

EPISODE 31

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:04.1] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the Creative Empire Podcast. Each week, Reina Pomeroy, the life and biz success coach and Christina Scalera, the attorney for creatives are taking you up close and personal with successful influencers in the creative community and tackling your biggest business hurdles. Their mission is to help you, creative entrepreneurs, think beyond your daily biz so you can make the brave decisions that build your Creative Empire.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:35.5] RP: Hey everyone, this is Reina and Christina with the Creative Empire Podcast. We hope that you are enjoying the episodes so far. Today, we are super excited to bring you Katell Schmitz with the Reverie Lane Design and we're excited to chat with her because she's the woman behind the Creative Empire Podcast branding.

We brought her on to execute this vision of what we thought our brand would be and I am super pumped to be able to just chat with her about what she thought about our process and if it was pretty normal or whatnot but Katell and I actually met when we were just starting out in our businesses in April of 2015 and I met her in the Savvy Business Owner group that's led by Heather Crabtree, and we decided that we were going to have a four person joint launch party for our websites.

None of our businesses were joined but we just thought it would be a fun idea so that was how we decided to do it. We wanted to collaborate in order to have a bigger influence. None of us had more than 500, 700 Instagram followers at the time and we just wanted to come together to have a more joined, unified force. So were super excited to chat with Katell and she can tell her side of the story for that one, but welcome Katell.

[00:01:51.1] KS: Hey, thank you for having me.

[00:01:53.1] RP: Absolutely, we're excited to have you. So let's see — I think the first thing that I wanted to talk to you about and ask you about is what you thought about when you were going through our branding process, when I came with all those crazy ideas. "Okay well, Christina likes these colors and I like these colors, how do we make these work?" Talk us through that a little bit.

[00:02:19.5] KS: Okay, so my first worry when you came to me was, "There were two people, how are we going to do this?" I was getting really worried when you have creative work and there's more than one person deciding. That was my main worry. So when you came to me and I look at both of your brandings and they're quite different.

[00:02:40.2] CS: Different, yep.

[00:02:41.2] KS: A little different, and I just didn't know how we would combine the two of them and speak to your audience and at the same time make sure we kept the essence of what you bring but it worked fine and I was so happy because you're both very easy and you have good taste and you understand branding and design so I think that helped.

[00:03:05.1] CS: Awesome.

[00:03:05.8] KS: So very quickly my worries left.

[00:03:08.2] CS: I think what also helped was Reina was our point of contact for at least our team. So anytime she had questions, she'd come to me and then she'd go back to you so it was filtered always through Reina, which was really helpful because I didn't have the bandwidth to take care of that. So thanks Reina.

[00:03:23.2] KS: That was smart I think to always have something really set for communication and keep it up, the whole project. I think that helps. If you're going to work with more than one person, you should definitely do that.

[00:03:34.7] RP: Yeah, I think it was such a fun process working with you because I knew that Christina had some things that she wanted input on but for the rest of it, Christina you were

really open to pretty much anything and you took the ideas that I had and you ran with it and you created these beautiful patterns and color combinations that I couldn't even have imagined.

One thing that was really cool was Christina texted me a picture at some point during the branding process and we were going back and forth about the colors and she texted me this picture of this flower that she had found and it had all of our colors in it.

[00:04:12.5] KS: Yeah.

[00:04:13.2] RP: She's like, "If it looks beautiful in nature and it would be beautiful branding." I was like, "Yes," and so it felt like that picture made it settle into place. Do you remember that Christina?

[00:04:22.8] CS: Yeah, I do.

[00:04:24.6] RP: Yeah.

[00:04:24.7] KS: That is true. That's one thing I always say when people ask me, "If I can hire a designer, how can I find colors that I like?" I always say, "Look at nature. It's only nature. If it's working there, it's working. Just take it, take one of them and use it." I always say that, so I'm glad. Yeah, I love that picture. It just had everything.

[00:04:45.3] CS: I'm so glad and I'm so glad that we ended up working with you and I'm looking forward to working with you on my own and quite honestly when Reina first told me that she was hiring a graphic designer for the project, I was like, "How much is that going to cost?" Because this is totally a beta kind of idea.

