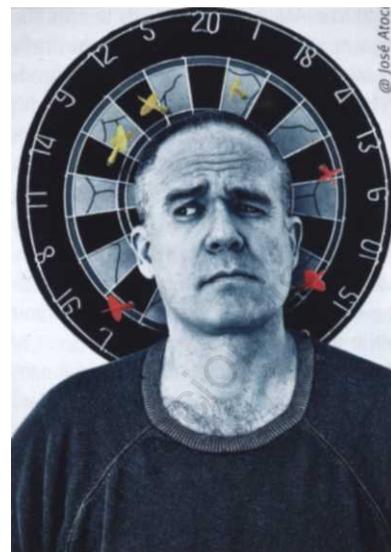


The best agencies are often those that do believe they can change the world.

Flavio Pantigoso is Executive Creative Director at Y&R Peru and a member of the Global Creative Council of Y&R. He also sat on this year's Press jury in Cannes. The Peruvian uprising is reflected in this Cannes edition: 10 Lions, including 5 for Flavio's agency. According to the Cannes country ranking, Peru is now rated third in Latin America, behind Brazil and Argentina, an historic achievement. Flavio was born in Lima but studied advertising in Brazil. Since then, he has worked at Y&R and Ogilvy (Chile), Delvico Bates, Cathedral and Tandem DDB (Spain), 180 (Netherlands), Lowe (Mexico), and Leo Burnett and Y&R (Peru). Apart from being chosen Best Creative Director in Peru by Ibero-American El Ojo in 2010, 2011 and 2012, and having led Y&R Peru this year to #8 at "Crema" (Adlatina's highly regarded Top 10 list of best Latin American agencies), he takes 8th slot in Archive's ranking of the most published copywriters over the last ten years. Michael Weinzettl spoke to the first Peruvian to be interviewed in Archive magazine about his stellar career, and about advertising in both his country and in Latin America in general.

L.A.: Hi Flavio, can you tell us a bit about where you originally come from, where you grew up, and how you got into advertising?
Flavio Pantigoso: I was born in Lima and lived there until I was 21. I come from a

completely bilingual family (Spanish/Portuguese), closely linked to the arts, painting, literature, and culture in general. My Peruvian father is a well-known intellectual personality in Peru and a member of the Spanish Royal Academy of Language. My Brazilian mother is a former teacher and director of the Center for Brazilian Studies in Lima. My grandfather, Manuel Domingo Pantigoso, was a winner of the National Painting Award. So, from a very young age, I took in that environment and was an eager reader. After quitting my law studies in Peru, I won a scholarship to study advertising in Brazil, and I have worked in countries such as Chile, Spain, Holland, and Mexico, and came back to Peru five years ago. **L.A.:** I hear you hold three nationalities: Peruvian, Brazilian, and Spanish. How come? **Flavio Pantigoso:** I'm Peruvian because I was born in Peru, Brazilian because of my mother, and Spanish because I lived and worked in Spain, and there is a dual nationality agreement between Peru and Spain. Long before the word "globalization" was to become popular in the world, I already knew - in the flesh - what it was all about (*laughs*)... To complicate things even more, I studied at the Swiss School in Lima, where German was the official language... **L.A.:** What are your earliest recollections of advertising when you were growing up? Was advertising a very strong factor in everyday life in Peru at the time? **Flavio Pantigoso:** When I was a kid, Peru was



Flavio Pantigoso, Executive Creative Director at Y&R, Peru and a member of the Global Creative Council of Y&R.

the Armed Forces," a left-wing military dictatorship with a nationalist, authoritarian mindset that isolated the market from what was going on abroad. They demonized consumer society and the mass media under the "Theory of Alienation." Superman was forbidden for being imperialistic, Donald Duck for not wearing clothes, rock'n'roll for being Anglo-Saxon... that sort of Manichae-an thinking. Advertising was considered a manipulative, shameful activity, and the regime censored its



An ad for League Against Cancer, a non-profit organization that provides free medical care to needy cancer patients, which was featured in Lürzer's Archive Vol. 2-12.

