

The 2017 SA experience and unmissable key learnings

 By Leigh Andrews

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SA attendees at Cannes Lions 2017 share their experience of the ultimate Festival of Creativity and tips to create work with a better shot of taking home a Lion next year: Make sure it has a clear brief and purpose, is innovative, and doesn't mistake the tech for the idea.

On Wednesday, 26 July 2017, our roving reporter Ann Nurock shared her experience at Cannes Lions 2017 with our Cape Town audience at the Ster-Kinekor V&A Waterfront Cinema - fitting as Cinemark are the official South African representatives of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity 2017. This year was focused on learning from the best of the best, with SA judges Jenny Ehlers, ECD of King James; Camilla Clerke, CD of Hellocomputer, Michael Lees-Rolfe, creative director at FoxP2 and Ryan McManus, ECD at Native VML, also sharing insights and points to ponder.



Nurock, Clerke, Ehlers, McManus, Andrews, Lees-Rolfe as snapped by Terry Levin.

Nurock kicked things off with an overview of this year's talks at Cannes Lions as it's an overall festival of creativity. These ranged from the real-time entertainment newswiness of Shazam to feminism-first punk rock group Pussy Riot. While the presentations were as impressive as any that have graced the Cannes stage before, Nurock pointed out that fewer creatives were in attendance this year, and there will be even fewer next year because of Publicis' decision to focus spend elsewhere.



Publicis Groupe shifts spend on award shows, other events to AI initiative

Jessica Tennant 21 Jun 2017



The true cost of Cannes

Nurock admits that Cannes Lions is too expensive, at R45,000 for just the Creative Week pass, and R10,000 to R12,000 per entry. But it definitely has value. Cannes Lions is the only festival of its kind that brings chief marketing officers and the top creative thought leaders together in one place, and "What wins the Grand Prix tells as much about culture as the Oscars do," which is why Cannes Lions is seen as the Oscars of the creative industry.

Nurock also quoted the McKinsey & Co report on report on consistently creative companies outperforming those who are not and how they do it. She also pointed out that so much is said about artificial intelligence or AI and big data that we tend to forget about the art of marketing – the industry needs to refocus on both for continued success.

Touching on top level trends from Cannes Lions 2017, Nurock added that **AI** was definitely a top trend, with huge implications set to change the world:

Burger King, this year's creative marketer of the year, and agency David Miami took home the direct Lions Grand Prix 'Google, home of the Whopper' and 29 Cannes Lions in total this year, while also presenting a packed presentation at Cannes Lions on "How to suck less as a client." Top tips included creating tight briefs and letting the idea grow, as **the biggest risk of all is not taking one**, as demonstrated in the following Cannes Lion-winning work:

The next big trend was that of **brand purpose**, especially where work goes so far as to change the world and save lives. A brand with purpose has societal good at heart, and Nurock mentioned that Unilever has been leading this charge for the last six years. Today's consumer – especially Millennials – don't want to be sold to, a brand's purpose must resonate with them. To break through the clutter, you need to get people to care:

It's also important to focus on **what clients want**, which, according to Marc Pritchard is "Less crap and more craft." You also need talk to consumers in real time, not just in focus groups. But remember that clients get the work they deserve – they must talk to agencies and treat them as partners to ensure the best possible result. The following ad is a success not just because of the innovation it highlights, but for the purpose behind it:

Reminiscent of ad executive Madonna Badger's push to stop the objectification of women, Nurock mentioned that any ad that stereotyped in any way could not be awarded a Cannes Lion this year, with Unilever's Keith Weed having mentioned 'unstereotyped' ads are 25% more effective, and the #unstereotypealliance formed at Cannes taking the movement forward.



#CannesLions2016: Badger and Winters - Women are not objects

Ann Nurock 20 Jun 2016



Winning at Cannes isn't just about big data but also about a strong big idea, as was evident in Fearless Girl, which was the darling of Cannes Lions 2017 in taking home the Outdoor Lions, PR Lions, Titanium Lions and Glass Lions or 'Lion for Change' Grands Prix, while being hailed by Sheryl Sandberg, whose company Lean In co-created the Glass Lions category with Cannes Lions in 2014.

Promo and activations no longer advertising's ugly sister

Nurock then introduced Michael Lees-Rolfe, creative director of FoxP2 and this year a Cannes Lions Promo and Activation juror. He explained it's a category that demonstrates ideas that generate interaction and has growing pull if it's authentic and engaging.



#CannesLions: Advertising, all grown up

Leigh Andrews 16 Jun 2017



While the category has had a bad rap as "the ugly sister of advertising," in the past, it's now one of the most innovative and human-centric forms of creativity. This had been his first stint judging for the Cannes Lions, but he didn't judge on site, instead involved in three weeks of shortlist judging beforehand. Lees-Rolfe said the sheer scale of work is scary, and while he questioned whether SA's size held us back in competing on this level, he also noted a number of examples of work that he felt would have worked just as well in SA:

Of the 99 entries that won in this category, Less-Rolfe pointed out that 37 were cause related. He also noted lots of work focused on VR for VR's sake, mistaking the tech as the idea rather than as a platform to experiment with and enrich the idea. There's no denying that the advertising and tech space is merging, and he was pleased to notice brand bravery, concluding that it's encouraging in the face of globalisation and homogenous ads to see that brands are seeing the value of taking risks.

Redesigning the world around us

Jenny Ehlers, ECD at King James was next at the podium, one of this year's Cannes Lions design jurors. Ehlers said she was initially dismayed that her role in judging would mean having to miss attending some of those once-in-a-lifetime tasks, but was pleased to find that the jury experience was amazing in itself.



