C te d'Ivoire, Damaris Kocobou reinvents crochet through handmade creations where texture meets elegance, turning each piece into a singular work of art. Between heritage, creativity, and entrepreneurial vision, she is building a brand that celebrates African craftsmanship while staying rooted in contemporary trends. Meet a passionate designer who makes thread, patience, and authenticity the pillars of a fashion with meaning.

Can you tell us about your journey and the exact moment when the Selah Design adventure was born ?

I'm Jemima Damaris Kocobou, founder of Selah Design. I hold a bachelor's degree in English, and I discovered crochet as a simple hobby that, over time, became a true passion. Since childhood, I've always been drawn to creative activities and handmade crafts. During school holidays, my sister and I would crochet together, never imagining it could one day become the heart of my career.

As a student, I started making a few pieces to help make ends meet. Gradually, this activity became much more than a source of extra income: it turned into a genuine calling. The more I created, the more I became aware of the possibilities this art form offered.

At that time, I didn't yet know which direction to take my life in. I was torn between following the path many people recommended, tied to my university studies, and listening to this growing passion for creating. Despite my doubts, one conviction remained: everyone has a calling, an area where they're meant to make an impact, and you have to have the courage to search for it deep within yourself.

For my part, I turned to God, convinced that the One who knows me better than I know myself held the answers to my questions. It was in a deep moment of reflection and elevation that the vision for Selah Design was born, formerly known as Handmade by Jemi. More than just a name change, it was the birth of an identity and a mission.

Why did you choose crochet as your main form of creative expression in a fashion world often dominated by conventional textile industry ?

I chose crochet because it allows me to create pieces with a real sense of identity. With crochet, you don't just make clothes; you pass on a part of yourself to those who appreciate this art form.

Each creation requires time, patience, and careful attention. That's exactly the value I want to share. In a world where everything keeps moving faster and faster, Selah Design invites people to slow down, take a breath, and appreciate the time creation requires.

Every garment tells the story of the hours devoted to it and carries the imprint of the hands that shaped it.

Your creations seem to tell a story where texture meets elegance. How do you define your brand's DNA and vision ?

Selah Design's DNA rests on three pillars: elegance, craftsmanship, and authenticity. Each piece is entirely handmade, with constant attention to detail and the desire to create much more than a garment: a work of craftsmanship that reveals the uniqueness of the woman wearing it.

Our vision is to give crochet the place it deserves in contemporary fashion by offering creations that are timeless, refined, and meaningful. Selah Design celebrates artisanal know-how while showing that handmade fashion can be modern, elegant, and deeply human all at once.

How do you draw inspiration day-to-day from Ivorian cultural richness, international trends, and your own artistic sensibility ?

My inspiration is born from the meeting of my African roots and my perspective on contemporary fashion. Côte d'Ivoire is an endless source of inspiration thanks to its cultural richness, the creativity of its people, and the artisanal know-how found on every street corner.

I also stay attentive to international trends, particularly those championed by many talented African designers. My goal is never to reproduce them, but to understand their vision in order to explore new possibilities and adapt these influences to the versatility of crochet.

Beyond fashion, my artistic sensibility is nourished by observing everyday life: a work of art, a landscape, a piece of architecture, or even an everyday scene can become the starting point for a new creation.

With each piece made by hand, how do you balance artisanal standards, production, and business development ?

Each creation takes many hours, sometimes even several days of work. This requires rigorous organization and a lot of discipline.

Rather than pursuing mass production, we've chosen to prioritize quality. That's why we work primarily on a made-to-order basis, so we can give each piece all the attention it deserves and offer our clients personalized support along with an impeccable level of finish. This approach lets us preserve the artisanal standards that define Selah Design's identity while growing the brand sustainably.

What have been the biggest challenges you've faced as a creative entrepreneur in Côte d'Ivoire, and how have you turned them into opportunities ?

The biggest challenge has been changing how people view crochet. For a long time, it was associated only with tablecloths, decorative objects, or bikinis. Today, I strive to show that it's a much broader universe, capable of producing creations that are elegant, contemporary, and refined.

The other challenge is getting artisanal work properly valued. Many people still compare a fully handmade piece to an industrially produced garment, without recognizing the many hours of work, patience, and know-how it requires.

Over time, this challenge has become a genuine opportunity: the opportunity to educate the public, to help them understand that they're not simply wearing a garment, but a work of craftsmanship of great value. Fortunately, attitudes are changing, and in Côte d'Ivoire, more and more people are now choosing crochet for their various events.

Today, what are the main drivers behind your business growth: social media, word of mouth, collaborations, or fashion events ?

Social media is currently our main growth driver. Beyond serving as a showcase, it's a genuine communication tool that lets us share the Selah Design universe and reach an ever-wider audience.

We pay particular attention to the quality of every piece of content we publish, so that each of our communications faithfully reflects the elegance, authenticity, and exacting standards that define Selah Design.

In your view, what added value does African craftsmanship bring to the global fashion industry, and how can crochet find its place within it ?

African craftsmanship brings to global fashion something that's becoming increasingly rare: genuine authenticity and a strong cultural identity. Behind every artisanal creation lies a story, know-how passed down through generations, and an attention to detail that industrial production simply cannot replicate.

Crochet fully claims its place in this evolution. Long considered a practice reserved for older people, it's now proving that it can be modern, refined, and perfectly in step with the codes of contemporary fashion.

I'm convinced that the future of fashion will increasingly rely on meaningful creations, crafted with care and respect for artisanal know-how. African craftsmanship, and crochet in particular, therefore has an essential role to play in offering a fashion that is more creative, more sustainable, and deeply human.

To order



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Côte d'Ivoire



If you had to imagine Selah Design five years from now, what mark would you like to leave on African and international fashion ?

In five years, I'd like Selah Design to have become a reference point for artisanal African fashion, and to have helped redefine crochet's place in the world of luxury and contemporary design.

I also hope that, through Selah Design, Ivorian craftsmanship can shine on an international scale and show that our designers can compete with the biggest fashion houses when given the support and recognition they deserve.

Beyond the collections, I want to leave a mark. If my journey and Selah Design's can inspire other young people to believe in their talent and pursue their dreams, then I will have fulfilled part of my mission.

Behind every handmade creation, there's an emotion. What emotion do you want women to feel when they wear a Selah Design piece ?

I'd like them to feel, above all, confidence. Every Selah Design piece is designed to reveal the personality of the woman wearing it, while highlighting her uniqueness.

I also want them to sense the emotion behind every creation. Every stitch, every detail, and every finish is the result of many hours of work, patience, and passion. Wearing a Selah Design piece means wearing a garment that tells a story and celebrates the value of handmade work.

Finally, I'd like them to feel genuine pride: the pride of wearing an African creation made with rigor, creativity, and a love of the craft. If a woman puts on a Selah Design piece and feels beautiful, unique, and deeply confident all at once, then I will have reached my goal.

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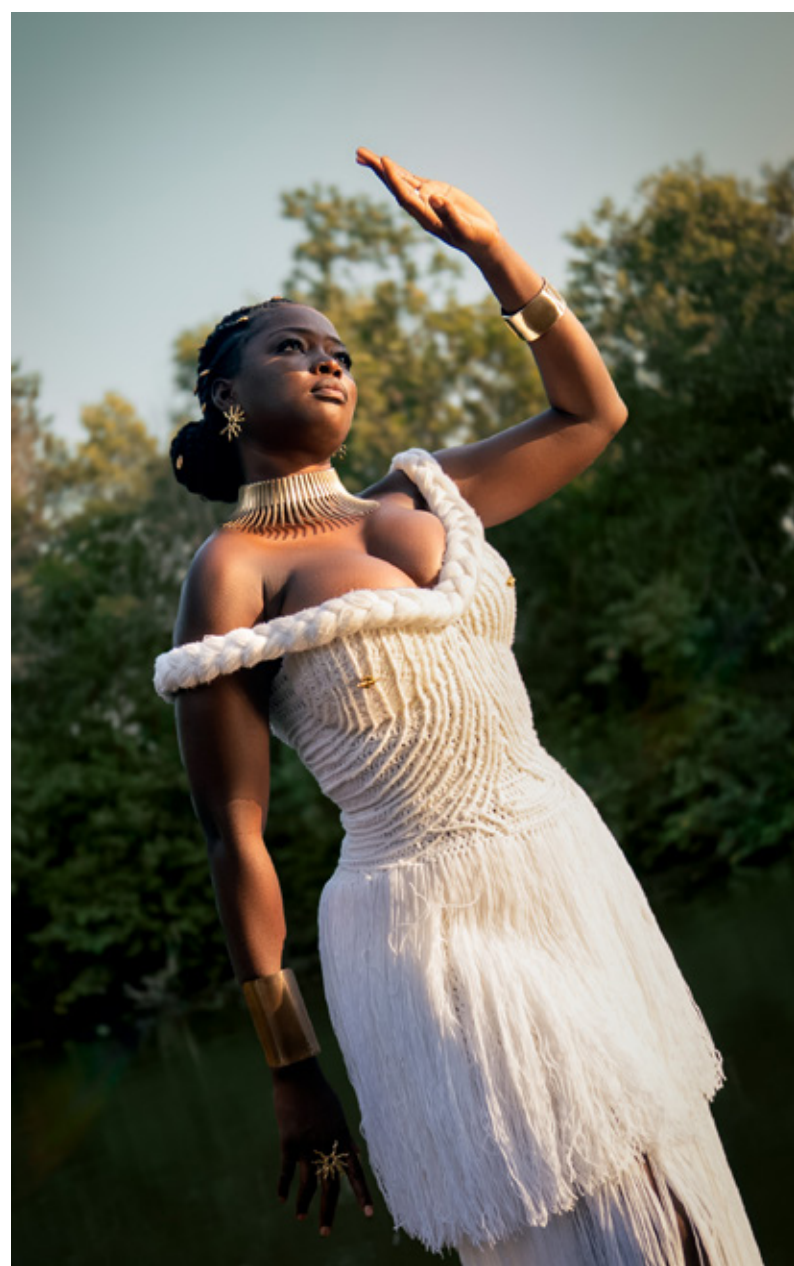
What advice would you give to young creators who want to launch an artisanal brand while building a sustainable business model ?

