

"There's no excuse not to innovate" - Lauren Mitchell

By  Evan-Lee Courie

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With a couple rounds of judging under her belt, Lauren Mitchell, creative group head at King James Group (JHB) sits on the judging panel in the Student Award category at [Loeries 2021](#).



Lauren Mitchell, creative group head at King James Group (JHB)

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

I feel lucky, recognised, and honoured. Spending time with some of the industries brightest minds, talking about work and ideas is one of the greatest parts of our jobs and we just don't get to do it enough.

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

I've spent the last couple of years really trying to interrogate what it means to be a creative in this country. Advocating for opportunities we need to start making for ourselves and our clients, working on the things we need to change and the ways we can create more space for each other. We always laugh that we're not saving lives, but we have the ideas and (sometimes) the money to do so, so why not try?

“ I'm constantly trying to find ways to use creativity for real-world-impact good. ”

I have a couple of rounds of judging under my belt and what it does each time is instill more confidence in the type of work I think this country needs to see more of, the kind of work I encourage pursuit of in our studio.

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

We opened throats :)

■ What does this mean to you, personally?

It signifies personal growth, trust, and a seat at the table. It's an affirmation that my voice and perspective as creative and

as a woman in this industry, matters.



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■ Which category will you be judging?

Student awards, so, all of them.

■ What do you expect to experience as a judge?

I expect to be impressed (and I was.) As always, there was some outstanding work that sets the trajectory for the future of our industry. A peep at that was very exciting. What I expected more of was innovative work in the social and digital space.

“ Our industry has transformed so much in the last decade and I don't think it's accurately reflective in our tertiary curriculums. ”

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

Innovation through purpose. I look for work that contributes value in ways our clients and country need it most. Covid-19 has shone a big light on some pretty serious problems. Be it financial, social, GBV, mental health – we need ideas that find interesting ways to connect us, include us and alleviate some of those pressures. At our very core, we are problem solvers, and I'm always searching for those impactful creative solutions.

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

It's been the most challenging almost two years. As an agency, we have seen growth in ways we could never have imagined. And with growth, growing pains. Our work needs to work harder; we've needed to sell better. Prioritizing great work and doing whatever we can to let it see the light of day has really been a constant push and pull.

It's been great for digital and social where we've seen more investment by our partners and our clients. Covid-19 just accelerated the transition to virtual living.

“ The future is here, and we don't really have an excuse to not be innovating in those mediums and adopting those channels anymore. ”

It would be a mistake not to mention the toll the last two years have taken on our people and our mental health. We only have each other and without that, well, we're nothing. We've made a concerted effort to turn inwards and focus on us. When we're good, our work is better.

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

Would it be too cheeky to say I can't remember any? Meeting people I look up to is always my favourite part of Loeries. Celebrating each other and most importantly the talent we have here at King James is an annual tradition, through pandemic or not we always come together and take every win, and every L together.

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

Medium innovation. New ways we've used IRL channels along with social and digital in response to Covid-19. Traditional media will take a backseat while we marvel at the ways we've managed to connect with each other and our consumers online.

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

Culture, world-class perspectives, and diversity. More of which I'd like to see represented on a global stage.

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

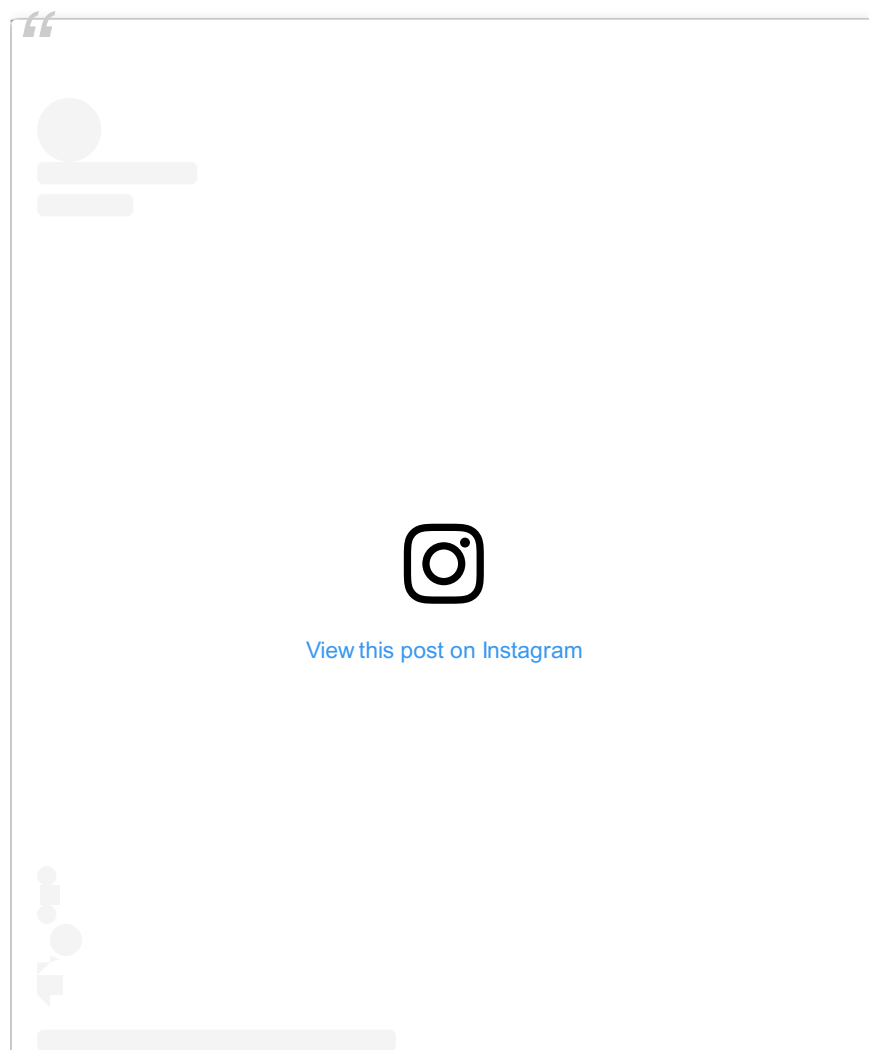
What Loeries and awards do to an agency is a beautiful thing to watch.

“ It brings us together and realigns our purpose. It inspires people to work harder, think better and chase bigger ideas. ”

At an industry level it's an excuse to connect over a beer and celebrate each other, which in the last two years, we haven't done nearly enough of.

■ **What does #FightTheGoodFight mean to you?**

I'm fighting for more women in leadership. More equal opportunities and more space for us to take up. I'm fighting for us to be humans before we are employees and for us to look after each other and the world around us. Our creativity has the potential to change the face of our country and I'll never stop fighting for that kind of work.



A post shared by The Loeries (@loerieawards)

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