

# What it's like, working as a creative in Dubai

 By Leigh Andrews

24 Aug 2019

Manuel Bordé, executive creative director (ECD) at TBWA\RAAD, was the opening speaker at the 2019 DStv Seminar of Creativity and delivered all the laughs and insights you'd expect to set the scene for the day of unpacking creativity in ways that go beyond the obvious.



Manuel Bordé, executive creative director (ECD) at TBWA\RAAD, on stage at the DStv Seminar of Creativity, part of #Loeries2019. Image via Al Ncoll © via Gallo Images.

Born in Miami, Bordé has been working in advertising since 2006 and has racked up more than 150 awards since then.

This includes a Loeries Grand Prix, having worked at the likes of DDB Puerto Rico, Panamá and Colombia, Ogilvy & Mather Colombia.



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Leigh Andrews 20 Oct 2017



That said, he began his talk with the disclaimer that this is his first time actually attending the Loeries, visiting South Africa and the African continent.

“ To great applause, he announced that his presentation would not be about current digital buzzwords or creative data jargon, nor would it be about advertising's newshiny toy, brand purpose and 'that Nike ad'. ”

Instead, his talk focused on the creative power of relocation. Bordé quoted great actor and creative mind John Cleese, who spoke of sparking creativity through contrasting views of the world.



## #Loeries2019: Being different is your superpower

Angie White 23 Aug 2019



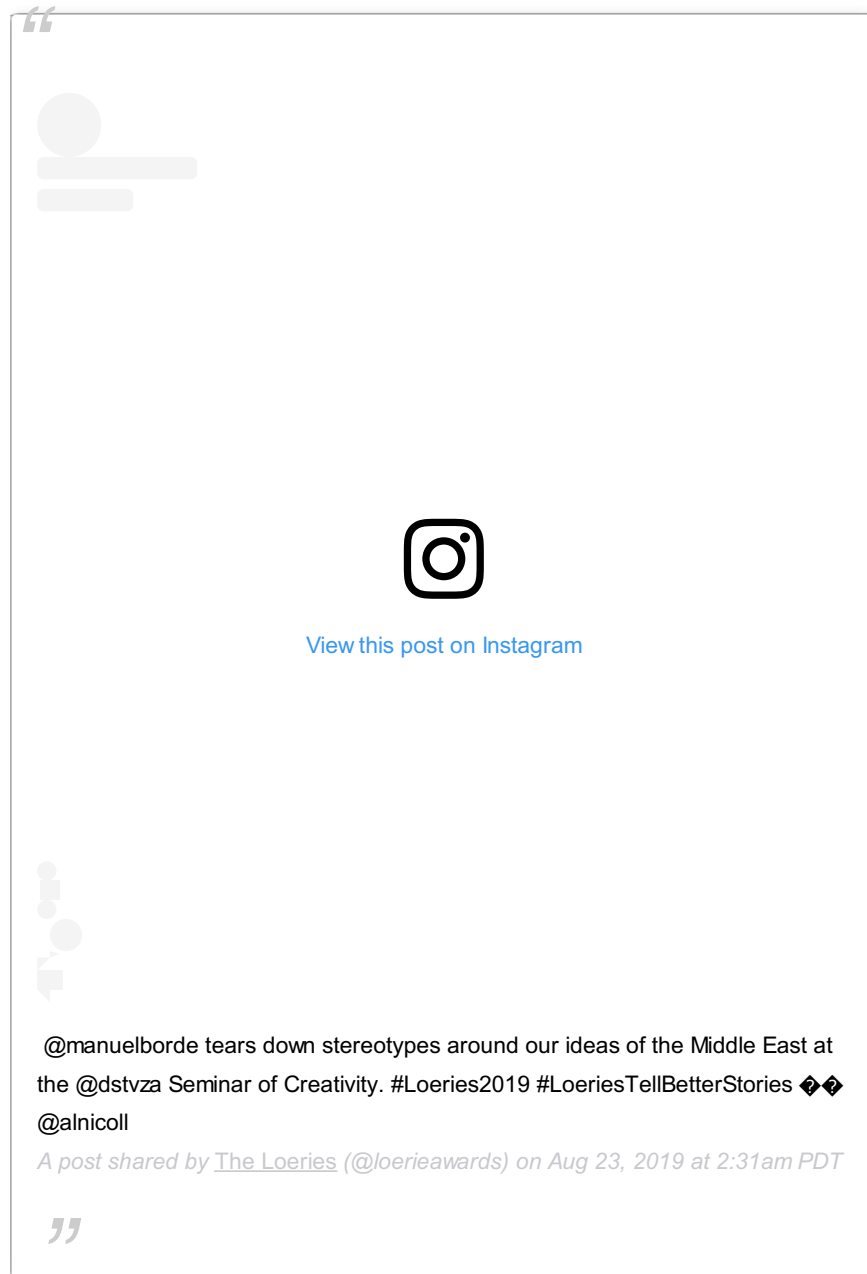
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This makes perfect sense to Bordé now that he lives in Dubai.

## Incorrect perceptions: Dubai life

His decision to move wasn't as easy as packing up his life and taking a long flight. When he first told his mom he'd be moving to Dubai, her first question was 'Where is that?'