I would tell them, above all, to believe in their vision, to work with rigor, and to keep faith in God, because it's that faith that helps you hold on through moments of doubt.

I would also encourage them to build a genuine identity. It's natural to draw inspiration from other creators, but it's essential to bring your own sensibility to it in order to offer something unique.

I'm convinced that a brand combining passion, discipline, rigor, and authenticity has every chance of standing the test of time.

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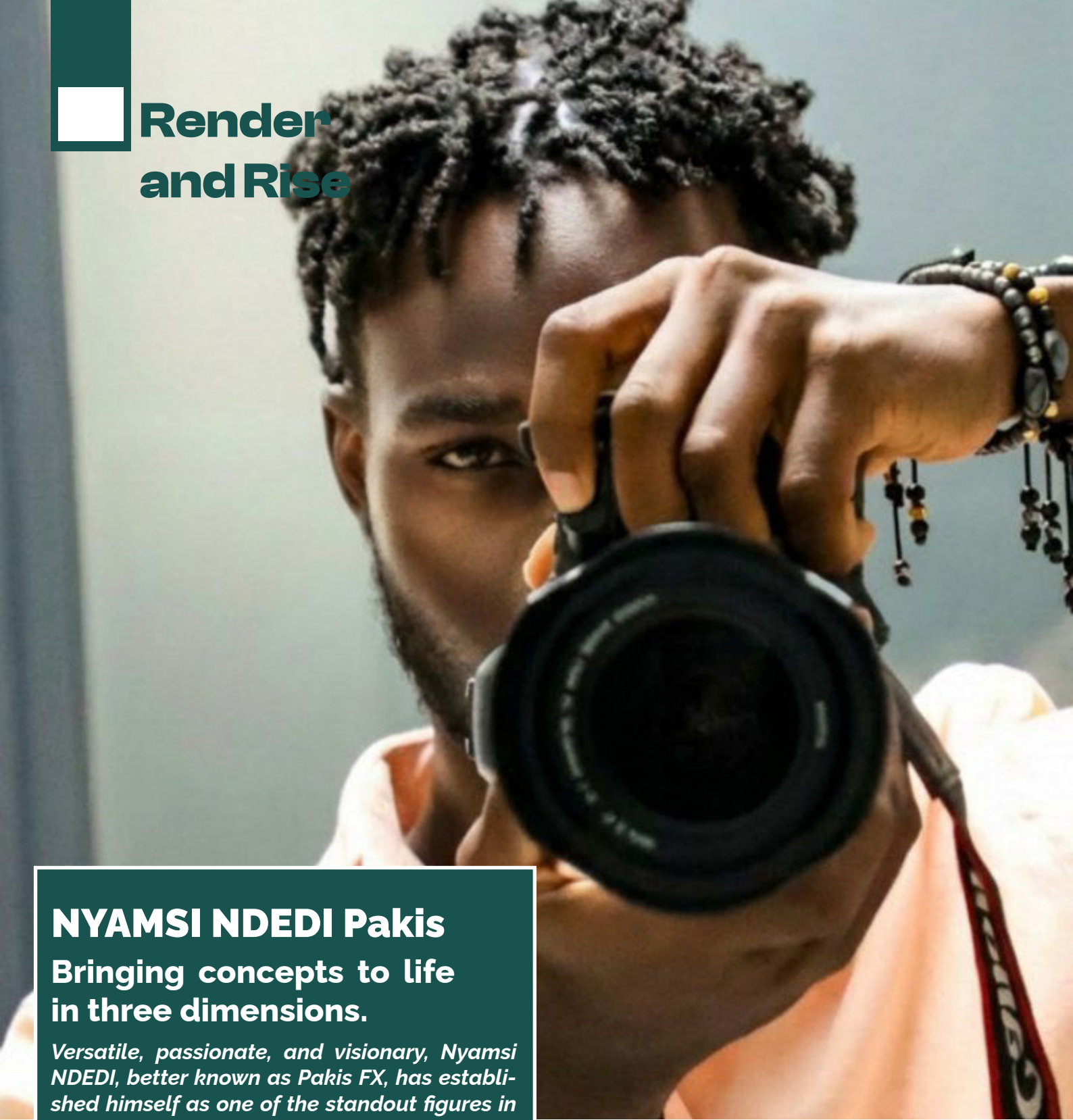


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Render and Rise

NYAMSI NDEDI Pakis Bringing concepts to life in three dimensions.

Versatile, passionate, and visionary, Nyamsi NDEDI, better known as Pakis FX, has established himself as one of the standout figures in 2D and 3D design in Cameroon. With over six years of experience, he turns every project into a captivating visual experience, blending flawless technique with limitless creativity. A designer at Soticam and an inspiring trainer, Pakis FX doesn't just create: he elevates, shares, and shapes the next generation of talent. In this exclusive interview, he opens the doors to his world, between passion, challenges, and visions of the future, to reveal what makes him a master of his craft.

What are your first memories with 2D and 3D design? What inspired you ?

It all started in my Première TI (final year of technical high school, IT track) class, during a computer graphics course. A group presented a video montage with special effects on the road, and it hit me like a vision. I was so passionate about what they had done that, from that day on, I started teaching myself design.

How did this passion turn into a real professional career ?

At first, you're passionate, you want to try everything, you're hungry to learn. You go through YouTube, downloaded tutorials, nights spent practicing... until the day a first client needs your services. You satisfy them, they spread the word, clients start coming one after another, and that's how you end up with a real professional career and a solid client portfolio.

How did you develop your mastery of Fusion? What role does technique play ?

Originally, I was passionate about special effects with After Effects. But over time, I looked for something more complex, more original. That's when I came across Fusion. The interface seemed magical to me, the philosophy completely different. I taught myself on my own, through trial, error, and discovery. Today, Fusion is essential to every one of my projects.

Can you describe your creative process, from idea to execution ?

The process varies depending on the project, but generally I start by materializing the base idea: sometimes through sketches, sometimes through visual research. Once the idea is well established, I move into the creation phase with the software I tinker, I experiment, I break things and start over, until I get a result that truly convinces me.

Which project impacted you the most, and why?

Without hesitation, the modeling of the Dolait yogurt pots for my interview at SOTICAM. That was the challenge I was given to land the position. I had never modeled yogurt pots in my life. Either I failed, or I rose to the challenge. I rose to the challenge. When I presented the results, everyone was satisfied, and that's how I landed a job at a very large multinational company. That project will stay with me forever.

What is your approach to guiding and inspiring the new generation ?

When I work with young, passionate people, I first try to present design in its entirety without influencing their choice. I explain the advantages and disadvantages of each discipline, then I observe what they naturally lean toward. Once I've identified their interest, I start to mentor them, motivate them, and guide them in that direction until they find their path.

How do you see the evolution of 3D design in Cameroon and in Africa ? What trends excite you ?

3D design has become much more accessible than it was six or seven years ago. Back then, the technical constraints were enormous: you had to master computing, know how to dig up information wherever it was hidden. Today, artificial intelligence simplifies everything. What excites me right now is art direction imagining a complete scenario, building an idea, and managing to make it emotionally resonate in everyone's eyes.

What have been your biggest challenges, and how did you overcome them ?

