

16 Jan 2025

Hall of Fame Awards 2025

Lifetime Achievement- Patrick Low

Patrick Low started his career in advertising in the late 1970s.

It was a very different time then.

There were over 150 ad agencies in Singapore and no holding companies. Ad agencies earned 17.65% mark-ups on everything.

Clients did not have to pay a third party to organize a pitch.

There were no colour pages in the newspapers. And multinational ad agencies were largely run by non-coloured management boards.

Patrick began as a Finished Artist in the studio of Fortune Advertising.

While his artwork was finished, his career had just started.

I met Patrick in 1982 when I interned at Ogilvy & Mather. I was a teenager, at my most annoying phase- always asking questions.

Patrick, the art half of a young dynamic duo, was the only one who took the time to answer my questions.

I learnt about the creative process just by observing how he worked.

Patrick with quick with his layouts.

Even faster with his witty headlines.

This was how Patrick guided me and so many other young people who later went on to manage and lead other ad agencies.

Some of whom I am happy to see here in this room.

Patrick was one of the first Singaporean creatives to fly the Singapore flag at The One Show.

He showed that a small island could punch above its weight.

In 1987, he joined Dentsu, Young & Rubicam.

Soon, he was promoted to ECD - a position he held on for over two decades.

His career was built upon an impressive body of work.

He also helped many creatives build their careers.

In that time, he created a culture that made DY&R a legend.

By winning new businesses at a pitch-win rate which was among the highest in the global Y&R network. And by retaining blue-chip clients for decades, re-pitch after re-pitch after re-pitch.

Patrick was trusted by senior clients, respected by competitors.

He influenced generations of commercial directors and DOPs- many of whom he gave their first jobs.

Patrick outlasted many agency CEOs, client CEOs, CMOs and after he left in 2010, even DY&R itself.

Not a fan of global corporate politics, long meetings and meaningless KPIs, he founded Goodfellas.

Thanks to the support of long-standing clients who value his professionalism and creativity, Goodfellas is now in its 15th year of operation.

Winning pitches against network agencies and still collecting awards.

There's no debate that Patrick is good at what he does.

If practice makes perfect, imagine how good he is with 5 decades under his belt.

Patrick has created thousands of ads, hundreds of commercials and won many hundreds of awards.

But the Lifetime Achievement award isn't simply given to one who does his day job well.

It's also for the things that matter outside the agency.

The things that are needed to raise the bar.

The thankless tasks that improve our industry.

Patrick is Chairman and on the Board of Governors for **Temasek Polytechnic's School of Design** and Vice-Chairman of the **Institute of Technical Education's Design & Media Academic Advisory Committee**.

But to my mind, this wasn't most important contribution he made to change the direction of local advertising.

From a dangerous course to a better one.

There was a time when the local Creative Circle Awards was decided by a handful of foreign judges.

These accomplished judges- usually mates of the year's Chairman- were flown into Singapore at considerable cost.

Why?

The belief then was that Singapore's work couldn't be good unless someone from abroad said that we were good.

At that time, ads created out of Singapore were already winning big in prestigious award shows around the world.

Yet, some felt that we needed some form of foreign validation.

It was this disconnect with reality that led to an admittedly very creative campaign for a coffee shop winning all the top prizes in the 1992 CCA.

Many larger agencies saw through such an obviously made-for-awards campaign as an affront to the real work and threatened to boycott future CCAs.

Two award cycles passed unorganized and the CCA faced irrelevance and an existential threat.

During its darkest days, the 4As approached Patrick to take on the responsibility as the next Chairman of the CCA.

Patrick was the perfect candidate for the job.

Every agency liked him and respected his creds and voted in favor of his appointment.

He had no ulterior motive.

So, he did what he believed was long overdue.

To save the CCA, Patrick assembled for the first time, a judging panel of Singapore's 15 most awarded creatives. A mixed body of judges which included both locals and expats who work here.

Patrick believed that the best people to judge our best work wasn't a foreign judge who flew in just for the week.

The best creative judges were the people who lived and worked here.

Senior professionals who understood the market and the people and the culture. This made them the best arbiters of the best real work produced in Singapore.

This change was also what Ian Batey believed needed to happen.

Batey Ads, Singapore's largest ad agency then, showed its support by entering the CCA for the first time.

At the end of the day, the 1995 CCA was the true coming of age of our industry.

Singapore finally had the confidence to judge for ourselves and to celebrate our industry.

There's no way I can adequately summarize Patrick's 50 years of achievements in a 4-minute speech.

Our industry is obsessed with youth, with annual lists of ‘The best 40 under 40’.

Patrick always maintained that a career in advertising isn’t a sprint but a marathon.

He just celebrated his 70th birthday two weeks ago.

So, it’s uncanny but fitting that I present you this year’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

The only one adman over 70 who is still running with footballers one third his age on the *padang*.

Even off the pitch, he can still give us all a run for the money, Mr Patrick Low.

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