Turning stories into Gold at Cannes Lions Trend Talks 2021

By Emily Stander

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On 22 July, Ster-Kinekor, in collaboration with *Bizcommunity*, hosted the Cannes Lions Trend Talks online.

Hosted by Neo Mashigo, chief creative officer at M&C Saatchi Abel, Cannes Lions judges came together to discuss trends they noticed throughout the awards. Speakers included:

- Ann Nurock, Senior Partner Relationship Audits, and Management
- Brett Morris, CEO, Nahana Communications Group
- Steph van Niekerk, creative director, Grey Africa
- Lufuno Mavhungu, freelance creative director, Black River FC
- Nkgabiseng Motau, founding partner, Think Creative Africa
- Tanya Schreuder, group managing director, Dentsu Aegis Network
- Bryan Habana, former professional rugby player

The key themes that emerged from the talks included simplicity, authenticity, and emotion. These themes spoke to the film, radio, and advertisements that ended up winning awards at Cannes Lions - and spoke to the idea that you don't need a big budget to create award-winning work.

Can creativity in media make a true change? Well, advertising and media have the ability to make a significant impact on the world. As we can see through campaigns like TBWA's #BlameNoMore, media holds the power to spread messages through simple, emotional, and meaningful work.

Through the Cannes Lions Awards, agencies showed the real power we hold when it comes to advertising and content creation. Creative solutions can work to solve budget issues and tell the stories people need to hear.

Film

According to Morris, film juror at Cannes, creating space to talk about craft and how to improve is imperative. When it came to judging film, it was all about the power of a simple story well told. Storytelling is critical to any platform of media - and this truly shone through in this category. Some of Morris's favourites stemmed from the bronze and silver categories, like *Unapologetically Human* by Cashmere towelettes.

Radio

Audio innovation was at the forefront of excellence at this year's Cannes Awards. Using tech and frequencies, the Grand Prix winner Woojer #sickbeats created a vest that helps improve the lives of cystic fibrosis sufferers.

This is an excellent example of creativity making a true difference where it can.

Industry craft

The process of judging industry craft gave van Niekerk, industry craft juror at Cannes, an appreciation for Bronze and shortlists, as she realised how difficult it is to win at Cannes. The main trend, according to van Niekerk, was a raw, authentic craft that aims to embrace our own humanity. A prime example of this is the "Courage is beautiful" campaign by Dove which spoke specifically to the times we live in now - which won a Grand Prix for the art direction craft.

Print

According to Motau, print juror at Cannes, print work - even though many have predicted its death - seems to be one of the first points of contact to kick off a greater campaign. "It feels the reason for that is because print still has a reach and credibility where people can be interacting with the work as a publication," she said. "It seems to have worked really powerfully to be the first point of contact for a campaign then spreading into other places."

We can see this through the Columbia Journalism review campaign which speaks to disparities in gun violence coverage in the US.

Media

"Media is now the space where we learn, live, cook, date, exercise, protest, and where we feed back to brands," said Schreuder, media juror at Cannes. "The space of media has had a hugely positive impact on brand purpose, performance, and outcomes. Media drives brand growth."

During the pandemic, media - brands specifically - have needed to find ways to be resourceful about how they communicate effectively with their audiences. According to Schreuder, crafting a simple story that gets your main point across is the best way to go about this.

For example, we can see this happen in Fortnite and Samsung's anti-bullying campaign.

Entertainment Lions for Sport

"Sport, in general, is unscripted, and from a trends perspective, we need to start finding ways as creatives to bring that storytelling in a way in which it remains unscripted but creates a tangible connection with the end-user - with the fan - that keeps them coming back," said Habana, entertainment Lions for sport juror.

According to Habana, fearlessness and straying away from the mundane is the pivotal way in which sports media can truly connect with audiences. People want interpersonal connections which speak to a true understanding of each other.

We can see this through the BT Sport unscripted campaign.

Final thoughts

The main trend projected from Cannes Lions was the use of authenticity and connection to make a difference. Through campaigns like BT Sport unscripted, and initiatives like #sickbeats, we see the power media platforms hold in using creativity to make meaningful change.

Across the board, truth emerged as the winning ingredient. Whether in media, sports, or brands, in the untouched faces of Dove healthcare workers, the raw emotion of football fans - real stories, real emotions, and real grit is what was necessary to win at Cannes 2020/1 and in the future.

South Africa has all the stories and the talent to turn our own raw materials into metal.

We've got this! See you at Cannes Lion Trends 2022.

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