My biggest challenge has been managing to convey emotions through my work. Sometimes you imagine something powerful, but the audience doesn't immediately grasp the idea. That's one of the most complex challenges in design: making sure that what you feel while creating is perceived and understood by the person looking at it.

What is your vision for the future of Pakis FX ?

In the future, I see myself evolving into a role as an image consultant and specialist someone who shares their experience rather than just executing work. That's actually why, today, every project I create has to be memorable. In thirty years, looking back at this work, people should be able to feel that there was passion and strong intention behind it.

How do you manage workload and deadlines ?

Let's be honest: I prioritize the quality of the result, which sometimes leads me to reassess deadlines. When you're passionate and want to do things right, inspiration doesn't always come at the planned moment. It can strike while watching a movie, while going out for a walk... those things can't be planned. There's pressure from the client, from the employer I understand their constraints. But for me, what matters most is that in the end everyone is happy: them with the result, me with my work.

How do you stay calm and remain creative under pressure ?

Experience plays a big role: the more you accumulate, the calmer you stay when facing difficult situations. I also draw on the anecdotes and stories of creatives who have succeeded. When I read about how the greatest have gone through moments of intense stress and made it through, it boosts me tremendously. I tell myself I'm not alone, that it happens even to the best, and it gives me renewed energy.

What was the most difficult moment of your career, and how did you overcome it ?

The most difficult moment was when, still a beginner, I dropped the ball on an entire project because of my technical incompetence. The elements weren't ready in time, I had failed. The client was so angry that he nearly became physically aggressive with me. It was humiliating and very painful. But that day, I promised myself it would never happen again. That's what pushed me to get involved in practically every area of design, so I would never be stuck again and could meet any requirement.

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What advice would you give to young enthusiasts who want to follow in your footsteps ?

The advice I would give to young enthusiasts is simple: nurture your passion and show perseverance. When you're deeply passionate about what you do, you find the motivation needed to learn, take on complex challenges, and keep moving forward, even in difficult times. There will be obstacles, doubts, and sacrifices, but passion remains the driving force that pushes you to progress. Never lose it, and keep believing in your vision.

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Une **vague** de
fruits qui réveille
votre **nature**

SOTICAM



Render and Rise

Sodie Micheline KIMOU

**Create without limits,
inspire without barriers.**

In a world still largely dominated by men, Sodie Micheline KIMOU stands out as a key figure in 3D and VFX in Africa. Awarded Best 3D Artist at the African Creative Awards 2025 and second prize at Lisolo Africa 2024, she embodies success and perseverance. Through her journey from her studies in digital creation at ISTC Polytechnique and ESMA in Abidjan to her professional projects in web design and graphic design Sodie is paving the way for women who dream of entering a field where they remain far too rare, proving that passion and talent have no gender.

Can you tell us about your journey and what pushed you to get into graphic design and 3D ?

I've always been deeply drawn to visual creation. After my baccalauréat, I was directed toward visual communication, where I discovered graphic design. This allowed me to acquire the basics of design, composition, and color, and above all to understand how to communicate through image.

One day, I came across a training program offered by Afro VFX to learn 3D, and I signed up without hesitation. Out of more than 500 applicants, I was lucky enough to be selected. That selection was a real turning point: it was at that moment that my love for 3D was born. It allowed me to move from creating images to creating entire worlds, offering a new dimension of expression more immersive, more ambitious, and more daring.

Why did you choose 3D and VFX as your main field, and what fascinates you most about this profession ?

3D allows you to sculpt the imagination. What fascinates me is that moment when an abstract idea becomes a tangible image. Working with light, material, and movement is both technical and poetic. And with VFX, you can even reinvent reality. It's a craft that requires patience, but the magic always happens at some point.

You won the Best 3D Artist award at the African Creative Awards 2025. What does this distinction mean to you ?

Receiving **the Best 3D Artist award at the African Creative Awards 2025** was a deeply significant moment for me.

Beyond the trophy, this distinction represents much more. It symbolizes all those moments of doubt when I wondered whether I truly had a place in a field still largely dominated by men. There were times when I wanted to give up, when I found my work «not wow enough,» not impressive enough, not up to standard. I compared myself a lot, I questioned everything.

But it's precisely those moments that built my strength. This award validates a journey shaped by perseverance, discipline, and passion. It rewards the invisible efforts, the sacrifices, the nights spent learning, starting over, correcting, and relentlessly improving. Today, I'm proud of how far I've come.

You mentioned winning «for all the women who dream of 3D.» What message would you like to convey to young women who are still hesitant to get started ?

I want to tell them that impostor syndrome is a lie. You can be talented and still doubt yourself. Both can coexist. Don't wait to feel «ready.» You'll never be fully ready. Start imperfectly and learn as you go.

You work both as a 3D AFRO Artist at AFRO VFX and as a Web Designer at Barrière. How do you manage these different roles, and what do you learn from each ?

I've learned to structure my time and prioritize. Each field nourishes the other: web design strengthens my sense of user experience, and 3D strengthens my creativity and artistic vision. This versatility is a strategic strength in a world where hybrid profiles are in high demand.

During periods of intense workload, how do you manage stress and moments of pressure ?

I've learned to listen to my body and accept that I can't be high-performing 24/7. Sport, music, and sometimes simply disconnecting help me find balance again. I also make sure to take creative breaks.

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***Don't wait to feel “ready”. You'll never be fully ready.
Start imperfectly and learn as you go.***

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***Start. Even with limited resources.
Consistency beats talent. Share your work.
Keep training continuously. Doubt is normal,
but inaction is the real danger.***

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Among all your projects, which one impacted you the most, and why ?

Among all my projects, the one that impacted me the most remains the virtual fashion show. It was a real challenge. I had to learn and master CLO 3D in just one month for an important presentation. One month to understand a new software, grasp its logic, test, fail, start over, and still produce a professional result.

There were sleepless nights. A lot of exhaustion. Moments of frustration where I wondered why I had taken on such an ambitious challenge.

This project transformed me. It taught me that I'm capable of learning fast, that I can create something impressive in a short amount of time when I'm focused and disciplined.

Above all, it showed me that my limits are often temporary. With hard work and self-belief, you can surpass what you once thought was impossible.

In your view, what are the major developments in 3D design and VFX in Africa, and how do you see your role in this movement?

We're at a turning point. More and more young people are getting trained, studios are emerging, and above all, we're starting to create our own imagery, far from stereotypes. I see my role in mentorship: opening doors, sharing what I've learned, and showing that you can make a living from your art here.

What would be your main piece of advice for someone who wants to get into 3D or graphic design but still doubts their abilities ?

Start. Even with limited resources. Consistency beats talent. Share your work. Keep training continuously. Doubt is normal, but inaction is the real danger.

What are your goals for the coming years, and how do you plan to continue inspiring and impacting the African artistic community?

To develop larger-scale projects, collaborate internationally, position myself as a reference in 3D and digital fashion in Africa, and pass on knowledge through training programs, conferences, and mentorship.

What message would you like to give to women who are afraid to get into this field ?

Fear is normal. But imagine, in five years, if you never tried? Fears will never completely disappear, but they shouldn't run your life. Do it for yourself, do it for those who will come after you. Every woman in 3D today paves the way for ten others tomorrow.



Michel Niamké BILE

Combining performance, strategy, and humanity.

Through nine years of experience, Michel Niamké BILE has made people the driving force of performance. An international HR expert and career coach, he navigates between strategy, innovation, and personalized support to build stronger, more competitive organizations. In this interview, he shares his journey, recounts his challenges, and offers valuable advice for those who want to excel while remaining deeply human.

Michel, can you tell us about your journey and what made you want to get into Human Resources ?

After my BTS (technical diploma), I started my career as a sales rep in 2016 because I loved being close to people: finding solutions, listening, advising, guiding. But deep down, I had always wanted to work in HR. Let's just say there weren't many HR opportunities available at that time. I had applied for many HR internships, but none ever came through. So I told myself I had to start somewhere. If the front door is blocked, you can always make a small hole in the wall (laughs). What matters is being on the path toward where you want to end up.

Then I joined a company as a bilingual back-office advisor for over a year, but deep down I knew that wasn't what I wanted to do.

One day, a company CEO contacted me about a Partnership Manager position, but unfortunately, the test didn't go well.

After that first failed attempt, he came back to me and said: «I see you have a BTS in human resources and communication. We have a Talent Recruiter internship position. Are you interested?» I said yes, took the test for that role, and it was successful!

That's how I ended up in HR. Others get into it through the administrative route, as an HR assistant, or through law, as a legal assistant. I got in through recruitment, and it quickly became one of my areas of expertise!

Contrary to popular belief, the HR function is a «people» function. You manage human beings, not machines. Being part of someone's growth, being the one who, at a certain point, helps build someone's empire that's incredibly rewarding. You feel useful, like you've been a bridge, and that's what makes me more passionate about this job every day.

