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## Book review

# FROM GROOT CONSTANTIA TO GOOGLE: 1685 TO 2010

Reviewed by Jacques Lange

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Some years ago, Affinity Publishing's Ken Wilshere-Preston,<sup>1</sup> while researching material for the South African Brand Museum project,<sup>2</sup> discovered that the Companies and Intellectual Properties Registration Office (CIPRO)<sup>3</sup> holds a rich archive of original and trademark registration forms dating back to 1877. Wilshere-Preston realised that an official record of South Africa's branding history existed, and he and a team of researchers embarked on a journey to document these treasures in a volume comprising 304 pages.

This is a book, that seemingly and confusingly has two titles: *History of Brands & Branding* reflected on the cover, designed by the stalwart of South African designer Roy Clucas, and *From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 to 2000*. The latter is apparently the actual title as displayed on the spine, cover (as a subtitle), and title page. The title's contradiction is a relevant reflection of the long-standing divide that marks the often-confusing histories and discourses of the advertising, design and marketing industries in South Africa. These three critically interdependent disciplines have converged and diverged, and diverged and converged over time, and this book reflects that colourful history which remains in constant flux.

*From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 to 2000* is a fascinating and massive book that provides an insightful

narrative of South Africa's social, economic and political history, and consumer culture spanning more than three centuries. It provides a backdrop to the stories of international and many of the country's most recognised brands, both old and new. These include centuries old wine estates and KWV; Mrs Ball's Chutney; I&J; Mars; Cecil John Rhodes' first ice-making business in Kimberley; Snowflake Flour; Anchor Yeast; Maizena; Cerebos table salt; All Gold; KOO; Fatti's & Moni's; Black Cat Peanut Butter; Bovril; Five Roses; Oros; Coca-cola; Energade; Castle Lager; Zam-Buk; Sunlight and Lifebuoy soaps; Bradlows; Woolworths; Pick n Pay; Eveready; Firestone; Standard Bank; Old Mutual; Ned-bank; ABSA; The Cape Argus; Juta and Company; PPC; PG; AECl; SABC; M-Net; DStv and a large number of others.

The book includes more than 1,000 illustrations, including advertisements, brand registration documents, industrial/commercial products, packaging, consumer culture and unique moments in history, many of which that have never been published before. Unfortunately, the image quality of some of the illustrations is not consistent with current publishing standards, yet, this can be excused, considering that much of the source material came from digital archives.



**Figure 1:** Cover of *From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 to 2010*. Image courtesy of the publishers



**Figure 2:** Page from *From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 to 2010* featuring Groot Constantia which is believed to be one of the oldest documented brands in South Africa. Image scanned from the book



**Figure 3:** The book includes more than 1,000 illustrations, ranging from advertisements, brand registration documents, industrial and products and packaging. Images courtesy of the publishers



**Figure 4:** From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 to 2010 includes a great diversity of heritage profiles of which many show the evolution of the featured brands. Shown here are the brand marks of Sanlam, PPC and AECI. Image courtesy of the publishers



**Figure 5:** The book includes a large number of historical advertisements that form part of the Brand Museum's and Andy Rice Collection ©

The first section of the book (pages 12-280) provides a fascinating chronology of Brand and History narratives spanning from 1652 to 2010, followed by nine feature articles that cover a diversity of geographic histories, selective industry sectors, and trademark and advertising history.

The second section of the book deals with Advertising (pages 232-237) and features essays by three of South Africa's foremost brand experts, John Faquhar, Tony Koenderman and Nkwenkwe Nkomo. The third section deals with Branding (pages 236-113) and includes essays by experts Andy Rice, Adelle Wapnick, Joseph Benson, Jeremy Sampson and John Faquhar.

The fourth section deals with Brand Heritage profiles (pages 114-140) that provide 36 insightful case studies

of some of the most revered South African brands. The fifth and sixth sections of the book contain articles dealing with Intellectual Property and related case studies (pages 267-281), while the final section of the book provides four valuable reflections of Corporate Heritage profiles (pages 226-303) related to the same topic.

This is a book that will be read and studied by marketers, advertising, design and branding practitioners, industry scholars, academics and students for years to come as it provides the most comprehensive anthology of South African marketing, branding, advertising and design history published to date. Over and above that, the book also has all of the characteristics of a great coffee table book for any corporate office since the entries are brief, to the point and easy to read.



**Figure 6:** Many of the illustrations in *From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 to 2010* reflect unique moments of the country's social, economic and consumer histories. Featured here are covers from *Zonk!* (January 1957) and *Die Brandwag* (January 1960) magazines. Image courtesy of the publishers and Brand Museum © 2011

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**Price:** *From Groot Constantia to Google: 1685 – 2010* is available in selective South African bookstores and can also be ordered directly from the publisher for R365 including VAT and local postage.

## Notes

- 1 Ken Wilshere-Preston is also the publisher of *The Encyclopaedia of Brands & Branding in South Africa* series, established in 1992.
- 2 Wilshere-Preston has been the long-time force behind the idea to establish a South African Brand

Museum that would collect, house and exhibit a collection of South Africa's branding history. To date, he and his supporters have not yet been successful in securing sustainable sponsorship for the physical museum, but have succeeded in establishing the beginnings of a virtual museum that resides at <http://brandmuseum.co.za>

- 3 On 1 May 2011 the New Companies Act (Act 71 of 2008) came into effect, whereby The Department of Trade and Industry restructured the Companies and Intellectual Property Registration Office (CIPRO) and the Office of Companies and Intellectual Property Enforcement (OCIPE). The two institutions have merged and is now known as the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).