Now it's taken off, but at first the podcast was a beta idea. I didn't know if it's going to be worth it to invest in branding because that's expensive if you don't have any budget right starting out. Oh my gosh, I am so glad that you did not listen to me and that — you guys, it changed the direction of everything and I've always knew how important branding was but I think it was two things.

One, that you are such a professional graphic designer but also Katell, that you have such a unique take on graphic design and so when you're trying to stand out in a noisy area like podcasting, that was just what we needed. We put some pretty cool things already like number 23 in business on iTunes.

[00:05:54.8] KS: Congratulations.

[00:05:56.0] CS: I know we have over 50 reviews at this point which is so helpful guys but I don't think that would have happened if we didn't have the branding in place to move forward like that. So thank you Katell and can you just talk a little bit about your unique background because I only recently learned about this.

[00:06:17.4] KS: Yes, before that I want to say something, it's true. Branding is one of the things that before you have it, you're not sure if it's going to be worth it but trust me, it is worth it. I believe, but I am biased of course. I think my take is how I present it. I was born in the Ivory Coast. So until I was about 12 and a half, 13 I lived there and I think just having all of that experience really makes me different in a good way.

It took me a while to accept that, especially when we move to France, I'm half Ivorian and half French. When we move to France although I am half French, I felt completely out of the water. I was African up to that point and then I got to France and then I had to be French and I had to relearn a lot of things, the culture and everything, which I loved but it took me a while. So I think all of that put together created this unique person that I am.

I think I bring that to the table with every project. I don't look at it as, "Hey, let's do what's been done or let's do what's obvious and what's going to work." It's almost like, "Let's know the rules, let's know what's been done and let's change it. Let's make it unique, let's make it different, let's make it you." This is how I always approach it. It's not worth it to me to be any of a way.

[00:07:33.1] RP: I love that and that's one of the reasons that I love you and I find it so easy to refer you because I think you have a very classic way of designing and you also have a dramatic way of designing too and I think that it stretches that running that gamut and being

able to have that, I don't know what's the word I'm looking for? Just the span and range of being a designer, I think it is such a gift for your clients.

[00:08:00.6] KS: Yeah and I think it comes from, like you said, where I've been, my history and having a mom from the Ivory Coast and having a dad from France, it really opens up your brain to so many things and learning different languages, all that. I think it just adds up to your bank as you go and that's why everything that you do and everybody that you meet makes you different. It adds up and you bring that to what you do creatively, I believe at least.

[00:08:28.0] RP: I love the point that you're making here and this is not exactly what we talked about, talking about but I think it is an important enough topic to mention, right? Because there are so many designers out there, but there's something that makes you super unique and the story of where you grew up, how you grew up, your different cultures and backgrounds and now you're in the United States, all of those things combined makes you who you are. It makes Reverie Lane the design brand that it is.

So can you maybe speak words of encouragement to somebody who feels like, "Oh I'm just normal, or maybe I am just weird?" And let them know that what they're doing is good and just push into that more, because that's what I'm hearing from you.

[00:09:11.7] KS: That's on my heart, I'm glad you're asking this question because, like I said, it took me a while to accept that I was different and not different in a way, you know, "I'm on the spectrum", I'm "special". But everybody is different because nobody has been where you've been. Nobody has the same story, nobody has the same taste. Putting all these things together creates a unique person and I think that's gold.

I think you should embrace it, you should accept it and once you accept it, oh wow, the things that you can do is just amazing and this is what happened to me. Like you said, we launched together in August and before that, I had been in business, I had been doing design but I wasn't confident at all because I hadn't accepted, "It's okay, you're different, you've been there, you've been here and that's what makes you special. That's what makes you," — because I was always comparing myself.

“Oh I don’t design like that. I don’t have classic elegance” or I don’t know, the styles all the wider colors out there, it’s just not what I do, I like to do different things and once I accepted that, things changed people were noticing me, the curtain. People were saying I opened the curtain and said, “This is me and I love what I do,” and people were seeing that and people were loving it and they were saying, “I want a piece of that, I want to be part of it, can we work together?” And it’s been really crazy since then. It hasn’t stopped.

