Digitally judging interactive work

By Leigh Andrews   12 Aug 2016

That glorious week of celebrating local creativity is upon us again, as Loeries® Creative Week™ Durban, kicks off on Monday, 15 August with one of the most daunting tasks - judging. A handful of this year's Digital & Interactive category judges spilled the beans on what they're looking for from the entries as well as the biggest trend they predict from the digital/interactive work in 2016.

McPherson, Carter, Williams and McManus

In describing what's he's most looking forward to from Loeries® Creative Week™ Durban, Gareth McPherson, executive creative director at Publicis Machine, says, "Judging week itself is a great time to sit for a few days and to share points of view, debate and admire great work. It's always a treat." He admires the other judges, thoroughly enjoys their company and says, "That's because ultimately the work is what brings us all together (hello, Loeries 2016 theme of 'Creativity Unites')!

Technology changes and challenges

McPherson says as technology constantly changes the industry and brand communication as a whole, he'll be on the lookout for how technology and platforms support great ideas. "For me, it must always be about the idea and the idea must always be hinged off a great insight… It has to be relevant and it needs to resonate. The tech must always be secondary to that." McPherson adds that user experience is also a big one for him, so the brand experience must be relevant to what a user is engaging with and the craft must be considered.

Moving on to discuss the biggest trend in digital/interactive work in 2016, McPherson says with the constant change and innovation driven in technology today, we are seeing many more ideas that bridge digital and the real world. "We have moved on significantly from tweeting vending machines and are now seeing real one-of-a-kind experiences and ideas that brands use technology to bring to life." He lists last year's Loeries Grand Prix-winning KFC 'Soundbite' table by Ogilvy as a good example of this.

Brian Carter, ECD at Liquorice, is also up for the task of judging this year's Digital & Interactive entries. He'll be looking for ideas that connect with people in new ways; ideas that have insight and execution that has been meticulously crafted. He explains that our digital lives can get rather cluttered, so will look for ideas that stand out from what everyone else is doing. In a word, "innovation".

He says we've seen a lot of selfies, memes and emojis this year, but while trends come and go, it's more important to be relevant.

Relevance is also cracking the judging criteria for Roanna Williams, creative director at Joe Public. She says great ideas that connect with consumers in a fresh and disruptive way are likely the ones that'll do well. "Ideas that are true to the medium and use technology with genuine purpose."

Revealed: The biggest digital trend

Williams dubs this the the biggest digital trend at the moment: When great ideas use technology with purpose, it can have a real impact on people's lives. She adds that digital ideas are integrating traditional values and storytelling, which is turning it into a medium that creates meaningful and accessible experiences for consumers.

Ryan McManus, ECD at NATIVE, will be on the lookout for excellence. He thinks we still need to really push hard to get the digital work up to a global standard, and as a result will be looking for: "Great conceptual or storytelling work. Ideas that embrace the medium. That transform and reinvent the medium. And work that really effects, connects with or touches people. The cheap wins or gimmicky ideas are not the ones that ever impress me." Instead, he wants to see how best you can use all the tools, platforms, tech and conceptual ability to create a powerful and innovative piece of communication that speaks to all the people who are using digital every single day.

That's no small ask, but hardly a surprise when you consider he feels the strongest digital work is that where the technology is vital to the idea, but is not visible in any way.

McManus explains, "When the work is cenetred on humans: real stories, beautifully crafted, magical experiences that embrace tech in execution, but leave the viewer feeling like there was no tech at all, like it was all effortless, seamless, human - I think when the story or the experience is at the centre, rather than tools - it just resonates with people. I also think that digital can be used to really connect people or allow them to participate in the storytelling. It lets them be a character in your brand narrative and allows them to co-create with you. There's also a strong move toward creating real tools for people. Whether its platforms or experiences, the more 'utility' side of brand work can add real value to the consumer experience. Overall though, I feel like digital is really starting to embrace telling real, meaningful human stories that use tech, rather than telling tech stories to humans. And that's pretty awesome."

Also awesome? The fact that the Loeries' judging process is all done electronically. Click here for a reminder of how the Loeries' fully digital judging process works – finalists will only be announced once judging is complete next week…

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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