

Thibedi Meso, ECD at Think Creative Africa

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Thibedi Meso, executive creative director at Think Creative Africa, sat on the judging panel in the Craft Film category of the 2021 [Loerie Awards](#). We find out about the experience.



Thibedi Meso, executive creative director at Think Creative Africa

■ Which category will you be judging?

I will be judging the Craft Film category. Popping a cherry on this one. There's really nowhere to hide when it comes to craft so I'm sure we'll have some great conversations around the work.

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

I'm very excited as this is a new category for me to be judging in. I'm looking forward to seeing what's on show because things have really gotten interesting with the inclusion of work from the rest of Africa and the Middle East. I'm excited to see the work that I wouldn't have seen or heard whilst driving around Joburg or scrolling through the timeline.

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

As a creative, I've always believed that a piece of communication has to be fully bought into by all sides; the brand managers, the creatives involved, as well as the consumers we're trying to reach. I know well enough the challenges that creatives and marketers are faced with when tackling a brief, solving real business problems and making sure that the message resonates and converts. I'd like to believe that my work over the years has shown that and maybe that's what got me in. I've also had the honour of judging for the past seven years so you could call me a friend of the Loeries.

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

I posted it on the Gram.

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

It means a nice break from my day job. Somewhat. But more importantly, it means getting to check out the competition and celebrating the talent we have in Africa and the Middle East. Judging Loeries always has me wondering about and appreciating the journey it took to get to that final product we get to judge. It's inspiring.

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

Meeting new people and hearing different perspectives. I think we have some judges who are not from the agency side sitting on the panel which is great. The more we can make that circle bigger the better. I'd love to hear what our LSM 4-7 consumer profile would have to say about the work (for example).

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

In Film Craft I'm looking for exceptional execution. 'Eye-and-ear candy' if you will. I've seen budgets decreasing drastically and timelines getting tighter of late so the struggle to make beautifully executed work is real. Hopefully, we'll have a good turnout.

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

Before Covid, it was so much easier for creatives to share thoughts on briefs and have mini-reviews with their peers before bringing in their work for review. You could validate your ideas with your small group before taking it to your CD/ ECD. That little bit of interaction is missing for me. It would weed out the ideas people weren't sure about and ultimately save time in the process. The knock-on effect is more (frustrating) rounds of reviews in a time where there's really no time to waste.

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

One year, 2016 I think, I witnessed one of the biggest celebrations for a win on stage. A couple of minutes later I went outside the auditorium where the event was taking place, I bumped into a disgruntled friend who had just lost out in the same category. In a matter of minutes, I had seen how much this industry meant to the two people equally invested in their work. Win or lose, passion and self-belief won for me that day.

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

Surprisingly we didn't see a whole lot of Covid work come through last year. I think that's because of the awards cycle so I anticipate we'll see a bit more of that this time around. I could be wrong.

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

As South Africans we've grown up in a multi-racial, multilingual, multicultural country, so what we bring to the mix is an understanding of diverse backgrounds, empathy and appreciation for various storytelling.

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

Can I look beyond 2021? I've mentioned before about bringing in (even) more people outside the agency to judge the Loeries, I look forward to a time when we can make that a reality because I think it gives us a more balanced view of effectiveness and appreciation for creativity. Another thing I look forward to is the addition of more categories that celebrate industry efforts holistically.

One account manager I've worked with proudly displays her portfolio at interviews because she's sweated as much as the creative teams; how about a portfolio prize for those in client service? What about the baddest strategy? How about we recognize (successful) Pitch of the Year as a category? This one could be particularly special because nowhere else is the playing field levelled amongst agencies than in pitch rooms. Just a thought.

▣ ***Outside of big budgets, what does #FightTheGoodFight mean to you?***

For me it means honouring your position, putting brands before self, respecting your work and making a place for everyone to feel welcomed and to see growth in the industry.

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