[00:10:32.9] RP: What was the eye opening moment or what’s been the steps to you transformation?

[00:10:38.2] KS: I think when I just took a second and said, “You know what? I really like what I’m doing. I like what I like, I like my taste, I’m comfortable with it, and I want to share it with all the people, I want people to know that you don’t have to do others to succeed. Absolutely not.” And once I felt that way, this is what I was showing people. This is the message that I was giving and that resonated with them. I think just that was the change because even if I was feeling it but not saying it, they wouldn’t have known it. But once I started to express it, they saw it too and they wanted to be a part of it.

[00:11:19.8] RP: Yeah I mean just watching you and how much you’ve grown and how much I think you were not willing to share all of that stuff when we started and now just looking at your blog and the way that you have been showing up online, it’s been such a cool transformation.

[00:11:33.7] KS: Oh thank you. Yeah, it’s been great and I’ve got to say, I remember having the discovery call with you Reina, last year.

[00:11:41.6] RP: Oh dear.

[00:11:42.5] KS: No, no seriously, it really changed my life. It just started the whole thing really and everybody should do it. I think everybody should do it and I was so thankful. I went to my husband and I was like, “Look, all the things that she said, look at all the actions that she gave me. Oh my life is going to change.”

[00:12:01.3] RP: So Christina just so you know, Katell and John are the cutest creative couple ever. Oh my God, they are so adorable together.

[00:12:10.5] CS: What does your husband do?

[00:12:12.5] KS: He's also a creative. He has a video production company.

[00:12:16.5] RP: So they're super talented together.

[00:12:19.1] CS: Yeah, that's amazing.

[00:12:20.5] RP: The creative duo. Anyway I have totally derailed us.

[00:12:24.0] CS: No, it's okay. This is the point of the conversation, it's just to see where it flows.

[BREAK]

[00:12:29.3] ANNOUNCER: Are you enjoying the show? It would mean so much to Reina and Christina if you take two minutes and head to our iTunes and leave a review. It doesn't take much time but it helps them bring you more value packed content.

Back to the convo ladies.

[BACK TO INTERVIEW]

[00:12:44.1] CS: Yeah, one of the things that I really like about your brand Katell is that you say right up on, I think it was your about page or something like that, where you say like, "I choose black and white for my colors," and that's a very bold move as a designer. Especially where the trend has gone, like you said, to water colors and gold foil and pops of colors here and there. So yeah, I think that your boldness is really refreshing.

[00:13:11.3] KS: That means so much.

[00:13:13.6] CS: Yeah and I think what you did with Creative Empire too is pretty amazing is you took these colors which Reina first approached me and she's like, "Hey, what do you think about bright colors because I know you like more pastels and neutrals and stuff like that?" And I was like, "Yeah, whatever let's just try it," because I trust Reina and I didn't know we were working with you yet and then she showed me the colors. I was like, "Oh, oh no," like, "What?" Because there was no pink in sight, there was no baby blue in sight and I was like, "Okay."

[00:13:43.7] RP: Oh dear.

[00:13:46.2] CS: But then we made a couple of tweaks. I think we started out with a little bit more of a reddish orange and it turned into something really, really pretty and then obviously the patterns and things like that that you created out of that are just amazing. So I guess for a new designer starting out, I know that we have kind of talked about this amorously, you can change. But what are maybe three things that they can put into action that would help them find their voice as a designer? It doesn't have to be three but you know?

[00:14:16.0] KS: Oh yeah, I'm sure I could find three, that's the problem. I would say before you try to design for anybody, you've got to know your own brand. You have to know what you like and I want to say it's not because you design for example for photographers that your brand has to look like a photographer's brand. You are your own person. I design for all kinds of people. I design a lot for baby brands but look at my branding, it's black and white. It has nothing to do with families or babies, nothing at all.

Find your voice, and I think that I posted about this last year, I can't remember exactly but find your vision statement. What are you trying to say? I'm all — everything that I post or everything that I put out there on my website, my print material anywhere, I'm always saying, "Look, I have a very different style, I have a very different take on design, and I am not saying that you have to have the same style as me to hire me but I love creativity and I will use creativity to serve you."