worked in Spain, the crisis was pretty much one of hope and identity: are we European, Latin, or both? There was a certain aspiration to imitate northern Europe in a purely formal way instead of looking for truly fresh and subversive ideas by processing its own reality. With plenty of money, excesses were committed and passion became dormant, and clients stopped believing in agencies. Nowadays, when the crisis is an economic one and money can't fix it all, it's Spain's opportunity to reinvent itself, as it has an impressive advertising tradition and culture. Mexico is the dormant power one always expects more of, in accordance with its size and extraordinary creative heritage. When I worked there at Lowe's, we produced a few truly remarkable projects, but Mexico suffers from very conservative clients, the Televisa media monopoly, and the stigma of being a gigantic market where subsidiaries go to milk money. In Holland, I worked at 180 with Adidas and I remember that, by six o'clock in the afternoon on my first day, everyone had left, which was so strange for our Latin working habits. They later gave us the keys and the alarm code so we could lock up the agency when we left. That's trust! We had absolutely exceptional timing to execute the campaign, with respect for processes, rigorous conceptualization, careful planning work, sensible analysis, etc. whereas in Latin America we are trained to place greater value on intuition, spontaneity, solving issues on the spot - a somewhat chaotic work culture, which can be very good sometimes, but very bad other times.

L.A.: Talking about stages, can you tell us a bit about advertising in the various Latin American countries. I guess Brazil has the longest tradition and has been the most successful ad scene when it comes to awards won over the past 20 years or so.

Flavio Pantigoso: I believe awards don't tell the whole story of what is going on in the market. There are countries which are more familiarized with technological advances and others which aren't, and this undoubtedly determines that, for instance, Brazil today plays a refreshing, non-traditional role in advertising in the world. The relationship Argentina has with its advertising (especially on TV) is amazing. It pours its whole idiosyncrasy into it; it has managed to get many brands to communicate with their audiences employing truths which, in other places, are still a violation of the codes of traditional advertising language. On the other hand, it is an example of a talent surplus vis-a-vis the size of its economy, while elsewhere there is a shortage of talent. Colombia has made striking progress in Print and in Promo, and Chile maintains its strong

level in Print. Peru is a little more eclectic and is lately doing well in several fields.

L.A.: Are there any characteristics that can be ascribed to the various South American markets and ad scenes? **Flavio Pantigoso:** If anything characterizes South Americans, it is the bold idea we have that nothing's impossible. And that's because we have neither the profitability nor the volume large first-world markets do, so we need to apply more emotional values that will boost our work. Projects that would be impossible elsewhere can still come to life here in Latin America. What we would need is to work with a greater number of big brand jobs that can impact globally. On the other hand, I don't think we should get obsessed with trying to define a Latin American "identity" through communication. Sometimes, I feel many Anglo-Saxon juries at Cannes expect us to talk about guerrillas, soccer, folklore, or social issues. The truth is that no one here is wondering if what we are doing is "Latin American advertising" or not. All forms, styles, trends and ways should be open to consideration

- like anywhere else in the world.

L.A.: What about Peruvian advertising? Obviously, there has been a great creative upsurge in Peruvian advertising in recent years

- mostly thanks to your own efforts at Y&R Peru. Is there a history, or some kind of tradition to build on?

Flavio Pantigoso: From day one I told people my vision: to be an agency that is passionate about Peru and the idea of a country that, insolently and proudly, declares its presence in global creativity, that competes at the same level with the best in the region. An agency that believes in everything where there was nothing before -and does things. Results speak for themselves: 8th agency in the "Crema" ranking of top Ibero-American agencies prepared by Adlatina, one of the Latin benchmarks for advertising. Ranked among the Top Ten of Ibero-American Agencies at Cannes this year. And it fills us with pride to see new players join this crusade, like Mayo Draft FCB, scoring 4 Gold Lions at Cannes with its "Potable Water Generator" for the Technological University. Ten Peruvian Lions all in all (4 gold, 6 bronze) at Cannes 2013 is an historic record that proves this vision can go real.