What were the most significant moments in your career that shaped your vision of management and talent ?

When you see around you how people are marginalized, sometimes with precarious wages, a lack of opportunities, or people who can't seize certain opportunities because they're poorly informed, poorly trained, or poorly supported, you tell yourself, in a way: there's something to be done here, a way to be useful to your community.

That's actually how I started using LinkedIn as a major communication tool, one that allows me to express myself and share my knowledge.

Somewhere, someone always needs to hear what we have to say.

I remember a time when a manager walked into my office and said: «Michel, we're going to let this employee go. It's just not working anymore.»

I went to see him in his office, we sat down and talked so I could understand his sticking point and see what we could do. An underperforming employee isn't necessarily a bad one if you manage to understand what's wrong and address it.

Some time later, that employee quickly became a key member of the team and started performing well.

I still have a lot to learn about management, but that day, I understood my very first lesson: to manage is to open the path, to show the way. Not to give orders.

You talk about a «human-centric» approach. What does that concretely mean in your daily work and for companies ?

Take the example I gave you earlier, and you'll understand what **a human-centric approach is !**

For me, the strength of an organization is its human capital. It's true that, in the evolution of human resources, HR used to be seen as a cost center, but it quickly evolved.

Our organizations are gradually coming to understand that you can have the best product, but if your organization treats people poorly, you'll not only have high turnover, but ultimately, no talent will want to work with you. And if you don't attract talent, your performance drops, your numbers drop, and one fine morning, you find yourself in the red!

Having a human-centric approach means putting people at the heart of your project. It means being aware that if I take into account the five dimensions of human needs (physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-fulfillment needs), I create motivated employees and a healthy work environment where everyone can thrive.

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The strength of an organization is its human capital...
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In an international and multicultural environment, what are, in your view, the key elements to attract and retain top talent?

It's undeniable that every company has its own vision, and from that vision comes a talent management strategy. What works at company A may not work at company B, so it's very relative. But generally speaking, I think that to attract and retain talent, you need a clear and strong company culture.

The image you project externally has to genuinely match what you are internally. There's no point showing the outside world that you have fulfilled employees who do team-building every year, when in reality your key positions keep losing managers to the competition.

I've often heard feedback from colleagues saying that a certain company looks great from the outside, but once you step in, excuse me, it's «the jungle.» Everything is disorganized, they still work the old-fashioned way, no digital tools, and worse, you can't even make progress: people often try to sabotage your work as if you were a nuisance!

If you want to attract talent, you need to ask yourself the right questions: what kind of employees do we need on our team? What are our own values? Are they applied and respected by the teams already in place? What internal issues do we need to fix, and how are we going to communicate?

You won't attract excellent candidates if you're invisible in the digital age, and especially if your recruitment process is unclear or too rigid. You won't attract talent if your compensation policy isn't attractive at all. If everyone in the market knows you for offering low salaries, that won't work in your favor.

The same goes for talent retention, or talent loyalty. To retain people, you need to understand a need. Once you've identified it, you'll know what action to take. It's mathematical.

Can you share a complex HR situation that you managed to turn into a success?

Ah, I have a few cases, but one that immediately comes to mind, and that really stuck with me, was the recruitment of a director for a strategic position. We tried twice to find someone, but it didn't work out! I should mention that the expectations for this role were enormous, and that if it meant taking more time than the process initially allowed, it would be worth it.

I had to show a great deal of dedication and resilience, and in the end, we found the ideal person! You should know that a recruitment is successful not when you've hired the person, but when they've passed their probation period and, after a three- or six-month evaluation, they're performing well and have fully integrated into the company's practices.

I also remember a conflict that needed to be quickly defused between a manager and a subordinate, because the relationship was on the verge of becoming toxic. After listening to both sides, I was able to bring them together so that each could understand what the other expected of them. Things then got back on track, grounded in respect and professionalism.

Digitalization is transforming the HR profession. How do you incorporate it into your practices to optimize processes?

That reminds me a bit of my thesis topic, where I addressed the question of the impact of digitalization on HR processes.

Human resources are evolving very quickly today. We're even seeing new jobs emerge that were born with the digital age (Chief Happiness Officer, HRIS Project Manager, HR Data Analyst, Digital Learning Manager, etc.).

Digital tools are very present in my practices, whether for organizing my to-do list, researching relevant topics, learning, asking questions, preparing for interviews, writing reports and employment contracts, planning projects, preparing presentations, and so on.

Every day, new things are happening in the world. I'm not obsessive about «testing» everything under the sun, but I try to stay as informed as possible so I don't get left behind, and to always find tools that can help me improve my work and save time.

What skills must an HR leader absolutely develop to have a real impact on organizational performance?

From my point of view, I'd say: observation, leadership, being people-oriented, active listening, and the ability to be a problem-solver. Of course, you could add several other soft skills, but I think that's already a solid combo!



You also support professionals in their careers. What advice would you give to help someone take control of their professional development ?

Don't just let your career happen to you. Plan it.

A successful career isn't a succession of jobs and companies, but the sum of experiences gained that allow you to achieve your professional ambitions.

You can climb the ladder within a single company, or across several companies. It all depends on the goal you're pursuing. **And to make this clear for yourself, you can ask yourself the following questions: where do I want to be in five years ? In what environment ? With what skills, to reach what position, for example ?**

If this exercise is clear in your mind, you'll know what you're missing, what training you should pursue, or how to work toward reaching your next step. Also, when I say «don't let your career happen to you, plan it,» I'm referring to the fact that this is, first and foremost, your responsibility.

Many people join companies and sometimes even ask in interviews: « How do you support career development within your organization ? » That's not a bad question at all quite the opposite.

The company should have a Career Development Plan, but the real question is:

- Do you fit into that plan?**
- Does it meet your objectives?**

That's why you need to be a co-planner alongside the company. The company envisions its future, and you envision yours too.

If, unfortunately, the company doesn't have one for the moment, at least it's clear for you: you know what you need and can take the necessary steps to move forward.

How do you see the role of HR evolving over the next 5 to 10 years, particularly in Africa ?

Business, Strategy, Governance, and CSR. These will be the biggest challenges of tomorrow.

Who or what inspires you daily in your professional and personal practice?

A shoutout to **Ms. Rachel Youant KOFFI**. I draw a lot of inspiration from her journey she's a real expert in the field, and when you see people like her who have accomplished so much in this profession and are still hard at work, it can only encourage and motivate you. A shoutout as well to **Ms. Joséphine Amouroux**, a very smart woman from whom I've learned a great deal.

To conclude, what inspiring message would you like to share with young professionals and aspiring leaders in the HR field ?

Competence isn't everything. Don't get trapped in overconfidence, and don't think that no one not even the least experienced person can teach you anything.

Believe in God, that's the foundation, and then believe in your own abilities. Success is built; it doesn't happen by chance.

Also know how to adapt. Most of the time, the opportunities you're looking for won't come wrapped the way you want them to. You'll need a lot of wisdom and maturity to recognize that you can start here and reach a certain level tomorrow.

Be strategic. Surround yourself, if possible, with people who are successful in your field and learn from them. Get out there, attend trade shows, events, training sessions, and so on.

Never stay in your comfort zone always keep the desire to discover, learn, and go further.

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Know how to adapt. Most of the time, the opportunities you're looking for won't come wrapped the way you want them to !!!

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4 Questions targeted at employment and the preparation of young candidates...

Many young people show up to job interviews without real preparation. In your view, what are the most common mistakes, and how can they be avoided ?

Showing up to a job interview unprepared is already a first mistake. You never succeed in life without preparation.

I see two things here.

First, schools should introduce a module into student training that could be called «Preparing Your Professional Career.» In this module, chapters could cover job search techniques, interview preparation, resume writing, and how to succeed in your first steps in a company.

Second, there's self-training. We're in the digital age, and information is available everywhere on the Internet. It's unacceptable to be a TikTok expert and not know how to simply answer the question: «Tell me about yourself.»

We, as young people, also need to make an effort.

How can a candidate work on their confidence and posture before an interview, especially when they're just starting out in the professional world ?

The mirror technique. That's the one I recommend most. If you don't have someone to prepare for your job interview with, you can film yourself, answer different questions, then watch yourself back to check whether your answers are coherent. If they're not, correct your delivery.

Also watch a lot of tutorials on YouTube and try to draw inspiration from best practices. You can use ChatGPT to help refine your answers, and if you have the opportunity, work with a coach or career advisor. Thanks to their experience, they can correct not only your delivery, but also your posture, body language, and so on.



What are the main gaps you observe between the expectations of young candidates and those of recruiters, and how can they be bridged ?

