

Q&A 2019 Loeries Africa and Middle East judges: Toufic Beyhum



1. Please tell us a bit about your professional achievements.

The fact that I've been in the advertising industry and have kept my hunger after 23 years is an achievement in itself!

I'm proud that I have worked with so many agencies in so many countries. I think staying in one agency all your career will break you. I've had the privilege of working in New York, London, Dubai, Berlin and now Namibia for agencies like McCann, Leo Burnett, BBDO & VMLY&R.

I've helped win accounts and awards in all those different countries, which is always a bonus.

One of the highlights of my career was mentoring at the most awarded advertising school in the world - the School of Communication Arts in London. I part-time mentored there for three years and working with these passionate creatives brought the spark back into my own work.

While I was there we watched the three intakes win 19 D&AD pencils, two Cannes Future Lions and three BIMAs.

2. What makes you excited about brand communications? What new skills and technologies do you see coming through in media and advertising right now?

We are at a time when every single piece of work is being scrutinised, especially the big brands. Audiences aren't being fooled by brands anymore... they can see when something is sexist, racist or fake, and through social media they have the power to call these brands out.

People are craving real-life stories and it excites me to see how agencies tackle every brief with such a tough audience. To be honest, I haven't seen anything new that's blown my mind when it comes to technologies and innovations. A strong concept with a solid story wins over technology any day.

3. What is unique about brand communications in Africa and the Middle East?

I've noticed that southern African advertising is very much about telling cultural stories.

The Middle East and southern Africa have very interesting target audiences. In the Middle East, you have about four languages, with Arabic being predominant, but there are many different religions (about eight different religions in Lebanon alone), tribes and cultures. South Africa has 11 languages. Namibia has over 10 languages.

It's not like a brief in the UK where your target audience is just lower or middle class aged this to that. It's a little trickier here, and you have to be very culturally sensitive.

4. What kind of innovation and creative work will you be looking for as a judge of the Loeries 2019?

Anything fresh and local. At the end of the day, Loeries is all about the work being relevant to the region and culture. If the work makes the room feel something, then it's a winner.

5. Do you think the tenets of a successful media campaign are universal? What makes a campaign work in your country?

Yes, I do. Nothing beats a good story. We are storytellers who sell stuff. When you say "my country" I guess you mean where I live and work now, which is Namibia. But you're right, as long as I live here, it is my country and that's what I do when I move to a new place; I immerse myself in the culture and I believe that's where the best ideas come from.

I have noticed that keeping things real and local works a treat. Nothing beats human truths.

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