#CannesLions: "Surprise us and instil envy in a good way"

Leigh Andrews 19 Jun 2017



There were 21 members from 14 countries on the design jury, which also included three weeks of prejudging before the six day stretch, with a final 16-hour day of just judging medals. The process was exhausting but she was pleased to note that the industry is moving the way designers think, and that it has the ability to transform business and make emotions visual.

Ehlers' examples of outstanding design work seen this year all displayed unconventional ways of designing a product or solution:

Ehlers ended with the following quote by Ayse Birsel: “Design is all about building coherence between your constraints, your values, and your possibilities.”

The need to reimagine mobile advertising

Next, Nurock introduced Camilla Clerke, creative director of Hellocomputer and a Cannes Lions 2017 mobile juror.



Four questions: Camilla Clerke on being a Cannes Lions judge in Mobile

HelloFCB 20 Apr 2017



This was also Clerke’s first time in Cannes, and while many who had been before advised her it would be a life-changing experience, she was sceptical until she got there. The audience tittered when she pointed out that Cannes Lions is the only place actors and musicians can roam freely and creatives get attacked for autographs.

Clerke said this year’s mobile jury comprised just 10 jurors, who interrogated work from the backdrop of many different backgrounds, like UX, UI, technologists, the client’s side and advertising, which led to interesting debates. Keen to see just where SA’s mobile work sits, Clerke had expected us to be far behind the rest of the world but we are not. We’re all taking

a different path and it's about how to best use mobile in your country. The key learning for others to note is that mobile is no longer just a touch point in the user journey, it *is* the touch point.

That said, Clerke feels mobile is misunderstood. We're living in a mobile-centric world but it's easy to get lost in that and forget that the story needs to be in the centre.

She then shared just three tips on how to "win in mobile."

- **1. Enter when the work is ready, not when Cannes is ready**
- **2. Make sure mobile is at the heart of the idea**
- **3. Don't build something new if you can turn something existing on its head**

Clerke said most of SA doesn't have the appetite to build new tech, but these examples prove we don't have to. Mobile as an industry now has the potential to switch from the ultimate platform for self-indulgence to connect people in a genuine way.

Don't overthink it, go where the audience is

The session ended with Ryan McManus, ECD at Native VML who was behind the Absolut One Source campaign and a Cannes Lions' Young Directors' Awards juror this year.



#CannesLions2017: "Great ideas can come from anywhere" - Ryan McManus

Leigh Andrews 18 Jul 2017



McManus shared that Cannes Lions itself felt like an onslaught of information and chaos with all the Rosé, heat and humidity but his biggest learning was that we need to stop the focus on "making ads" and instead make better content, not shorter content.

Great ideas can come from anywhere, for any brand on any budget, so there are no excuses for why certain work won't work in SA. McManus also noticed a bigger split between marketers, entertainers and inventors this year than before, with a greater need for all to work together.

He said the biggest theme was the move towards entertainment – advertising needs to stop existing in the pre-rolls and rather move to the content people choose to watch. Tap into what matters to them.

Some are disheartened by the democratisation of creators and platforms, but remember that we still need the talent to create that work – an important reminder if you're working on user-generated content, as they can't do it all.

McManus says to put your passion into your work. He also tapped on the Cannes Lions 2017 Snapchat ferris wheel as the ultimate disconnect of platforms and people and proof that the platforms themselves are not engaging with people.



Cannes. Strangers at the circus

Damon Stapleton 28 Jun 2017



While the AI chatbot is the website of the 90s that you can't avoid, you can develop its tone and attitude to make yours stand out, remember that platforms are the vehicle for stories. Stop interrupting and start adding value as marketers.

You compete with everything, not just your literal competitors. Remember the excellent soundbite by Sir John Hegarty:

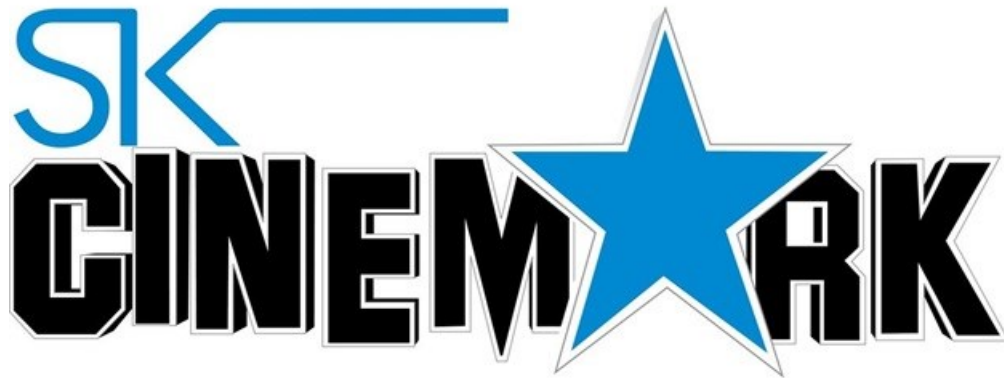
“ I hear people in advertising saying there's no point because nobody's watching ads any more – that's just stupid. Architects haven't gone 'Jesus, it's too difficult to put up interesting buildings any more so let's give up'... The application of

creativity is the solution to all of these problems. ”

Here's hoping next year's Cannes Lions-winning work reflects this.

Cinemark are the official South African representatives of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity 2017.

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