

# Sarah Dexter, "True diversity across the board is key"

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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*As part of our Women's Month content feature and in the build-up to our panel discussion with some of this year's Gerety Awards all-female South African executive jury members, taking place in September, Jessica Tennant, senior editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity, interviews this year's jury to find out what a woman has to do to get onto an advertising jury, what the opportunity means to them and the significance of these Awards given the current state of gender equality...*



Sarah Dexter, CEO of MullenLowe South Africa

The Gerety Awards, founded by Joe Brooks and Lucia Ongay is relatively new, having launched in 2019. It brings together all-female juries from across the globe to shortlist the best in advertising – all advertising, not just advertising made for women – through the female lens.

The Awards was named after Frances Gerety, the copywriter who coined the slogan 'a diamond is forever'. So, instead of categories, the Awards are judged by cuts (as in diamond cuts), of which there are 10.

This year, there are a total of 180 new jury members from 30 different countries. Pre-Covid-19, judging sessions were hosted in each host city and the shortlists submitted to the international grand jury of creative experts for final evaluation, but of course this year's judging sessions are having to take a different format. Joe Brooks explains that "the judging would have taken place at the VMLY&R offices, with Jacquie as the ambassador. The date had been set for Monday, 1 June and we would have judged and discussed a number of categories of entries from around the world. The same week judging sessions would have taken place in London, New York, Buenos Aires, Bangkok, Melbourne, Milan, Istanbul, Helsinki and Berlin. Due to the 'Corona', all judging is taking place remotely and online over a four-week period with group calls in the middle of the judging to discuss favorite pieces."

This year's South African executive jury includes: Jacquie Mullany, ECD, VMLY&R; Mpume Ngobese, MD, Joe Public; Sanche Jansen van Rensburg, ECD, Avatar; Simone Bosman, founder and creative, Osu & Kumalo; Neo Segola, ECD, FCB Africa; Sarah Dexter, CEO, Mullen Lowe; Nadia Mohamed, marketing director, McCain; Emma Strydom, head of design, Network BBDO; Juliet Honey, creative, Freelance; Suhana Gordhan, ECD, FCB; Linda Notelovitz, director/producer and founder, Life Design; Liezel Bygate, marketing director, Bliss Brands; Monalisa Zwambila, CEO, Riverbed; Loli Bishop, producer, Freelance; and Fiona O'Connor, creative director, Havas. Look out for our online panel discussion featuring some of these remarkable women in advertising in September after the shortlists have been announced.



#CannesLions2019: Lucía Ongay on starting the Gerety Awards to elevate female voices

21 Jun 2019



Here, Sarah Dexter, CEO of MullenLowe South Africa, says that it's about time we see women being represented and that for the industry to survive we need more, true diversity across the board and cross-discipline integration between creative and media...

■ ***The Awards recognise the best advertising (not just advertising made for women) through the female lens. Comment on the significance of this given the current state of feminism / gender equality / women's empowerment.***

**Dexter:** With so few women in the world identifying with the women shown in ads, and yet they account for up to 80% of spend in certain categories, it's about time we see their actual contributions to society being properly represented.

■ ***As part of its call for entries campaign, the Awards sent purple moustaches to prominent female leaders in the advertising industry, and asked them to pose for a picture with the question: What does a woman have to do to get onto an advertising jury? How would you answer that question – what does a woman have to do to get onto an advertising jury?***

**Dexter:** To get onto a jury you have to have a passion for great communication and be able to recognise it no matter who it's targeted at, i.e. you can't judge comms by what you, in your own narrow personal capacity, like. You need to have intuition, open-mindedness and empathy to judge anything in life, and it's no different in ad juries!

■ ***What are you most looking forward to or excited about with regards to taking part in this year's Gerety Awards judging?***

**Dexter:** It's always exciting to see great work and this judging opportunity means I get to share it with some real super kick-ass women in the industry.

■ ***What is your hope for the next or future generations of women in advertising / the advertising industry?***

**Dexter:** For the industry to survive we need more diversity, in the complete sense of the word. True diversity across the board is key and this includes race, gender and background. My other hope is that we see the resurgence of great ideas, unsuppressed by the fear and box-ticking that is strangling much of the work. We need cross-discipline integration especially between creative and media.

■ ***And what is your key message to fellow women in advertising this Women's Month?***

**Dexter:** Don't give up. Lean in. Dig deep. Work hard. And take what you do, not yourself, seriously.

For more info, visit the Gerety Awards' [website](#) and follow them on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and/or [Instagram](#), and follow Dexter on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) or visit [MullenLowe South Africa](#).

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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