

Steph van Niekerk, CD at Grey Africa to judge Radio & Audio



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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The One Club for Creativity recently revealed seven creatives from South Africa who will serve as judges for The One Show 2021. The judging panel is made of more than 250 top creatives from across 42 countries that will judge work from around the world.



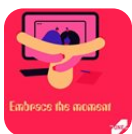
Steph van Niekerk, creative director at Grey Africa

Ranked as No.1 Creative Director and No.1 Copywriter in South Africa for 2019, and as the runner-up for Woman of the Year 2020, Steph van Niekerk is one of the country's top talents. Over the last 19 years, she's honed her skills as a copywriter at some of South Africa's best agencies. She's won nearly every local and international award, including several Gold Cannes Lions, SA's first (and still only) Gold One Show Pencil for TV and Cinema and the first Grand Prix at the Loerie Awards for a branded content series.

I chat to Steph van Niekerk, creative director at Grey Africa, Johannesburg, who will serve as a judge for The One Show 2021.

■ ***You are one of 7 South Africans to serve as a judge for The One Show 2021. How do you feel about this?***

I am thrilled! No, seriously. I have won quite a few One Show Pencils in my life, but I've never been invited to judge them. I'm excited to finally see what goes down behind the scenes and to have a chance sit and talk about the best work in the world with some of the best creative minds in the world.



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■ ***How did you celebrate the news, and what does this mean to you, personally?***

I watched *Pretend It's a City* on Netflix to remind myself how lovely New York is and that I won't be travelling there because

of the current lockdown restrictions. LOL. The irony is that I've waited 20 years for an international judging gig and when it finally happens, it happens right here in my lounge! Typical.

In all honesty, it means quite a lot. We've all had a horrible year, and it was just the encouragement I needed to face 2021. For a minute there it felt like nothing exciting was ever going to happen again. I'm really grateful it did.

■ **Which category will you be judging?**

Radio and Audio.

■ **For the second year in a row, judging will take place online. What do you expect to experience as a judge?**

Haha, I'm guessing "You're on mute!!" and "Can you guys hear me??!". I know from friends who have judged that I can expect intelligent, respectful discussions and robust debates. I'm hoping it inspires me and that I can bring that inspiration back to the teams at the agency.

■ **What specific criteria will you be looking for when judging?**

Radio, as with all mediums, is at its best when it's underpinned by a universal human truth and a whip-smart idea.

“ I'll be looking for great ideas brought to life with beautifully crafted storytelling that entertains and moves people. ”

At the end of the day, it's not about the content but whether that content has the power to make people stop and listen, to stay engaged and to not change the channel or press 'next.'

■ **You have some major experience in the creative industry. Could you comment on the impact of Covid-19 on the industry?**

Goodness. Covid has changed the industry in fundamental ways. Not only in the type of work we do, but also the very way in which we work. Remote working has definitely had some benefits, but the creative process thrives on intimacy, creative rapport and connection. We are all stuck behind a screen, buried in an avalanche of Teams and Zoom meetings, and I'm starting to see and feel its effects on our creatives.

“ Creativity needs space, and we need to resist the urge to fill each inch of the day with meetings and reviews and working sessions just because we can. ”

Also, this year, with the death toll rising and more and more people losing loved ones, we are having the deal with the impact of this virus on a deeply personal level. I don't think we can underestimate the emotional and mental toll it's having on people. It kind of puts everything else into perspective.

■ **In your opinion, What's the biggest trend we can expect this year?**

As with last year, I expect the winning work to fall into two camps: Social justice issues and humour.

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