L.A.: How do you account for this energy and optimism? What is going on in Peru today?

Flavio Pantigoso: Peruvians want to be known by the world as a country setting out to win. They have recovered their self-esteem and pride. Take the worldwide boom of our gastronomy, for example: quite a phenomenon, and one that has reached

out socially in an incredible way throughout the country. As a country, we have been struck by the seven plagues of Egypt, and we underwent crises infinitely worse than those the developed world is undergoing at the moment. But, about 20 years ago, our economy started to pick up. The country is growing at rates of 6-7% annually, every year. From the outside, Peru looks hot and sexy in investment, tourism, food, entrepreneurship, though the real challenge will be to turn economic growth into development. In Peru, what you most expect might not happen, and what you least expect might. We're a magical country, cosmopolitan and open to novelty, where diversity is the only thing that unites us: in the same land you can find Coast, Andes and Amazon, totally western cities and villages from ages past, which makes up the raw material for tasty storytelling. Don't forget we were the cradle of a world-class empire. Unlike other neighbors, possibly more developed but lacking that kind of past, Peruvians know perfectly well where they stand in the world as heirs of a rich, sophisticated and diverse culture. Intellect, arts and creativity have always lived in us, and we are giving



In the campaign for the Peru Country Brand, a delegation of Peruvians were sent to US town Peru, Nebraska to represent their culture there.

a Nobel Prize laureate like Mario Vargas Llosa, a photographer like Mario Testino, a super chef like Gastón Acurio, etc. **L.A.:** Has your perception of advertising in general changed over the years? And has advertising itself undergone major changes since you first started out in the business?

Flavio Pantigoso: The major changes are related to the social changes in human behavior that have sped up with the increasing access to technology; the shift from vertical, monologuing brand communication to the so-called conversations, and the use of individuals as platforms to amplify the brands' messages, producing the incredible number of canvasses on which to express an idea today. On the other hand, creativity being treated as a commodity means the progressive erosion of income for agencies. It has never been more necessary

than now, but at the same time it has never been more difficult to attract it, pay for it and retain it, due to schemes based on man-hours and fees that do not compensate the true value of the ideas we generate. **L.A.:** What about the role of digital and social networks? How important is that in a country like Peru for clients and agencies? **Flavio Pantigoso:** Digital had growth of 30% last year in Peru, Google opened a local office there, and it is one of the countries with the most users contributing to Face-book. Smartphones sales are growing exponentially. There are problems, however, related to poor digital penetration across some parts of the territory, where bandwidth is an issue, and poorly developed e-commerce. In addition, many clients do not properly value digital advertising yet because they don't quite know what to do

with it or how to measure it. Furthermore, there is a divide between "traditional" agencies that cannot "digitalize" well and "digital" agencies that are able to conceptualize properly, as there is simply not enough talent available. What is clear is that there is enormous potential for those who are able to do it well.

LA: Can you tell us about some of the work you've done that you are proudest of, perhaps think back to most fondly? **Flavio Pantigoso:** The launching of the Peru Country Brand, which is one of the most awarded campaigns in Latin America (Grand Effie and two Lions included). We started from the point that Peru has so many wonderful things to offer that it would be a shame if there were a sole Peruvian on Earth unfortunate enough not to know or enjoy them. So we discovered a real and forgotten town in Nebraska called Peru (a homonym of the country). Technically, they are "Peruvian," but they "don't know" what this really means. So we sent them a delegation of Peruvian representatives from the fields of culture, gastronomy, arts and sports, and for a week we "Peru-vianized" them through a sort of "reverse colonization," making them aware of their "Peruvian" strengths and pride. We recorded it all in a 15-minute-long video, posted it online, and national viewers found out for themselves the strengths of the Peru Brand by seeing how they impact and are embraced by their counterparts, in a kind of great physical and experiential demo. It raised a wave of unprecedented pride and self-esteem for millions of Peruvians, who also wanted to be ambassadors of their own brand - with no need to go film at Machu Picchu. In fact, without shooting a single square meter of Peru. **L.A.:** Where do you get the inspiration for your work?