This is always what I'm telling them. I'm not saying that you have to be dramatic like me no, you can love pink and go for it. I will serve you the way you need to be served but this is my take,

this is me if you want to know me and I think that's what they need to find first, who are they as designers?

Before they try to design for anybody else, their own brand, find that and then you can design for anybody. You can have a specific style, they're very organic and I don't have a problem with that, but find yourself first or you will always be lost. You will always become the person you're trying to design for, that doesn't work.

[00:15:52.8] RP: And you're always chasing something else, right?

[00:15:55.1] KS: Yes.

[00:15:55.9] RP: I think it was Abby Grace that said she didn't even know herself when she started and she encouraged us to, in the audience, to really sit down and think about who you are and I think that's what you were saying. If we don't know who we are as people then how can we really expect to serve anyone else?

[00:16:16.8] KS: It's also some practice, you're practicing. Because you have to do it over and over and over again with each client. You practice on yourself first, you always practice on yourself first and then you can do it. So that's one thing I guess but another thing I would say is keep learning. Keep learning because the creativity is just always there. You can always find more creativity I think, but you will stop at technical issues.

So make sure you always have in your tool bag those things to support your creativity and I know you just want to be free to take your brush and just go crazy, but you also have to know the rules. To break them, you have to know them. So that's what I would say. Don't just go with the flow, make sure you know your thing. New programs and you keep learning new techniques, I think that's very important.

[00:17:07.3] RP: "Know the rules so you could break them." I like it.

[00:17:11.2] KS: Yes. Like know some classical music but then add some jazz in there.

[00:17:14.7] **RP:** Yeah except with legal, you can't break that.

[00:17:16.6] **CS:** I was going to say...

[00:17:17.7] **RP:** You can't break the law.

[00:17:18.5] **CS:** I think it has a different connotation with lawyers. I think I know a lot of attorneys that learn the rules so they can break them as well. I don't know them personally, I'm just saying I think that's the rep that attorneys get but yeah, more or less that notion is a really noble one in the creative field which is that if you know the rules of design, you can get away with adding your own take on it.

If you don't know those rules of design, which there are rules like for photography, there's rules of composition. There are basically just proven strategies to take a good picture essentially, that have been shown to be pleasing and aesthetically beautiful to the eye. So how did you learn those? Did you go to school or did you train yourself?

[00:18:01.7] **KS:** I went to school back in France actually. I did two things, at first I went in, the program is called Applied Modern Languages, so it had nothing to do with what I am doing right now. But we did have, for some reason, we did have some graphic design classes. Maybe they were bonuses and I just took them. I can't remember exactly, but I remember just loving it. I was lost but I remember loving it.

I am thankful that I did that because I think when you learn different languages just opens up different places of your brain and it helps you with creativity and relating to all the people, which I really need for my business and then I did my masters in project management, which was international project management, which you have everything in there. You have business, you have economics, you have graphics, branding, everything.

I started to like it more and more, the part where you're supposed to brand things, you're supposed to sell to people creatively. It's like, "Oh I'm really liking this," and then for my internship, we put together this big project for a short film festival and we had to sell it to the

European Union to get funding and I just fell in love with branding at that point. I had to design — that was my first logo that I ever designed and I was so in love.

I got so excited to present to people and make it visually appealing but also write all the content and that's when I realized, "Oh this is what I like about it." It's not so much about project management but it's everything that you put into it and I realized, "Oh, I need to go for that. This is my fuel."

[00:19:34.3] RP: I had no idea Katell, that's so cool.

[00:19:36.3] KS: I never told you?

[00:19:37.5] RP: No, my background is in project management. So I am like, I'm really excited right that you're talking about this. That's fascinating and it sounds like you got bit by the creative bug and never looked back.

[00:19:47.4] KS: Yes. I've always wanted to be an artist. When I was little I wanted to be an artist, I knew that. But my dad always told me, "You don't learn to be an artist. You're an artist or you're not, so you don't go to school to learn," which I don't agree with that. So I never felt like I could be an artist, it would just fall on me, that's how I felt and if it never fell on me then whatever, I'm not an artist. But it did, it fell on me. So I must be an artist. So yeah I was very glad. I didn't go in school thinking this is what I'd be doing but I am so blessed I am doing this.