These two parties meet often, but unfortunately, they don't understand each other.

The candidate is looking for an opportunity, the recruiter is looking for the best candidate for their opportunity. Deep down, their interests align, but in practice, what creates the disconnect is that we regularly see candidates taking things too lightly they don't take the time to study a job posting, a company, or understand what's at stake in that recruitment.

You post an ad for a Recruitment Officer, an accountant applies and says they can adapt. YES, everyone can adapt (in a way), but if the candidate carefully breaks down the job posting, they can understand whether or not they're actually the target.

Recruiters also need to know how to put candidates at ease, especially during an interview. It's not an interrogation. I always say there's no point asking questions just to unsettle a candidate and amplify their stress. That might stroke your ego a little, but what do you actually gain from it afterward? Nothing!

If we want to close this gap, each side needs to make an effort. If candidates train themselves, recruiters need to train themselves too. Recruiting has nothing to do with just asking people questions. It's more of an exchange, a conversation, where you get to know one another. The exchange should be constructive, so that both parties even if the candidate isn't selected walk away having learned something from the interview.

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If you had to give three concrete and immediate pieces of advice to a young person heading into their first interview, what would they be to maximize their chances of success ?

Be authentic, don't make anything up. Practice your pitch (the art of talking about yourself) so you know how to introduce yourself well. And finally, before going to the interview on the actual day, if you can, 1, 2, or 3 days in advance, go check out the company's location (if it's an in-person interview). Why? It will help reduce your stress, because your eyes will have already seen the place and a few people going in and out beforehand. You'll feel like you already know it.

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Digitals Minds



Kevine WAFFO Structuring companies' digital presence.

In a rapidly evolving African digital ecosystem, certain voices stand out for their vision, consistency, and ability to turn social media into genuine growth drivers. Kevine Waffo is part of this new generation of digital strategists.

A certified Social Media Marketer, ranked Top 1 Social Media in Cameroon by Favikon, and co-founder of the agency Digital Experience, she has spent several years helping B2B companies structure and expand their digital presence. Between strategy, teaching, and entrepreneurship, she holds a strong conviction: beyond algorithms, it's human connections and authentic stories that truly allow brands to shine. In this interview, she looks back on her journey, her vision of digital marketing, and the ambitions that drive her commitment to the African ecosystem.

Kevine, today you're recognized as one of the leading voices in Social Media in Cameroon. What was the trigger that made you want to build a career in digital ?

I had never imagined getting into digital. Honestly, I didn't even know this world existed.

When I started my first year of my master's degree, in 2018-2019, I was simply looking for an internship. I wanted to find something that would let me both discover the professional world and earn a bit of money.

At that time, Facebook had just launched a feature dedicated to job postings. While doing some fairly random searches, I came across a listing for a web copywriter position. I didn't know exactly what it involved, but I told myself: « I'm good at writing, I have a nice way with words, so I'll apply. »

So I sent my application to an online media outlet. The manager responded and explained that, given my profile, I would probably be more suited to being a community manager than a web copywriter.

I admitted to him that I had no idea what that was. He replied that he would explain everything to me as we went through the process.

That's how I discovered the world of digital.

I started learning, practicing, and gradually advancing in this field.

My experience began at that media outlet, before I later joined an agency.

Your career began in digital media and agencies. What were the first challenges that impacted you the most early in your career ?

The first difficulties I encountered mainly came from the environment. By «environment,» I mean the absence of a framework and a community within which we could exchange ideas and learn from each other's experiences.

There wasn't really any shared space yet, so learning was mostly self-taught. At that time, the different specializations within digital hadn't yet been clearly defined the way they are today. The sector was still fairly unstructured, with fewer training opportunities and future prospects than it offers now.

You've held several roles: community manager, social media marketer, teacher... What key skill did these experiences allow you to develop ?

I've held several positions: community manager, social media marketer, and today, digital agency manager. The experience that shaped me the most in digital remains the one at Famille 2.0 magazine, even though I don't talk about it much these days.

It was my first almost entirely digital project I'd say 80% digital. It taught me to start from zero and see things through to the end. Carrying a fledgling project, developing it entirely through digital, and managing to achieve results was an extremely formative experience.

Throughout that journey, I learned to build websites, to understand the link between digital and business, and I even became a digital project manager. In the beginning, due to lack of resources, I had to learn everything and do everything myself.

That experience later served me in every other position I held, from community manager to agency manager. It truly trained me from A to Z: from the initial idea for a digital project to its launch, structuring, and commercialization.

Today you mainly work with B2B companies. Why this positioning, and what distinguishes B2B digital marketing from B2C in your view ?

B2B simply means «business to business.» In other words, it involves a company offering its services or products to another company. The sale therefore takes place between two professional entities.

Conversely, when we talk about B2C, it involves a company selling its products or services directly to the end consumer.

The key difference mainly lies in the way of selling.

In B2C, the goal is to reach the end consumer directly. The strategies used often aim to trigger emotions, create desire, and sometimes a sense of urgency to encourage purchase. Sales cycles are generally shorter.

On the other hand, in B2B, it's not about convincing a single person, but an entire organization. Decisions are often more deliberate and involve several stakeholders. The arguments and selection criteria are therefore more rational, tied to performance, profitability, or the efficiency of the service.

Many companies are present on social media, but few actually manage to perform well. What is the most common mistake you observe ?

When we say that many companies show up on social media but very few manage to perform well there, it often comes down to several mistakes.

The first is not clearly defining the objective of their online presence. When we talk about performance, are we talking about getting more likes, followers, authority, or sales? You can only measure performance against clear objectives.

The second is believing that digital is free. Creating a page and posting isn't enough to attract customers. Getting results takes time, skills, and resources.

The third is neglecting the structure of the business. Some companies think a good idea is enough to sell, when in fact you first need a clear offer, a defined target audience, and a solid understanding of your customers.

Finally, **the fourth** difficulty concerns the choice of professionals. Without clear objectives or an understanding of digital, some companies turn to service providers who don't actually match their needs.

LinkedIn is now a central platform in your strategy. How can African entrepreneurs really benefit from it ?

I believe that today, no professional should do without LinkedIn. It's actually the platform that got me my first clients and helped me position myself professionally.

LinkedIn has given me a great deal, and I think anyone operating in a professional environment should take it seriously. For African entrepreneurs, the mistake would be to see LinkedIn simply as a space where you post job listings.

In reality, it's a genuine professional social network: a space to meet, discover, exchange, and build connections that, when well maintained, can lead to real opportunities.

After several years as a freelancer, you co-founded the agency Digital Experience. What made you want to take that step ?

Over the course of my journey, I realized that working alone as a freelancer didn't always allow me to bring all the value I wanted to my clients. Very often, I had to rely on outside service providers, which could limit my control over quality and deliverables.

That realization is what pushed me to evolve. I told myself that, with my experience, I could bring more to the table by building something more structured.

I already had a friend who ran an agency specializing in designing digital solutions, particularly software, with whom I was collaborating. So I joined him so that we could go further together.

Moving from freelancer to agency co-founder brings new challenges. What was the biggest lesson in that transition ?

The biggest challenge for me was team management: delegation, structuring, and managing people.

When you work alone, everything is simpler, because you already know how you operate. But when you have to share the work with others, making sure everyone delivers to the level of quality and standards you have in mind becomes a completely different challenge.

So it's a constant learning process around delegation, organization, and managing people.

How do you see the evolution of B2B digital marketing in Africa in the coming years ?

I think there's a real acceleration today in the way companies perceive B2B.

We're seeing more and more offers and marketing strategies specialized in B2B, which shows that mindsets are evolving.

In Africa, B2B still relies heavily on person-to-person relationships, built on trust and informal agreements. This is partly explained by the fact that many companies are still led by a generation attached to traditional methods. But gradually, a new generation, more familiar with digital tools and new modes of communication, is taking over.

I'm therefore convinced that, in the coming years, B2B digital marketing will grow significantly in Africa, with more structured, more visible practices that are increasingly geared toward digital.

You often emphasize the importance of human connections in digital. How do you maintain that authenticity in a world dominated by algorithms ?

You know, despite everything that's said about digital, data, or algorithms, there's one essential thing we shouldn't forget: we're always selling to human beings.

They are people we're trying to convince, people who recommend, decide, and place their trust. We're not selling to robots.

Algorithms can help with visibility or reach, but the final decisions remain human. Behind every click, every purchase, or every partnership, there's always a person making the choice.

What impact would you like to leave on the African digital ecosystem in the years to come ?

In terms of impact, I'd like it to one day be said of me that I built one of the largest digital marketing and communication agencies in Africa.

But beyond the size or success of the agency, I'd especially like to be remembered for work that helped many people get started, believe in their projects, and for having helped companies achieve real results through digital.