Flavio Pantigoso: From the conviction that advertising can contribute greatly to the recognition of a country's intellectual, artistic and creative weight and value in the world. From wanting for my own country what I have seen they already have in Brazil or Argentina: attitude, self-confidence, total absence of complexes. Today, I get job applications from many creatives from countries where we used to dream of being and growing. I pinch myself and cannot believe it.

L.A.: How do you feed your creativity?

Flavio Pantigoso: With books, travelling, a phrase from my daughters, a good ceviche, a National Geographic show: it all counts. You have to be an omnivore and permanently train your curiosity. Mediocrity is insidious, and the minute you find yourself at ease, you're stuck in the comfort zone.



The ad for The Land Rover S1 phone, a rugged, high-quality mobile phone, was featured in Lürzer's Archive Vol. 2-11 as well as in our 200 Best Digital Artists special. It won a clutch of eight London Circle Awards.

To get out of it you have to leave fear out. Have a solar confidence that anything is possible, and that anything can be dreamt. We'll see from then. Embrace and nurture a small personal Utopia: that we can change the world. And the best agencies in the world are often those that do believe they can change the world. **LA:** You've won numerous awards for your work, from Cannes Lions to Effies. How important to you are advertising awards? **Flavio Pantigoso:** I go by a personal belief, a charm of sorts: if I give them too much importance, awards will end up not coming ever again. That's why I welcome them joyfully but also with skepticism. I care for them, first, as the eventual outcome of a project into which we put our hearts and best effort, as evidence that we can gain presence on the world's creative map. And, finally, obviously as an incentive for my team and to attract talent. But if I had sat down every year to put into writing: well, guys, the challenge for Lima this year is to win 60 awards (as we have in fact won), I'm sure they would never, never ever, have come. Things work differently for me. You can't create with two briefs on the table: the actual brief and the awards brief. The sensible thing is to kill both birds with one stone.

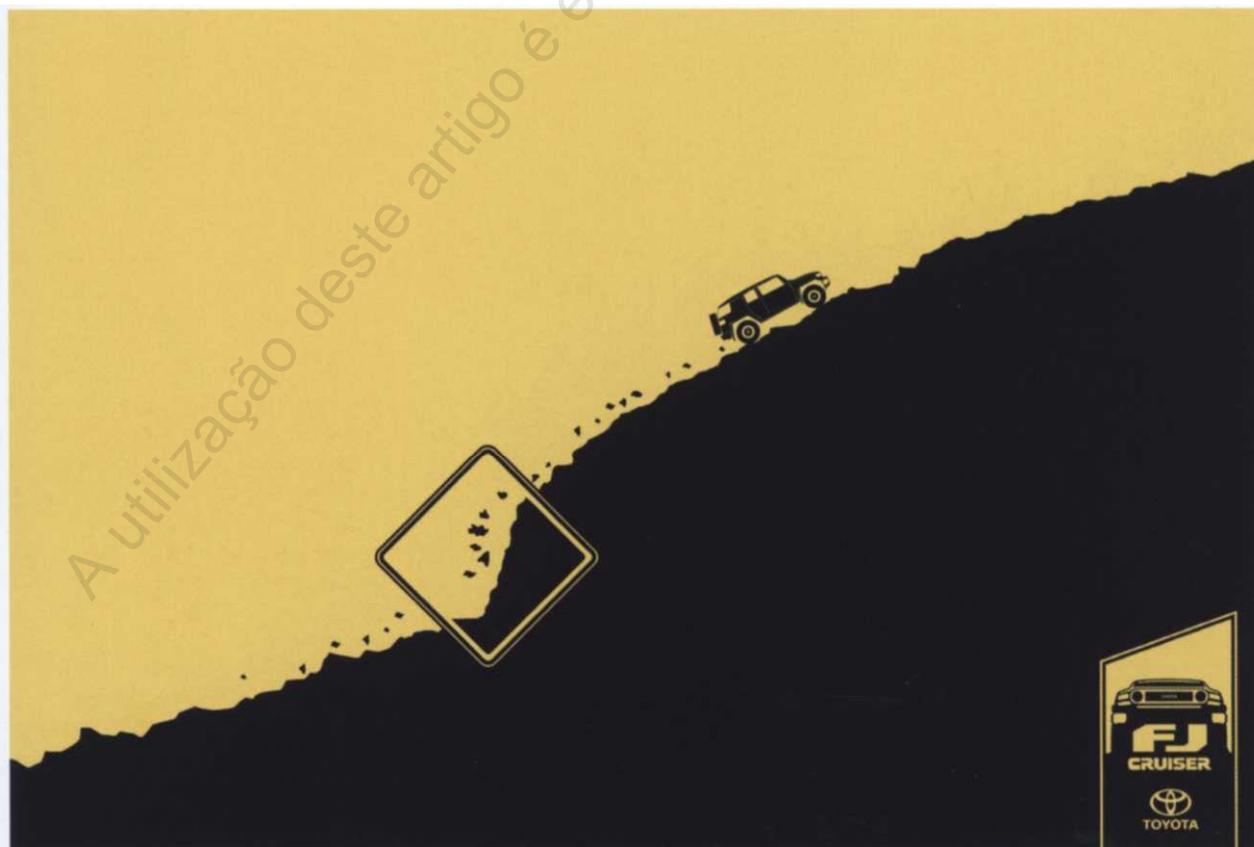
L.A.: How do you view the downside to them, e.g. campaigns that get produced -