When he responded that it's in the Middle East, her reaction was one of shock as her perception of this region was a compilation from Hollywood and war stereotypes.

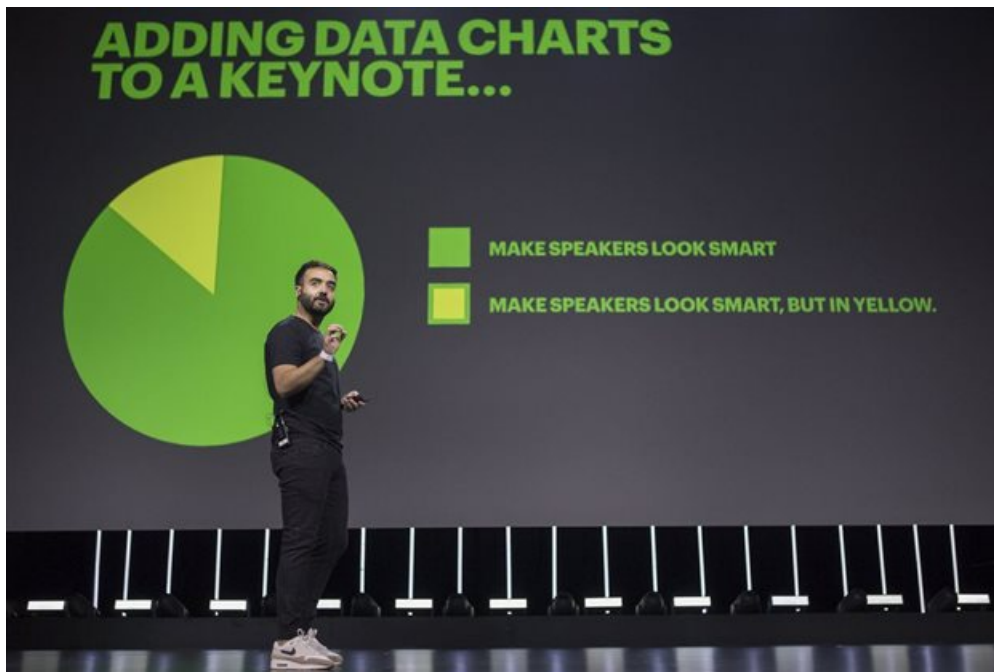


ther, and largely based on the Disney movie

Aladdin.

“Dubai is actually a safe, honest space, but you can go to jail for showing the middle finger there.”

Other idiosyncracies include the fact that only 15% of the population there is true Emirati, with 85% expats.



One of Bordé's more amusing slides, on stage at the DStv Seminar of Creativity, part of #Loeries2019. Image via Al Nicoll © via Gallo Images.

In Dubai's creative agencies, this figure is actually closer to 100% expats. Speaking of the context of advertising in Dubai, he shared that many brands are constantly on edge as the area went through an economic recession in 2009 and there are fears of a second crisis, so they're very careful with their budget.

So, being a creative in Dubai usually means working with global talent on regional work.

## Working on insights from elsewhere in the world

Bordé shared four award-winning examples of this, with key outtakes on each...

1. Some of the most awarded work from the region shows the importance of **gaining local insights from new imports**.

When the news first broke that Saudi Arabian women would finally be legally allowed to drive, many brands jumped on board with special promotions, but it took the expats from elsewhere to realise that what these new female drivers would most enjoy is the support of their male relatives, as seen in TBWA\RAAD's **Nissan #SheDrives** campaign:

2. Another example of expats tapping into ideas with the **power to innovate locally** relates to a novel way of measuring SUV performance in the region that was culturally spot-on - TBWA\RAAD's Nissan's #CamelPower:



#Loeries2017: Stoked about camelpower

Leigh Andrews 8 Sep 2017



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3. Bordé's examples also touched on **generational insights**. For example, it was found that millennials would rather look at their phones than buy lottery tickets. Solution? Bring the lotto fun to the mobile phone, with some selfie action for Lotto Libanais' 'Lucky Face' campaign:

4. Your greatest inspiration could also come from a **daily frustration**, like a boring stretch of highway. Why not turn that into an immersive art show? That's where 'Louvre Abu Dhabi's 'Highway Gallery' flourished...

Tying these examples back to his theme of relocation's effect on creativity, Bordé tried to prove why you become more creative when you immerse yourself in other markets. He consulted with others who had relocated and found the following four things:

## Why your creativity soars when working in other markets

1. There's often **pressure from home** to perform.
2. From the moment you receive the brief, to the brainstorm process to producing the creative work, you're **working with different cultures**. It's a great daily clash that challenges your thinking and makes the mind more flexible.
3. There's a strong sense of '**passerby syndrome**' in Dubai, as it's seen as a temporary location, a stage from which to jump into another market so there are lots of other cultures to rub off on.
4. There's also a strong sense of **hunger**, as the relocation is usually seen as an opportunity to shine with a better salary and way of life, while doing the type of work you like to do.



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To apply this sense of relocation-enhanced creativity, Bordé says you can move to another market, or flip this on its head by bringing in new talent from elsewhere locally, while boosting your internal talent team with fresh perspectives and different insights.

He ended with another of Cleese's quotes, this time on how we better understand what we like when we move away from home and miss it as it's no longer within reach.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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