

Concept and Craft: the key to winning work

By  Danette Breitenbach

4 Jul 2022

The recent Cannes Lions has highlighted the shifts from brands, and the industry, globally. But as much as things change, they stay the same, and when it comes to winning at Cannes, Concept is still queen and every idea needs Craft.



Supplied. Mpume Ngobese, Joe Public's co-MD examines the shifts we are seeing from brands globally following the recent Cannes Lions

"Cannes-winning work is not work driven by gimmicks or short-term sales and instant gratification rewards, It is work that creates brand love, which is far more meaningful for brands than short-term results-driven work that relies on incentivisation strategies," says Mpume Ngobese, Joe Public's co-MD and author of [Is the advertising industry lost?](#)

Ngobese's Cannes 2022 observations

- **Concept.**

"It is not about tactics. Every category winner had a concept, an idea. All the work that had a strong concept featured in more than one category because, as we know, a strong concept can beautifully translate across different channels and categories.

"Boldness, risk-taking and taking a stand are the themes that I came across when looking at the work that performed well.

"Beyond the remarkable work that is seen in the classic categories of film, outdoor, print and audio, we saw influencer marketing being turned on its head, the art of storytelling using digital innovation, the use of real everyday people in a non-artificial manner to sell a product. Retail can be sexy. Beautiful, crafted work," says Ngobese.

- **Craft.**

"To produce a beautifully crafted idea, agencies need time, and if there is no time, lots of money is required. Ideally, agencies should be given both.

"Well-thought-out and crafted executions, simple innovations and true integration between a creative idea and media are some of the ingredients needed to deliver a Cannes-winning piece of work," she explains.



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"We saw a newspaper opting not to print a single day's edition of their paper and turned the blank paper to [election ballots](#) to save democracy, and an iconic FMCG brand reinventing itself through an effective (global) integrated campaign that went from a social experiment to OOH, packaging, social media, digital and e-commerce," says Ngobese.

"A [deeply emotive piece of film](#) that speaks to time and experiences lost during the pandemic is the kind of film work that requires time to find the best director in the specific genre, a thorough casting process, a perfect location scouting process, a great wardrobe and styling process, a thorough post-production process that involves a thorough editing process, a thorough picture grading process, a thorough music selection process and a thorough voice recording process, all sealed with beautiful and powerful titles in the end," she says.

"It doesn't just happen in a few days," she adds.

- **Creativity that addresses socio-political, health, identity, and gender issues; creativity that advocates for heritage and culture preservation.**

Ngobese says it was beautiful to see work that delivered on the perfect intersection of product + brand purpose + cultural tension. "The work that was rooted in insight and culture continued to come out on top."

It is evident, she says, that brands are beginning to take the humanised approach of listening to communities.

"And then creating meaningful connections, which include taking part in conversations and creating real value exchange by supporting social causes; an important aspect of advertising which was achieved by a lot of the winning brands through the various advertising campaigns," she says.

"We saw the [unfiltered history tour of the British Museum's stolen colonial artefacts](#), a poetry book about freedom and love which turned a symbol of repression into an art manifesto celebrating freedom, the first swimmable billboard ([liquid billboard](#)) done by a brand that is on the mission to strive for inclusivity and closing the gender gap in sports, a design piece that addresses children malnutrition, and an art exhibition that highlights the importance of early detection of breast cancer, to mention but a few," she says.

"The respective brands used their power and influence to authentically make a positive impact on society," she states.



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A great performance but...

South Africa features at number 13 in the *Top 15 Countries at 2022 Cannes Lions list* is a remarkable recognition for the country.

"This is especially given the context of where we are as a country, the challenges we are navigating, the creative opportunities that SA agencies are given by the clients and of course the effects of the pandemic to our economy and our client's budgets.

"Creative opportunities are few and far between, so it is great to see that despite all of this, we, as a country, have managed to get this far," says Ngobese.

She says that the SA work that performed well at Cannes is absolutely interesting, delightful and meaningful conceptual work that is also tonally uniquely South African, yet globally relevant.

"So, we all have to congratulate everyone who entered, everyone who made the shortlists and everyone who won a Lion, including the Young Lions Film competition!"

However, she warns that, despite the performance at this year's Cannes Festival, "we cannot ignore the ongoing business and creative pressure that agencies continue to face, multiplied by the multiple reverts and churn on left-brain work, which leaves us with a deep yearning for pure creativity".

Future-fit agencies

For agencies to move forward and ensure they are future fit, Ngobese says, that while it sounds like a cliché, "it is true, people are a company's biggest asset".

She says: "Agencies should prioritise the growth of people first before anything else. As agencies, we must do more in this area. It is simply not enough to ignore.

"We must grow our people and ensure representation across all levels and put targets to ensure we are tracking progress in this regard.

"We need to find unconventional ways to get the talent if we can't find it, because if we do well in this area, we will then get to grow our clients through the work we produce, and by growing our clients, we will ultimately be able to grow our country."

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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