and signed off by clients - just for award shows. Are things like that a problem in the South American ad industry? **Flavio Pantigoso:** It exists in South America the way it exists in so many other parts of the world. They cause clients to doubt whether sound creativity really sells better, and convey the message that cheating pays off; dedicating time, energy and talent to solving the actual brief on the table, doesn't. The damage inflicted on young creatives is huge, and we all pay the cost in the form of trash advertising in the streets. Because variables such as "market," "brand" and "consumer", necessary to deal with real assignments, aren't present in the success formula of creatives with as many awards on their desks as zero training or a willingness to deal with reality and push it to evolve. To get the board of a major brand to lean towards a revolutionary idea, now that is true change. And if we wish to challenge the status quo, let us begin by challenging the mediocrity, self-deceit and defeatism in believing it's impossible to do a job that is at the same time real and brilliant with clients and consumers. It's tough. It's uncertain. But it's the only path that will lead us anywhere real. **LA:** In what field would you be working if you hadn't gone into advertising? **Flavio Pantigoso:** I haven't the faintest idea, and hope never to have to.

LA: What piece of advice would you give a student who wants to go into advertising? Is this a good time to be in the ad industry?

Flavio Pantigoso: There's no better time, but timing is up to you. It's what you do in the next five minutes with what you have on the table.

LA: What are your comments on your participation as Press judge at Cannes? **Flavio Pantigoso:** Every year we hear the same about Press: there is nothing really new, it needs to reinvent itself, etc. Maybe we are being a little harsh and unreasonable. Press still is, and will continue to be, basically that blank rectangle where we nakedly place an idea. Sometimes, it's better to look for what is Good, with a capital G, than to look for something new with no substance. This having been said, the premise was to reward simple, powerful ideas that would transcend short-lasting jokes or anecdotes irrelevant to the brand or consumer. They should make us envy them in 20 years' time. I think all gold awards are indisputable. Regarding the Grand Prix, there was debate and polemic. I believe the iPod campaign is very clever, but its cleverness gets to me a posteriori, on a rational level, through the mind and not through the gut. The Dove campaign, on the other hand, has a powerfully human insight that doesn't leave me cold.



Ad from the campaign for the Toyota FJ Cruiser, which was awarded a Bronze Lion in the Press category at this year's Cannes Advertising Festival.