[00:20:20.8] RP: That's awesome. I have a question about if somebody is looking to really start looking and hiring a designer. What should they keep in mind when they are looking for designers because I feel like if they run the gamut, there's so many of them when I was starting I don't even know what I'm looking for and for you what is that process look like of actually designing the branding because it's not just a logo, right? So can you talk to us a little bit about that?

[00:20:48.6] KS: Okay, so I feel like there are two questions here. So the first question I would say...

[00:20:51.7] RP: Sorry.

[00:20:52.7] KS: No it's fine. If you're looking for — there's so many. I know. There's so many of us, but we're all different. I believe we're all different but maybe you are looking for somebody who has specific style, then that shouldn't be too hard. You will find somebody who does, and I can only think of water color right now. I don't know why, but if you are looking for somebody who does — you want a water color branding. There are some people out there that do that very well. That's their specialty and then you can just go for that.

Or you want water color but you want something different, you want an edge to it. Then maybe you can hire somebody like me, because you know it's not going to look like a beautiful water color logo or branding. It's going to have that and it's just going to stand out. It's going to be different so I think it depends on what approach you're trying to have of your branding and after that, I think you just go with your gut. If you like the portfolio, you like the messaging, really research them. Don't just hire them. Just look at what they're doing on social media, what they're saying and as designers, we should be putting out how we work. We should be seeing some things out there.

So look what they're saying, how they're working, testimonials, all the things they've done in the past and just write to them. Start talking with them, if you're still not sure, have a call with them and ask them all the questions you can. I would say just remember that we're all human beings and it's okay to ask questions, it's okay to wonder and call me and be like, "Katell I don't know. I really love your work but is it going to work for me because I like this, I like that?" Just ask me and I will gladly talk to you.

[00:22:25.8] RP: You make magic happen, totally.

[00:22:29.0] KS: One lady actually, we're almost done with her project. This is how well it has been but when she first called me, she said, "I see that you talk about simplicity a lot, but my brand is not simple. It's bold, it's big, it's colorful." And I was like, "I can do that. I can do that." When I talk about simplicity, I am saying, "Let's take a concept that is complex, because your branding is complex, I know. But let's try to express it in a fairly simple way so it can speak to your audience."

You don't want them to come in and they have to guess this puzzle, what is happening with your branding? No, that's not what you want. You want it to be expressed simply. It's thick in meaning but when I look at it, it makes sense to me. I don't want to be like, "What in the world are you trying to say?" It's got to be simple. It's got to come naturally. Like I said, I send out a client questionnaire always, with a bunch of questions in there, that should help you. If you haven't been thinking of your brand, that should help you before we have a consultation call so you can think about your ideal client, your why's, just a bunch of things in there just to get you going.

Or sometimes you have all the things inside and you've never taken the time to write them down so you don't even know and many times after they have filled out the form, they're thinking, "Oh my gosh, I never thought of my ideal client that way. This is so exciting," and this is what it's for and then we have the call. We talk more about even the style and what you want a little deeper and then I get to designing. I show you colors.

[00:23:53.2] RP: Yay.

[00:23:55.9] KS: Bold or not bold. And then we did a logo option, I really take the time to do every single thing on its own so you can really focus on it because this is the time you get to focus on it and then you can use it. So it's the honeymoon time, we get to know the brand and hangout and go to Hawaii.

[00:24:16.0] CS: I love that, that's a great analogy.

[00:24:18.1] RP: Yeah, that's cute.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:24:22] ANNOUNCER: Are you ready to build your own empire? For more information, show notes, downloads and tips on how to do it, head to www.creativeempire.co where you can find out more about this week's episode and the two lovely ladies behind it all, encouraging you to build your own creative empire.

If you enjoyed this week's show, it would mean so much to Reina and Christina if you could take two minutes to go to iTunes and leave a review. It's a little thing that makes a big difference for the show.

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