VIRTUE INTEGRATES AMERICAS REGION, APPOINTING KRYSTLE WATLER AND GENIE GURNANI AS REGIONAL LEADS

Together the duo has penned an open letter to the marginalized talent of the advertising industry, as the agency brings together its US, Canada, Mexico and Brazil offices into one region.

August 13, 2020 BROOKLYN, NY - Today, Virtue, the creative agency born from VICE, announced the integration of the Americas region and appointed Krystle Watler, Managing Director, Americas and Genie Gurnani, Executive Creative Director, Americas.

With this integration, the agency’s Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Mexico City, São Paulo, and Toronto offices will fall under their leadership.

As Virtue operates under a borderless, global model across its 21 offices, this regional integration will see Virtue’s US, Canada, Brazil and Mexico teams working collaboratively and across borders, while bringing in new opportunities from local markets.

Together, Genie and Watler penned an open letter, entitled *Come Through*, to the diverse, underrepresented and marginalized talent of the advertising industry. As two BIPOC people in leadership positions, the open letter details their personal and relatable experiences that underrepresented talent often live and work through within the advertising industry.
Genie said, “Come Through serves as a siren call to those that have been through what both Krystle and I have been through. We want the incredible talent that makes this creative industry so special, to know that there is a place led by people who not only understand and empathize, but have experienced firsthand some of the obstacles, feelings and challenges only underrepresented people go through. We have worked and will always work to ensure that Virtue is an environment where others like us can show up as their full selves, to get the work done that they passionately love doing. So come through!”

Genie joined Virtue in 2019 as both Virtue and VICE’s Head of Creative in the APAC region. Based in Singapore, Gurnani oversaw the creative output from multiple markets including work from CUB in Australia, Urban Decay in China, Diageo in India, and many more. Beyond the day job, Genie is known as a drag performer and emerging international talent. They starred in the reality TV series Drag Race Thailand, the official Thai franchise of RuPaul’s Drag Race. Genie’s appointment as Executive Creative Director, Virtue Americas will have them overseeing all creative output across the Americas region.

Watler joined Virtue in 2017 as the agency’s first business development hire, helping the agency to grow exponentially across the North America region, bringing on new clients including Beats by Dre, Indeed, Target, Urban Decay, AT&T and many more. In 2019, she was elevated to Managing Director, North America, overseeing all agency operations across its Brooklyn, Los Angeles, and Toronto offices. Her promotion now, to Managing Director,
Americas adds Virtue’s Mexico and Brazil operations to her remit. Watler has received incredible industry recognition, including being named a 2019 Ad Age Woman to Watch and a 2019 Adcolor Rockstar Award finalist.

“We’ve worked hard to build a strong family, body of work and client roster within our North America offices. And now to formally add the incredible talent and diversity of our Mexico City and São Paulo teams under the fold of the Americas region, operating as a borderless agency, will not only help with our growth objectives, but to also diversify our thought, our approach, and continuously challenge and push our clients,” said Watler. “I couldn’t think of a better creative partner to take this on than Genie. The level of creativity and boundary pushing that they brought to our APAC clients is exactly what we need right now.”

The diversity of the agency doesn’t just sit at the top, but permeates throughout all levels of talent and offices. Most recently, Virtue brought on Jorge Ortega as Group Creative Director. Based in Los Angeles, Ortega brings extensive industry experience across agencies in the US and Mexico, including Isobar, Deutsch, Grey, CP+B, and J. Walter Thompson. In his role as GCD at Virtue, Ortega will have a special focus on Virtue’s clients seeking to connect with the Latinx demographic.

Other recent, notable appointments and elevations to the Virtue Americas team include:

- **Fernanda de Lamare** appointed Head of Account Services & Business Development, Brazil.
- **Lia Koo** elevated to Group Creative Director. Koo joined Virtue in 2018 as Creative Director and has worked on noteworthy projects for Urban Decay, Target and more.
- **Jesus “Chuy” Cervantes** elevated to Group Strategy Director. Based in Mexico City, Cervantes joined Virtue in 2017 and has worked on noteworthy projects for Johnnie Walker, Reckitt Benckiser and more.
- **Heather “McT” McTavish** elevated to Creative Director. McTavish joined Virtue as Associate Creative Director in 2017 and has worked on noteworthy projects for Dove Men+Care, Bushmills, and more.

This integration also comes at an exciting time for the agency. Since the start of the year, Virtue has added 17 new clients to its roster in the Americas region, including Cholula Hot Sauce, Canada Goose, Natura Musical, Landshark Beer, Frosted Flakes and more. On a global level, Virtue established itself as true a creative competitor in 2019, bringing home 48 award wins, including a prestigious Cannes Lions Grand Prix and D&AD pencil, for projects including Carlings aDRESS_THE_FUTURE, Q - The Genderless Voice, and Weemaps Museum of Weed.
ABOUT VIRTUE
Virtue is the creative agency born from VICE. With presence in 21 countries, Virtue crafts campaigns, platforms, and IP for some of the most important brands on the planet. Using proprietary tools, access, and intelligence, Virtue finds new ways for brands to matter to the world through an entertainment-centric approach that plunges its hooks into audiences’ subconscious and refuses to let go.

Virtue is behind the award winning work Q the Genderless Voice, Carlings adDRESS the Future, Weedmaps’ Museum of Weed, and Dove’s Dear Future Dads.