

Business of Design speaker Q&A: Nicola Cooper

 By Jessica Tennant

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Business of Design (BoD) is back with a [speaker lineup](#) of note. The two-day seminar is held annually in Cape Town and Johannesburg during October and doesn't just focus on design in itself but has a much broader vision for the field in all areas of business. Delegates include everyone from business owners and creative entrepreneurs to retailers, marketing and brand executives, trend analysts, design students and other employees from various industries.



Tracy Lynn Chemaly on Business of Design and other things

Jessica Tennant 18 Jul 2016



New to the conference is 'Open Sessions', a platform for delegates to ask the BoD founders (Trevyn and Julian McGowan of The Guild Group, and Laurence Brick and Cathy O'Clery of 100% Design South Africa and Platform Creative Agency) as well as fellow delegates any questions they may have, and together overcome any barriers to growth and challenge new ways of doing business.

I asked trend researcher, analyst and cultural strategist Nicola Cooper of [Nicola Cooper & Associates](#), what she loves most about being in the 'business of design' and to let us in on what she'll be sharing during her Cape Town and Johannesburg sessions.

■ **Why are you excited for Business of Design this year?**

As excited and honoured as I am to speak at the Business of Design this year, I am even more excited to listen to and gain insights from incredibly talented and intelligent game changers within the South African design space.

■ **Comment on the importance of events such as this that recognise the role design plays in (and the impact it can have on) various industries?**

Many key players in the industry do not have the time or capacity to think beyond their own roles, as time is scarce. Platforms such as Business of Design allow individuals and companies a 'snackable' platform, to break their pattern and engage with different and unique players who may offer left of field insights which could be applied within their own role or business.

■ **Comment on the current state of design in South Africa (and internationally).**

We at Nicola Cooper & Associates have been saying it for a while, Africa is where it is at. We are beginning to recognise the value and the power of our own style, aesthetics and creativity, we are no longer looking towards an Americanised or a Eurocentric approach. We are finding our unique voice and the rest of the world is listening. It is our time to develop our own identity and reflect it to the rest of the world on our own terms.

■ **What is your/your company's involvement in/contribution to the local design scene?**

The area of research, analysis and cultural strategy in which we specialise in, namely 'Glocalisation' is to inform



Nicola Cooper

businesses of international trends which would resonate locally, local trends which inform local and local trends which have the capacity to speak universally to an international audience.

For approximately six years we have been informing local business of the necessity for a point of differentiation from international, that the African emerging market is not London, New York or Paris; that we are African and that involves understanding the aspirations, aesthetics, touch points and cultural intricacies of the African consumer.

It has taken a while but we are getting there.

■ **What do you love most about being in the 'business of design'?**

We are very proud to provide new knowledge to our field and to our clients.

Many businesses do not have an in-house trend department and utilise information from international trend agencies who do not offer trend knowledge from an African perspective, our role is pivotal in providing business with key trends in from a highly informed perspective with a holistic approach at the intersection of trend, culture, lifestyle and business.

■ **What is the title/subject of your talk and/or what are you going to be sharing?**

The subject of my talk is *Trends that Shape Business*; I am going to be sharing key short-term trends within the sociopolitical, technological and environmental categories, which affect consumer's mindsets and purchasing patterns.

■ **What's the key takeout?**

I hope to give insight into the field of trends, as a key component of business strategy, often there is a misconception of trend research and analysis, that it is a 'nice to know' rather than a business necessity.

The talk will allow the audience to take home some key 'Glocalised' trends that they can apply within their business and marketing strategies.

*The Cape Town version takes place 11-12 October, followed by Johannesburg on 18-19 October, and **our readers qualify for a R450 discount**. To take up this offer, email tracy@businessofdesign.co.za with 'Bizcommunity' as the subject. In the meantime, follow #BODCT and/or #BODJHB for more pre-event speaker interviews over the next couple of weeks to get your creative juices flowing.*

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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