If my journey can inspire, open doors, and help other initiatives grow, then my impact will truly have meaning.





“

If you had to give just one piece of advice to a young African who wants to get into digital today, what would it be ?

With the arrival of artificial intelligence, it has never been easier than today to learn and get started. Access to information and tools is now much simpler than it used to be.

But in a world that has become very saturated, in order to move forward more quickly, it's often essential to surround yourself with the right people. That can mean belonging to a community or being guided by a mentor.

That's actually what we offer with Social Media Room, of which I'm the representative in Cameroon: a community of digital professionals where the most experienced share their knowledge and support the younger ones. Even though many resources are available for free, there's a structure, a depth, and an experience that you can't always gain on your own. You can certainly get there by yourself, but it will generally take much longer.

”

Design Legacy



Theo YAOVI

From vision to inspiring creative leadership.

In the demanding world of visual creation, certain journeys stand out for their consistency, their boldness, and their ability to reinvent themselves without ever losing sight of their vision. Theo Yaovi is one of those rare profiles who has managed to turn every stage of his career into a ground for experimentation and growth. From Lomé to Dakar, from the role of graphic designer to that of Artistic Director and Chief Creative Officer, he has built a trajectory marked by discipline, the direction of major brands, and the creation of ambitious creative structures. Through this interview, we dive into the journey of a creative who has made vision, doubt, and resilience the pillars of his evolution.

What common thread connects your journey, from Senior Graphic Designer to Artistic Director and then Chief Creative Officer ?

For me, creativity, fueled by research and the constant drive to push beyond oneself, is one of the essential elements at the heart of any creative process whether it's small projects, like creating content for social media, or the rollout of 360° advertising campaigns.

You've worked between Lomé and Dakar, two different creative ecosystems: what have these environments taught you about creativity in West Africa ?

You've worked between Lomé and Dakar, two different creative ecosystems: what have these environments taught you about creativity in West Africa ?

For me, Lomé was where it all began. It's an environment that pushes you to go beyond your limits and challenge yourself every day, particularly because I knew a lot of talented people around me who cast a meticulous eye on everything others produced. Although the communications industry in Togo is less developed than in Senegal, Togolese creatives are true dreamers.

Dakar is also a city overflowing with talent. Unlike Lomé, its ecosystem allows a creative like me, coming from a country like Togo, to fully express my potential. That said, it still comes with certain limits, particularly related to religion, customs, and traditions.

As I often say: Lomé gave me the fire, and Dakar gave me a playground.

Looking back at the start of your career at INTEGRAALE GIE, what memory stands out most in your professional development ?

I remember having to touch a bit of everything. I worked for a company that operated in event management, radio and television media, and communication consulting all at once. I had to quickly adapt to every situation since I was the only creative at the company.

It's worth noting that, at the time, having several creatives within one agency wasn't as common as it is today. The most striking memory remains having to be out in the field supervising events while, at the same time, working on projects with my laptop on my knees, at the beach, in the middle of a concert.

All of that helped me develop a certain resilience and quickly adapt to any situation.

At what point did you realize you were no longer just a creative executor, but truly a leader of artistic vision ?

I should first point out that I've always shown leadership, because I quickly learned to be autonomous in managing projects, thanks to my past experiences.

As I said, Lomé educated me, but Dakar marked a shift to another level: that of unlocking my potential and being able to fully express myself. I already knew how to lead teams. What I needed, however, was the opportunity to express my artistic vision on 360° projects and to be able to refine it. Dakar gave me that opportunity, particularly with Les Barbus Paris-Dakar, which I want to acknowledge here.

Working in such a creative environment was a real trigger and allowed me to further sharpen my artistic vision.

“AI should not replace creativity, it should amplify it.”

As Artistic Director at Bantoo Studio for nearly 9 years, what were your greatest human and creative challenges ?

Bantoo Studio was a creative studio I launched in my grandmother's shop with three childhood friends who shared the same passion as me. A makeshift studio, with a few desktop towers and screens that were on their last legs (laughs).

Even though, later on, each of us went our separate ways, the project always stayed alive. We would find projects to work on remotely, each of us bringing our own expertise: graphic design, video, motion design, photography, printing, UX/UI, website development...

That studio was truly the space where we let loose, where we could present and sell our ideas directly to clients, without having to go through approval from a boss.

It was our vision, our expertise, face to face with the client. We had to win people over through our creativity and results, without any sales pitch fluff.

In your creative direction experiences for brands like Moov Africa or Sobebra, how do you strike a balance between brand requirements and artistic freedom ?

To be honest, the line of balance is very fine and delicate. Sometimes it feels like the client is imposing their vision, and that can completely distort a creative concept if you don't manage to find the right balance.

For my part, I take the time to fully understand all of the brand's requirements, its constraints, and the expected outcome before thinking about a concept that fits within its vision. The goal is to avoid confrontation and bring the two visions together to achieve a result that satisfies the client while still allowing for genuine artistic freedom.

And as I often say, we don't work for brands, we work with them. It's a true team effort.



Today, how would you define your creative signature in a single sentence ?

In one sentence, I would say: I transform African brands into visual experiences that are popular, powerful, and instantly engaging.

You've co-founded several creative structures (TYMS, Parabellum). What drives you today to build your own spaces rather than join existing structures ?

I'll paraphrase an elder in the field by saying this : **« Every creative working in an agency today is a competitor in the making » (hello, Mr. Modeste Kouassi).** I think many creatives aspire to become independent, **to break out of the 8-to-6 routine.** That's what pushes more and more designers to go freelance or build their own structure, driven by the desire to dream bigger and express themselves more freely. There's also the aspiration toward a better future and a certain financial freedom, so as not to remain solely dependent on a salary.

So you try to launch out by taking your elders as role models, learning alongside them, and drawing inspiration from their journeys. It's also worth factoring in that some structures avoid entrusting big projects to freelancers for tax and administrative reasons: they prefer working with registered, compliant structures.

What was the most difficult project or assignment to manage, and what did it teach you about yourself ?

There was a time when I worked for three years client-side, on the advertiser's end, rather than at a communications agency. Being a pure product of the advertising world, joining an Ed-Tech company where people talked about JavaScript, Python, and development all day long wasn't easy.

I remember being brought into a three-day sprint, with only one day to finalize the design of an onboarding site for a pan-African competition. It had been almost seven years since I'd used UI design software, the last one being Adobe XD, and this time I had to work in Figma.

There was no talk of ad campaigns, films, brand design, or copywriting. It was a major challenge, with enormous pressure. But that experience taught me something very important about myself: I learn fast and adapt quickly.

In your journey, have you experienced periods of doubt or deep self-questioning? How did you get through them ?

There have been plenty of periods of doubt, and there still are.

It's a bit funny, but sometimes, when I scroll through LinkedIn, I get impostor syndrome. I feel like I don't belong when I see all the achievements and posts from other professionals.

But by looking inward, reflecting on my journey and on all the people who follow me and see me as a role model, I feel proud of what I've accomplished.

That's what comforts me, pushes me forward, and keeps me giving my best.

How do you view the new generation of creatives in West Africa, and what mistakes would you advise them to avoid ?

With the rise of AI, talent is multiplying, but there's sometimes a noticeable drop in originality in the work being produced. I'm not saying the new generation is less creative, but the output increasingly looks the same.

Today, they have every tool available to push the limits of what's possible. They need to avoid taking the easy route and not use AI the way everyone else does. It's essential to specialize, to keep improving, and to use these tools in order to excel. AI shouldn't replace creativity — it should amplify it.

A journey like yours isn't easy. How have you gotten through and endured periods of doubt, pressure, and stress, without losing your direction or your creative energy ?

Several times, I've questioned my entire career. But I always remind myself that I chose this profession because I'm passionate about advertising.

I can't change the world, but I can make people happy through campaigns that have real meaning.

I can sell ideas and concepts that help brands grow. Those are the small victories that give me the energy and the drive to keep going.



“

If you had to leave a single lesson for those who want to become Artistic Directors or creative entrepreneurs, what would it be ?

Get out of your design software. Explore the world. Discover art in everything. Break down advertising campaigns. Try to understand how things are made, the different skills needed to achieve a particular result.

Learn to master AI. Don't set limits for yourself. Be patient.

And above all, no matter the size of the project, always give the best of yourself.

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Money



Creative King



Jean-Claude AMOUGOU

**Creativity, strategy, and
impact every day.**

For over ten years, Jean-Claude Amougou has been shaping the creative world of McCann Douala as studio director and artistic director. With a career marked by projects for iconic brands like Vimto, Orangina, Big Gum, and La Pasta, he has established his unique vision and inspired entire teams to push the boundaries of creativity. In this interview, he opens up about his journey behind the scenes, sharing his methods, his challenges, and his lessons learned, offering young talents and advertising enthusiasts an inspiring look into the world of creation in Cameroon.

