

The importance of jury duty: Creative award shows essential in fostering a culture of excellence and collaboration

By  Tanya de Jongh

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Being nominated to serve on the jury of the 2024 Bookmark Awards prompted me to contemplate my career and the invaluable lessons I've gained.



Source: © Bizcommunity.com [Bizcommunity.com](https://www.bizcommunity.com) The 2023 Bookmark Awards. Tanya de Jongh, integrated creative director, Rapt Creative contemplates her career and the invaluable lessons she has gained after being nominated to serve on the 2024 Bookmarks jury

My appreciation for the Bookmarks traces back to 2011 when I received the 'Student of The Year Pixel' award from this organisation that uniquely honours digital excellence.

Now, after many years, digital communications have transformed into a crucial asset for brands seeking to engage with contemporary audiences.

But while much has changed significantly, some very important things (thankfully) have remained the same.



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Can craft still really exist?

With all the fierce debates about ChatGPT, generative AI and new tech buzzwords, the biggest question for creatives has become whether craft still really exists.

This is an area I'm really looking forward to discussing and debating when serving on the Marketing Craft jury and hopefully finding an answer as to what constitutes digital excellence in South Africa.

Having worked in the creative industry for more than a decade, I've realised that picking up metal is far more than just a pat on the back; it's a validation of hard work, innovation and excellence.

A critical role in the acknowledgement of brilliant ideas is the selection and choice of jury panels.

Three years ago I entered my jury-serving era and if I'm entirely honest, I wasn't entirely sure about it.

At the time, a few questions popped up for me: What did it all mean? How would I be adding value with my skillset and experience? What value would this opportunity bring me?



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The pivotal role shaping the narrative of what constitutes brilliance

For years, I watched people I admire in our industry serve on these panels.

But I never truly understood the pivotal role they played in shaping the narrative of what constitutes brilliance.

After having judged a few shows in recent years, I've realised that serving on jury panels is not just an honour but a responsibility with far-reaching and long-lasting implications.

Beyond the recognition, being on a jury carries with it enormous responsibility.

The selected judges wield considerable power in shaping the standards and trends of the industry, setting the (future) benchmarks for creatives innovation and excellence, and the new golden standards of inspiration for us all.

Selecting diverse jury panels

That said, I cannot stress the importance of selecting diverse jury panels and introducing new jury members to award shows as new talent emerges in the industry enough.

If we don't have the best minds rooting, debating and discussing the work, we'll never truly represent what the collective standard of excellence should be – or could become.

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To contribute meaningfully

Jury duty has also deepened my appreciation and understanding of both the idea and the craft there-of.

As someone who reviews work daily, these panels offer the rare opportunity to engage with a variety of pieces conceptualised by different types of creatives.

The process allows you to gain invaluable insights into emerging trends, the latest techniques and industry ideologies.

Such exposure not only enriches one's perspective but also equips you with the knowledge to contribute meaningfully back in the office.

An exercise in humility and introspection

Most importantly, being part of a jury panel is an exercise in humility and introspection.

You are forced to confront your own biases, preferences and preconceptions – an experience that stretches your thinking and opens your mind in ways you'd never expect.

And by doing so, you contribute to a fair and more inclusive representation of creativity within our industry.

Creative award shows continued evolution

As we look ahead, it's evident that creative award shows will continue to evolve in exciting ways.

New categories, jury panels and recognition of young talent should be our key focus as an industry collective.

In an ever-changing world, where the boundaries are constantly pushed and redefined, these awards not only honour outstanding achievements but are essential in fostering a culture of excellence and collaboration, reminding us of the profound impact that creativity has on shaping our collective imagination, building brands and driving positive change in society.

ABOUT TANYA DE JONGH

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