

Tackling unconscious bias, raising jurors' cultural awareness

 By Leigh Andrews

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The Loeries is only the second international award show after the D&AD awards to introduce "unconscious bias" workshops for its judges. Asha Ranchhod Patel, head of marketing at Google South Africa, explains how the workshops work to sensitise judging panels and help them recognise their own inherent prejudices, while removing these from their judging decisions.



Asha Ranchhod Patel, head of marketing at Google South Africa.

Loeries Creative Week is upon us, with live judging taking place from Monday, 19 to Wednesday, 22 August, and finalists announced at the end of each day's [intensive judging](#).

It's a difficult but rewarding process, with which comes a lot of responsibility.

Loeries CEO Andrew Human explains that as the Loeries is a regional award show that works hard to reward locally relevant work, the judges have to understand that they're not necessarily the target audience of the work they're judging.



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Leigh Andrews 3 May 2019



They need to remove their own prejudices from the process, as a good judge can recognise great ideas from anywhere in the world, intended for any audience, but that's easier said than done.

That's where the Rare Juries training module comes in. A way to improve the judging process, all Loeries judges will take part in the anti-bias and cultural literacy training, part of Google's global diversity and inclusion platform, Rare.

Here, Patel explains the main unconscious biases that play a role today when we interact with others, as well as the after-effect of the unconscious bias training and how this will assist the Loeries' 2019 judges when making their decisions on which creative work to award...

■ **What are the main unconscious biases that play a role today when we interact with others?**

Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about social and identity groups that individuals form and hold. They can involve race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, weight, language group – any number of characteristics.

“ Our own unconscious bias can influence our thinking and decisions as much as our rational thought processes do, which is why it is so important to be aware of them and to guard against them. ”

They limit creative thinking and the potential to innovate, and it can influence our decisions when it comes to selecting the best work. Rare was designed with and for the creative industries to enable under-represented talent, businesses and the industry at large to drive, and benefit from, more inclusive cultures.



#Loeries2019: "Discover how different cultures are reflected through their creativity and ideas" - Katja Thielen

Leigh Andrews 10 May 2019



Homogeny and prejudice are two of the biggest challenges for the advertising and brand communications industries today.

Unconscious bias can lead judges to dismiss work they don't identify with and disregard perspectives from judges they don't relate to.



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For the best work in the industry to be rewarded and recognised fairly, jury rooms need to be unaffected by these biases.

■ **Definitely. Talk us through the importance of unconscious bias training – what's the after-effect?**

Humans tend to categorise things as a way to make sense of the overwhelming stimuli we are exposed to every day and save time and effort processing information. We categorise people too, which is often displayed in our tendency to rely on stereotypes.



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Everyone has unconscious biases – the result of unconscious bias training is that we become exposed to where our own prejudices lie and to then counter them when we're making decisions, and especially when we're stressed, tired or under pressure, because that's when these biases tend to come to the fore.

■ ***That's the very definition of judging! What will the Loeries judges' training then entail?***

The Rare Juries interactive short courses use a series of exercises and tutorials to help awards judges learn where their bias comes from, how they can identify a biased thought they've had, the terminology to articulate bias, and the process to de-bias a thought or action.

Ultimately, it will improve the jurors' cultural literacy, and lead them to celebrate the work that is most deserving.



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As a founding sponsor of Rare, Google has been instrumental to its growth since 2017, and officially adopted the platform in 2018. As an industry leader, we feel Google has a responsibility to support the industries it operates in and assist in ushering us all towards a more inclusive, more innovative state.

■ ***That's my next question: How exactly does cultural literacy come into the mix? How can creatives enhance theirs?***

Cultural literacy refers to the ability to understand different beliefs, customs, values and behaviours that are held by people who are different to them, and not behave in a way that is biased or judgemental towards them as a result of those beliefs.



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■ ***Let's end with the info everyone wants to know: How will this training ultimately assist the Loeries' 2019 judges when making their decisions on which creative work to award?***

Making judges aware of how they unconsciously discriminate, who they discriminate against and why and how to identify this thinking will lead them to more objectively evaluate and award the work they're reviewing.

“ It is our hope that in making the jury more aware of negative stereotypes and unconscious bias, we will reward work that doesn't merely mirror society, but plays an important role in leading society. ”

We believe it's important that advertising and design help build a better society, and a huge part of that is breaking down stereotypes.



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In our region, this is especially important in terms of race and gender.

That it is. Here's wishing the jurors a smooth and enlightening judging process! Rare Juries will be running training across all three days of the 2019 Loeries, as we look forward to telling and learning from better regional stories, with cultural awareness.

If you can't wait for Loeries Creative Week Durban, taking place from 22 to 24 August 2019, keep an eye on the Loeries' [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) feeds and stay tuned for my interviews with more of the regional jurors and all the latest updates in our [Loeries' special section](#). You can also follow Patel on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and see more about the programme at [Rare.withgoogle.com](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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