Tell us about your journey: what led you to become artistic director at McCann Douala ?

Since childhood, advertising has always held an almost instinctive fascination for me. When ads interrupted programs, where others saw a break, I discovered a spectacle. It was my own moment. The vibrant colors, the catchy music, the funny or touching stories... Every commercial was a small window opening onto a more beautiful, more intense, more inspiring world. Without really understanding what advertising was, I already sensed its power: the power to tell stories, to make people dream, to leave a mark in just a few seconds. That feeling never left me. My studies in fine arts and art history gave that sensibility a language. They shaped how I saw things, sharpened my taste for image, and deepened my understanding of forms, symbols, and narratives. Drawing, painting, cinema... everything always brought me back to the same realization: I wanted to create images that speak, that touch people, that stay with them.

Choosing advertising wasn't a coincidence, then, but a natural continuation. And when I discovered **McCann**, I saw it as much more than an agency: a space for expression that matched my ambitions, a place where creative rigor meets real impact. For me, it was and still is the place to turn that childhood fascination into a fully embraced calling.

What were your first challenges early in your career, and how did you overcome them ?

Like any ambitious young person, I knew that entering this profession wouldn't happen by chance. I needed to understand its codes, its demands, its subtleties. But above all, I had to earn my place. To win the trust of those who had been there long before me. Those who had experience, seniority, and their share of scars too. They taught me, guided me, corrected me. **Step by step. I had only one strategy: work twice as hard. Twice as hard to learn, to progress, to reach the required level.**

That meant late nights, weekends spent polishing a single detail, redoing a visual, learning a tool. It meant investing time in additional training to broaden my range of skills: 3D, photo retouching, motion design, advertising illustration, FX coding...

Every skill acquired was another building block. Every project, a training ground. I wasn't just trying to get things done. I wanted to understand, to master, to elevate my work.

How would you describe your creative approach ? Is there a philosophy or principle that guides your work ?

« One detail at a time. »

That's my working philosophy. I believe excellence isn't born from one big, spectacular gesture, but from an accumulation of details mastered with rigor. Every nuance matters, every choice carries weight.

Truly rigorous work is a piece built patiently, detail by detail. It requires constant discipline, genuine attention, and the same level of commitment, whether it's a large-scale project or a more modest assignment.

Among the brands you've worked on, like Vimto, Orangina, or Big Gum, which project inspired you the most, and why ?

Working on mobile phone brands has always been, for me, a real proving ground for rigor. It's a world where nothing is left to chance: competition is fierce, consumers are attentive, and every piece of communication has to be strategic, creative, and flawless in its execution.

Whether it was with Orange, Tigo, Nextel, or Vodafone, every collaboration marked me in a different way. These brands taught me technical rigor in managing and ensuring the quality of deliverables, pushed me to go deeper in the ideas I proposed, and strengthened my day-to-day organizational discipline.

Looking back, I can say that working on these accounts truly structured my approach: I gained in rigor, method, and creative maturity.

How do you identify the trends that will make a difference for a brand ? Do you have an example where you successfully innovated ?

As Artistic Director at McCann, several tools and methods are put in place to identify high-value trends for brands. These analyses are then precisely adapted to local dynamics and to the specific realities of each brand.

Through these tools, the goal is particularly to understand what consumers are looking for, saying, doing, sharing, and consuming. This approach makes it possible to develop communication that is genuinely relevant and aligned with their expectations.

Beyond focus groups and so-called traditional studies, we now incorporate digital tools to complement the creative strategy. Among them: social media through Meta Business Suite (Facebook & Instagram Insights), TikTok Creative Center, and Google Trends. These platforms are particularly effective for analyzing social and cultural trends around a brand or product, and for informing creative recommendations grounded in real-world usage.

How do you inspire your teams and create an environment where ideas can truly flourish ?

I deeply believe in leadership by example. For me, a high-performing team is a solid chain where every link knows its role perfectly and reliably contributes to a common goal. I personally commit myself to every challenge, ready to roll up my sleeves and move forward alongside my teams, delivering solid and meaningful results. So far, this approach is paying off.

What makes advertising in Cameroon unique ? Are there particular challenges you often encounter?

As in most African countries and elsewhere in the world, advertising in Cameroon faces a major challenge : remaining strategic and effective in an environment dominated by data and technology platforms.

This central and constantly evolving dynamic requires professionals in the sector to continuously adapt, both structurally and methodically, their tools and approaches.

This particularly concerns :

- * **Strategy**, which makes it possible to understand the market, analyze behaviors, and build strong, differentiated brand platforms ;
- * **Creation**, now enriched by software, applications, and platforms optimized to produce innovative, high-performing advertising content ;
- * **Media tools**, essential for ensuring targeted, measurable, and effective message distribution.

Cameroon's uniqueness naturally lies in its cultural richness and diversity, as well as in the proud and assertive character of its people. In this context, brands must offer reliable, coherent, and authentic responses, in perfect alignment with their identity and values. That is precisely my role as an advertising professional: to guide brands through this process, so they can build messaging that is relevant, credible, and impactful.

Can you share a difficult project that taught you something invaluable ?

My years working on the Orange brand were formative. They called on the full range of my skills as a young advertising professional and allowed me to reach an important milestone in my career.

I gained essential skills there that still serve me today, particularly diligence, availability, high standards, and the ability to question myself.

As is often said: « **Your work doesn't belong to you, it belongs to the client, because they're the ones paying.** » That reality taught me rigor, humility, and a sense of responsibility.

The advertising profession is, above all, about responding in a striking, accurate, and creative way to the challenges that brands face in a given environment. It's an exercise in listening, analysis, and constant innovation.

How do you manage stress, and how do you manage to keep your teams motivated and inspired ?

Stress is almost part of the DNA of the creative profession: tight deadlines, decisive pitches, sometimes demanding client feedback, pressure for results, constant comparison... That's our playing field.

Over time, I've come to understand one essential thing: stress isn't the enemy. When properly channeled, it becomes a driving force. It sharpens instinct, speeds up ideas, and pushes you to go beyond yourself.

The real challenge isn't eliminating it. It's learning to turn it into creative energy. My responsibility today isn't just to deliver results. It's also to help my teams tame that pressure, master it, so that it lifts them up instead of holding them back.

“

If you could give just one piece of advice to a young person who dreams of becoming an artistic director, what would it be ?

My advice comes down to three things: curiosity, boldness, and Ctrl+Z... if the client says it's not good. After all, the one who pays is the one who decides.

”

How do you imagine advertising and creative design in Cameroon over the next 5 to 10 years ? What role do you want to play in it ?

In 5 to 10 years, advertising will no longer be simply creative. It will be smart, connected, and deeply integrated into everyday use.

Mobile will be the center of gravity. Digital and data will be its engine. AI will be a strategic partner, capable of amplifying ideas, optimizing performance, and opening up creative territories still unexplored.

Creativity itself will need to become deeply human again: more authentic, more local, more cultural. Because technology will never replace the accuracy of a good insight.

Agencies will evolve toward hybrid models: creative, strategic, and business partners all at once. Less about execution, more about decision-making. The role I want to play in that is ambitious: to be an actor in this transformation. To help build an ecosystem where creativity, technology, and performance coexist meaningfully. An ecosystem capable of giving our profession fresh momentum bolder, more structured, more influential.

“ ***Stress is not the enemy.
Properly channeled, it becomes
a driving force that pushes
you where comfort would
never dare to take you !***

”



Neil SICKO

**A creative vision
that shakes up the rules.**

In a rapidly evolving African creative ecosystem, Neil Sicko stands out as a talent who doesn't follow the wave, but sets it in motion. From Cameroon to Senegal, his journey reflects a rise driven by clear vision, steady discipline, and structured ambition. From Graphic Designer to Art Director, he has managed to leave a strong mark, understanding that design is far more than aesthetics: it's a strategic lever and a tool of influence for brands. An entrepreneur with Footclup, passionate about branding and forward-looking toward new technologies, he embodies a generation where creativity, leadership, and innovation are one and the same.

Leaving Cameroon to become Artistic Director in Senegal... at what point did you know you were ready ?

I didn't wait to feel ready. I waited until I felt limited.

There comes a moment when your environment doesn't hold back your talent... but it holds back your ambition. I needed a bigger playing field, a more demanding market, a pace that would push me to go beyond myself.

Leaving Cameroon wasn't running away. It was a strategic move. I understood that if I wanted to become a benchmark, I had to accept discomfort. Discomfort is often the price of growth.

When did you stop executing and start leading the vision ?

When I understood that design isn't a question of « beauty, » but of power.

