

Get ready for the Cannes Lionesses!

 By Leigh Andrews

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A Cannes Lion award roars with approval for your agency work. But it's not just about the boisterous male lions; industry females are finally getting a larger share of that spotlight glow - Katherine Glover, copywriter at Joe Public agency, tells us how...

So many people across the globe are attending next week's Cannes Lions Festival, looking forward to the razzle-dazzle of seeing the world's best ad work and mingling with sparkling creative minds.

But there's more to Cannes than mere celebration of winning work - there's a mind-boggling array of events, initiatives and sideshows to distract you while you're there.



Katherine Glover

In fact, South Africa's own Glover is one of only 12 female creatives from across the world to be chosen as part of this year's participants in the [Cannes Lions See it, Be it](#) programme.

That's not the only way female ad talent is standing out this year as Cannes Lions is big on gender equality, with some of this year's talks focused on the lack of female directors in Hollywood and 'marketing to women in the fourth wave of feminism'.

Glover tells us more, below...

1. Firstly, congratulations. How were you selected as part of the 'See it, Be it' initiative?

Glover: Thank you very much. 'See it, Be it' put out a call for nominations earlier this year. Creative heads were asked to identify women in their agency who they thought had the potential to become future creative leaders. I am very fortunate that my creative director, Roanna Williams, thinks I have this potential, and therefore nominated me. Based on these nominations and their accompanying motivations, the women were shortlisted. The next part of the process was for them to have a telephonic interview with the programme co-ordinator and founder, Senta Slingerland, the director of brand strategy at Cannes Lions. After she had conducted all her interviews, Slingerland had the tough task of choosing just 12 women, and luckily I was one of them.

2. Impressive. What can we expect from 'See it, Be it'?

Glover: 'See it, be it' invites 12 women to experience the Cannes Lions Festival in a way that very few people have access to. We get access to the jury rooms and judges to learn what goes on behind the scenes. We get to network with, and more importantly, learn from top industry leaders. We will be exposed to what it's like, and what it takes to be part of the top echelons of the advertising industry in order to help us to become part of, and ideally, shape it one day. Hence the name 'See it, be it.'

Essentially I think we'll learn a lot while having an incredible amount of fun and I will be able to bring this knowledge back and impart it on young South African women in the industry.

3. Sounds like a wonderful opportunity. Let's talk about gender equality, particularly when it comes to

the media and marketing industries...

Glover: I think that addressing gender issues in the media is extremely important. If you look at the literature circulating right now, it's not really focused on equal rights, but rather on smart business practise. Women account for more than half the purchasing decisions, so why don't we have women communicating with them? Especially in this age where consumers are very savvy, and there's an emphasis on building relationships with brands. It makes sense that female creatives, who can better relate to them, play a part in forming these relationships.

Also, there are amazing female creatives in this world and they should be recognised as amazing creatives based on merit, regardless of gender.

■ 4. Agreed. Do you think enough is being done to promote the importance of female thought leadership and innovation, particularly when it comes to advertising and viewing the world?

Glover: According to Slingerland, the statistic that sparked the need for a programme like 'See it, be it' is that globally, creatives in the industry at an entry level have a gender split of about 50%. But when it comes to creative directors' level and higher, only 3% are women. With statistics like this, no one can deny there is still a lot of room for improvement, but it is a process.

I'm delighted that Cannes Lions is addressing the gender divide, and from a 'good business-sense' perspective. The Cannes Lions is perceived as the leading creative festival in the advertising calendar, so I hope that the rest of the world will follow their example. I also think that initiatives like this are important, simply because they spark discussion and bring the issue into the spotlight so that it has to be acknowledged and addressed.

Individual agencies have a larger role to play. I believe that they not only need to invest more in developing women, but also to embrace the different strengths and ideas women bring to the business world and to acknowledge the importance of this. If more active interest is taken in getting more women into creative leadership roles within the agency, it will naturally filter into the industry.

■ 5. Makes sense. How did you get that right personally, meshing your dream of becoming a Cannes award-winning filmmaker with your passion for creative writing.

Glover: It was about experimenting until I found what suited me best, and that is advertising. I wanted to be a Cannes award-winning filmmaker when I was young and didn't really know what I wanted except that I wanted to do something creative. For me, advertising has the advantage as it's not 'creative for creative's sake'. It also requires you to think in a very strategic way. I love coming up with ideas, that's the fun part. And, the fact that it still allows you to win awards, and sip Rosé on the French Riviera, that's a bonus.

■ 6. What's your advice to young girls hoping to crack it in the industry?

Glover: It's not an easy career, but it's a very rewarding one. You need to develop a really thick skin and learn to deal with rejection of your work without internalising it as a rejection of you. I think that's a big one for women.

Focus on ideas rather than the craft - that comes with experience. Experiment, don't be scared to show people your ideas, no matter how weird or crazy you think they are. Be prepared to fail. Most importantly, it should be fun, I find a lot of people are forgetting that these days.

■ 7. Let's end with what you're most looking forward to as part of your time at Cannes this year.

Glover: I'm really looking forward to meeting the other women on the programme with me. We are all at the same stage of our careers and I think that it will be great to swap stories, ideas and ambitions. I'd love in the end to have developed a worldwide female support and friendship base that understands, relates to, and helps me throughout my career going forward.

We'll have more exclusive insights this week and exclusive feedback from [Ann Nurock](#) next week, who is attending as our first media correspondent on the ground this year! Watch our special Cannes Lions section, as well as our [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts for all of Nurock's updates...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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