

Ryan McManus, "More deep and slow thinking is needed"



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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We chat to Ryan McManus, chief creative officer at VMLY&R South Africa, about his experience on judging the Integrated, OOH, PR and Media category at [Loeries 2021](#).



Ryan McManus, chief creative officer at VMLY&R South Africa

■ *How do you feel about judging at this year's Loeries?*

Disappointed I don't get to hang out with all these smart people in person.. but always an honour to be part of judging The Loeries and seeing the best work in our industry.

■ *Tell us more about yourself and why you believe you were selected – your judging experience and so on.*

I suppose being selected comes from the work you do, the awards you've won, and the reputation you've built for your agency. I've been back in SA for eight years and have judged Loeries every year since returning.

It's always a fantastic experience and a chance to connect with other creative leaders, to learn, get inspired and grow. I think it's important to bring your own personal and professional lens to the judging process as it can help shape the industry and lift up the type of work we should aspire to do.



#BehindtheMask: Ryan McManus, chief creative officer at VMLY&R

Emily Stander 16 Jun 2021



■ ***When you heard about being selected as a judge, how did you celebrate the news?***

I would love to say thanks with tequilas in a crowded bar, but I just sent a mail of thanks.

■ ***What does this mean to you, personally?***

I love to be part of the discussions and always feel richer for it.

“ I love to be challenged by ideas, people and debate so I feel like these things always alter and push your perspective forward. ”

It is always a privilege and an honour.

■ ***Which category will you be judging?***

Integrated, OOH, PR and Media.

■ ***What do you expect to experience as a judge?***

Heated debate. Critical discussions. Inspiration.

■ ***What specific criteria will you be looking for when judging?***

Work that resets the bar. That adds value to both people and the brand it is made for. That challenges the status quo and creates a more inclusive world.

■ ***You have some major experience in the creative industry. Could you comment on the impact of Covid-19 on the industry?***

That is a long answer. I don't think it's been good for the level of SA's creative work. I have seen much more focus on efficiency in the way we work, but very little focus on asking *Why?*; Or dreaming; Or doing deep and slow thinking on a problem.

I feel that we need to carve out the space for more deep and slow thinking to get to more creative and innovative solutions. We need to get out of survival mode. I think there are some examples of great creative work... but not nearly enough. The ones who have stood out are the ones who really thought about the problem, the situation of Covid and what it has brought on, very deeply, to discover new insights that birthed the ideas. If we are just reactive, we can't create compelling work.

■ ***Share a few of your favourite Loeries-related moments over the years – either from attending personally or agency winning work-related.***

Winning is always a massive highlight of course, but for me, it's always about the time you get to spend with great creative people... not in a meeting, but just talking freely and hanging out.

Sharing your creative philosophy or approaches. Spending time with your own agency people and others from different agencies and production houses. It's always a great time to be provoked and inspired to do better. It reminds you of the talent we have in SA, and how we need to feed and nurture it.

■ Any predictions of trends that are likely to stand out at Loeries 2021?

Work that really did something. Work that felt more like an action than an ad. Work that was simple. And work that helped to sculpt a better version of the world.

■ What do you believe SA creatives bring to the Loeries judging mix?

Very different perspectives. Diversity. A love for the work. But a hate for the ordinary. We are thick-skinned as a people. We are resilient. And our country forces us to live a very contrasted life. I think it helps contribute to the way we can jump to different points of view or perspectives when discussing ideas while still remaining passionate about the work. I hope we all aim to elevate the standard though. I feel that we are a great creative country, but we should be doing better.

“ If we look at the rise of the quality of creative work from the Middle East over the last few years .. or how Brazil went from nowhere to some of the best work in the world.. we have the ability and talent to do that.. but we have to fight for it. And get the best work made. ”

And this also means that the business side of marketing has to fight for creativity too. It is the differentiator. It is the thing that ultimately brings value and growth to shareholders. Otherwise, we are all just doing the same thing as our competitors.

■ Lastly, what are you most looking forward to from Loeries 2021?

A real-life in-person meet-up.

■ What does #FightTheGoodFight mean to you?

Fight to turn your dreams into reality

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