The day I began taking part in strategic decisions rather than mere execution, I shifted my stance. A designer solves a visual problem. An artistic director anticipates positioning, influences perception, and builds a system.

Leading the vision means accepting that every graphic choice puts a brand's credibility on the line.

Your creative signature in three words ?

Vision. Discipline. Impact.

- Vision, because a creation without direction is mere decoration.

- Discipline, because talent without rigor burns out fast.

- Impact, because a brand doesn't pay to be pretty it pays to exist in people's minds.

How do you lead a creative team ?

I don't lead through pressure, I lead through clarity.

When a team understands the strategic objective, it naturally goes beyond mere execution. My role is to provide a framework, set a high standard, and encourage boldness.

Creativity needs freedom, but performance needs structure. The balance between the two makes the difference between a good campaign and a memorable one.

You've worked at several agencies in Cameroon before joining a company in Dakar, Senegal. What difference do you see in the maturity of the advertising market between these two ecosystems ?

Cameroon gave me resilience. Senegal gave me strategic exposure.

But beyond the differences, what I mainly see is a continental opportunity. Africa is entering a phase where its visual identity needs to be embraced, structured, and exportable.

The future of African branding shouldn't imitate. It should assert itself.

You incorporate AI Design Assistants into your process. Does AI replace the designer, or does it amplify their genius ?

AI is a lever. Not a threat.

Tools change. Creative leaders adapt.

Those who refuse to evolve become spectators. Those who embrace it become benchmarks.

The real difference will no longer be technical. It will be conceptual.

“
***Discomfort is often
the price of growth.***
”



You're also the founder of Footclup. Why does an artistic director feel the need to create their own brand ? A need for freedom, or a bigger vision ?

Because creating for others made me want to build for myself.

FootClub isn't an entrepreneurial whim, it's a cultural vision. Football is a religion in Africa, but few African brands tell its story with real aesthetic ambition.

I want to contribute to a sports apparel culture that speaks to our generation and celebrates our identity.

In your view, what mistake do 80% of African brands still make today, and how can it be improved ?

They underestimate the power of branding. Many invest in advertising without investing in a brand platform. Yet without a strategic foundation, no communication can last. Branding is an act of leadership.

What was the most difficult moment of your career, the one where everything seemed like it could fall apart, and how did you manage to overcome that doubt ?

The moment when I had to believe in myself before anyone else did.

Changing countries, moving up in position, launching a brand... every step comes with silent doubt. But I understood one thing: doubt isn't a signal to give up, it's a test of conviction.

What kept me going wasn't motivation. It was daily discipline.

Graphic designers often face immense pressure in agencies. Do you have a method or a trick for managing that stress, and how do you handle your own on a daily basis ?

I prioritize. I structure. I breathe.

In an agency, pressure is constant. But pressure is productive when it's organized.

I've learned to compartmentalize: the brief stays at the office, my mental health stays a priority.

A burned-out creative produces tired ideas. A creative leader doesn't pass their stress on to their team. They absorb, structure, and redistribute the energy.

Creativity requires strategic serenity.

In 10 years, would you prefer to be recognized as a successful Art Director... or as a builder who redefined creative standards in Africa ?

I'd say a builder.

A position is a step. A vision is a legacy.

If I can help raise creative standards in Africa, inspire a generation of strategic, confident creatives, then I will have done more than succeed I will have taken part in a transformation.

I don't just want to be recognized.

I want to have helped redefine what it means to be creative in Africa, both entrepreneurially and artistically.

What powerful message would you like to leave for those working in the same field as you who aspire to become creative benchmarks ?

Stop waiting for outside validation.

Work on your identity. Develop your visual culture. Learn strategy.

African talent has nothing to envy in the rest of the world. What we sometimes lack is structure. Creativity is power.

Learn to direct it.

“

Doubt is not a signal to give up, it's a test of conviction.

”

**“Africa doesn’t need more creatives.
It needs creative leaders.”**





LE FOOT C'EST LE STYLE

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Cecilia WANGUE

**A fullstack vision
that transforms digital.**

A passionate fullstack web developer, Cecilia WANGUE embodies a generation of African talent that combines technical rigor, creativity, and leadership. With over four years of experience, she has worked across a variety of technological environments, from back-end to front-end development, going on to take on roles of responsibility on high-impact projects. Now a Lead Developer, she combines technical skills, design sensibility, and determination to build high-performing digital solutions, all while inspiring those who aspire to build a career in tech.

To start, can you introduce yourself in a few words and tell us how your passion for web development was born ?

I'm an application developer. A big dreamer in tech. I do fullstack development for several Cameroonian companies, as well as WordPress integration for building websites. My passion for computing, particularly application development, was born in my Première (11th grade) year, when my computer science teacher asked us to design a website using our class notes. I was immediately fascinated by the ability to implement automated programs with a computer.

You have over 4 years of experience in fullstack development. What was the decisive turning point in your career that pushed you toward more complex and structured projects ?

I'd say my growth happened fairly naturally. I was lucky to be ready when a major opportunity came along (Enjema - MyHome). There, I met «big brother» developers who guided me in using new stacks like NodeJs and NextJs. That allowed me to move beyond personal projects and truly put my skills to the test.

You've worked in both Back-End and Front-End. How do you manage to balance these two worlds in your approach to development ?

I see the back-end as the brain of the system, because that's where the logic, business rules, and data processing happen. The front-end, on the other hand, is the face the user sees and interacts with. It's this complementarity that allows me to approach a project as a whole, understanding the constraints on both sides.

You've worked across various technical environments: Node.js, Next.js, MongoDB, Spring Boot, SQL. Which stack do you prefer today, and why ?

I adapt easily to the needs of each project, because I believe each stack brings its own strengths depending on a system's requirements; for example, for a fast, lightweight system, I'd favor NodeJs on the back-end and MongoDB for data storage.

For a robust and complex system, Spring Boot / Java is among the best choices on the market. For now, I'm interested in every stack out there, and I'm still exploring.

Development often involves tight deadlines, complex bugs, and unforeseen issues. How do you manage moments of stress when things don't go the way you'd like ?

I panic a lot, but I remind myself that what matters is the outcome, so I quickly refocus.

Concretely, I make a to-do list, then rank the tasks by priority and/or complexity, tackling the simplest ones first to keep moving forward.

Delegating and asking for help also helps me find solutions fairly quickly when facing uncertainty.

It's also worth knowing that pressure has this power to reveal talents you didn't know you had.

At MyHome-XP, you served as Lead Developer on a real estate management application. What were the biggest technical and human challenges of that experience ?

Technically, the biggest challenge was quickly learning the fundamentals and specifics of the stacks being used and reconciling them with what I already knew.

On the human side, it was about being out front, following the user acquisition process, managing team dynamics as well as the relationship with leadership, knowing how to motivate the team when needed, and finding quick solutions in the event of bugs or delays.

Your journey shows a strong capacity for adaptation, between startups, established companies, and field missions. What have these environments taught you about your profession ?

Each of these different environments brought me something unique.

- Startups allowed me to quickly get hands-on with new stacks, move fast, and manage pressure and tight deadlines.



BASS LIVE

- Established companies gave me rigor and respect for standards, producing maintainable and scalable code.
- Field missions taught me to analyze and understand users' real needs.

All of this clearly showed me that development isn't the same everywhere, but that skill, rigor, and curiosity can take you anywhere.

Today you combine development and design to deliver high-performing projects. How does this dual skill set make a difference in your work ?

This dual skill set allows me to create applications that are both functional and pleasant to use, with interfaces that are aesthetic and intuitive. I don't need to wait for a designer to picture the final result I can design and develop while keeping the user experience at the heart of my decisions.

As a developer, you've also led technical workshops. What do you aim to pass on when you mentor or train other developers ?

I haven't actually led technical workshops yet, but rather training workshops, because for me, when I work on an application, I also handle training end users on how to use it. I find that step essential: delivering a technical solution isn't enough if the people who'll use it day to day don't feel comfortable with it. This direct contact with users has also taught me to better understand their needs and to design more intuitive interfaces.

The digital world is evolving very quickly. How do you stay up to date technologically, and what skills are you currently looking to strengthen ?

I stay up to date mainly through specialized articles, by following well-known tech experts both nationally and internationally, and through a few newsletters for real-time information.

Right now, I'm looking to deepen my skills in software architecture and to better master best practices around application scalability.

To finish, what message would you like to share with young African developers, especially those who still doubt their place in tech?

Tech is the future of the world, and we need more hands on deck to bring Africa up to the same level as other continents. Africa's development will also come through its technological progress. We, as African developers, must be capable of carrying African technology to the top of the global stage. So, Africa needs you, needs me, needs all of us let's not give up.

“

***An idea without action remains a dream.
An idea put into action can transform
an entire continent.***

”

Ink the future of here and elsewhere !

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