

The diary of Creative Circle: Roanna Williams' tips on how to survive a Cannes jury room

By  Roanna Williams

19 Jun 2023

Cannes Lions is celebrating its 70th year of awarding creative excellence. The sun is shining and the atmosphere is electric. It's going to be an inspiring week of creativity, talks, discussions, networking and a glass or two of rosé



Image supplied. Roanna Williams, chairperson of the Creative Circle and CCO Network BBDO gives perspective as a Cannes Lions Outdoor category juror

But let's kick off with a sneak-peak inside my jury room.

This past week, I judged the Cannes Lions outdoor category, the first category to kick off the judging for 2023.



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Our panel was led by the remarkable Javier Campopiano. The jury members were from Brazil, the US, Italy, Czech Republic, South Korea, France, UAE, Argentina, Spain and South Africa.

A beautiful representation of cultures, diversity and gender, which led to a very inclusive, unbiased and fair judging process.

We spent three days and three nights in a dark room in the Palais de Festivals, looking at case studies, scoring and having intense and insightful debates about the work and drinking copious amounts of espressos.



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With over 1,900 entries in this category, only 199 made the shortlist. 9,5%!



The Cannes 2023 outdoor category jury

Bullet proof entries

Does some good work fall through the cracks? Yes. And that's why your entries have to be bullet proof.

So, what does it take to survive the judging room? The simple ideas stand out. If it's a complicated idea that needs to be explained, it opens up debate and this can work against it getting through.



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Human insights that are relatable with an element of emotion that connects with consumers to drive an action is key.

Purely functional ideas are not enough. Your idea needs scale. Small ideas with small impact just don't cut it.

Real work is must. If the judges sniff that it was an idea made for an award, it's out. Your idea has to be original and uses the medium in a modern or disruptive way.



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Craft! Craft! Craft! Because when it gets to the metal discussions, if the craft is not at an impeccable level, it's out.

Having an impact on culture or solving a real problem can help the idea get to the next round of discussion.

Pay huge attention to your case study. You have to have a great case study because the judges use this over and over to determine if your piece is a contender for a Lion.

So, to survive the jury room, you have to have an idea that goes all the way. Insight, concept, execution, medium, craft, scalability, results, disruption, impact, culture shifting.... It has to be Full Circle.



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Roanna Williams is the chief creative officer at Net#workBBDO and Creative Circle Chairperson / Artist / One Show 2023 juror / Cannes Lions 2023 juror / Nedbank IMC Conference 2023 speaker.

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