

Shattering the glass ceiling with Glass Lions and more

 By Ann Nurock

26 Jun 2015

There's no denying a glass ceiling exists in when it comes to creative directors globally, with many no longer batting an eyelid when the '3% stat' is bandied about. Katherine Glover copywriter at Joe Public agency and the only South African female as part of this year's 'See it, Be it' initiative', gives us an insider's view on what's being done to make amends...

Cannes Lions 2015 is big on gender equality, with this year's talks focused on the lack of female directors in Hollywood - but this isn't limited to the golden land of directing and huge budgets; it extends right into the agencies we work in. Our media correspondent on the ground in Cannes, Ann Nurock interviewed Glover at the Majestic, live in Cannes earlier this week.

Nurock: Tell us a little bit about 'See it, Be it', because it sounds terribly exciting, particularly in view of the Glass Lion, sponsored by [Sheryl Sandberg's Lean.In](#), and the relevance of it in terms of up-weighting the number of women in senior creative positions around the world.



Katherine Glover

Glover: 'See it, Be it' is an initiative launched by Cannes Lion last year. Through it, 12 women, who are at the cusp of going into creative director roles - so eight to ten years into their careers - are exposed to an exclusive programme. It's based on the statistic that everyone's heard; the 3%. Going into the industry, there's about a 50/50 split gender-wise, but for whatever reason, women tend to fall out before the point they get to creative director level.

Nurock: Why?

Glover: Senta Slingerland, the director of brand strategy at Cannes Lions and the force behind the 'See it, be it' initiative, says it's for a number of reasons, namely because women tend to have children, in this industry it's very hard to attain the type of work-life balance everyone talks about and find time to participate in their other interests, there's also the good old-fashioned 'boys' club' that advertising is - so it's a number of reasons that women get overlooked.

Nurock: Interesting that you mention women themselves drop out, that goes to a lot that Sandberg is saying, that women need to 'lean in' more.

Glover: Absolutely, yes. Sandberg is a big advocate and sponsor of the programme, she was very involved last year in the programme's inaugural year. I think we need to take ownership of the industry a little bit more, we need to say that, a lot of the talks about gender equality in the industry at the moment make sense.

If you're advertising to women, they hold 80% of the buying power and make the bulk of the purchase choices, so you need women to be talking to them, especially in today's day and age where it's all about conversations in advertising and relationships - women tend to understand relationships with women a lot better than men do. So we need to keep women in the industry to actually have those relationships.

Nurock: And yet when Cindy Gallop was handing out the awards for the Glass Lion, the majority of people going up to collect them were men.

Glover: Exactly, that was very interesting. One of my big observations from Cannes so far is that 'Like a Girl' was the only winning campaign where the entire winning contingent going up on stage was women. I thought that was great, that's what

makes that campaign so rich and relevant to all of us, it was the brainchild of women.

Cannes is pushing so hard for gender equality that this year, the juries aimed to be comprised 30% female. Each country has representatives that nominate juries. They get to nominate three, and one of those three has to be a woman.

Nurock: That's very encouraging. Tell me some of the things you've seen and done at Cannes, during the 'See it, be it' programme.

Glover: It's been incredible. The first day we had a behind-the-scenes tour of the jury room. We got to speak to the mobile jurors and ask them some questions. We also met most of the Glass Lions jurors and had lunch with Cindy Gallop. She is the most phenomenal woman. She has the most amazing presence and conviction, the belief in her cause is tangible. She's a little intimidating as well, I feel sorry for the two guys who were part of her jury! She was so encouraging and believes in agencies run 50-50.

Nurock: As this is your first trip to Cannes, what is your overall view or perspective of the Festival?

Glover: I think it's amazing. I was discussing with some of my colleagues, it makes it feel more attainable. Often back home, you're sitting up at 10pm waiting for a tweet to come through that you've won or been shortlisted, but actually being here, being immersed in it, makes it more accessible and you think 'I can do that actually, I can do great work and be on that stage'.

Nurock: The standard of the work overall this year is phenomenal. What I love about it is that all the work this year is about doing good, creating a higher purpose, going beyond the functional aspects of a brand.

Glover: Absolutely, that is so important, especially for South Africa. We have so many social problems, we need to start using brands and not necessarily NGOs, and start changing the conversation and doing good through brands.

Nurock: I agree, South African brands have a long way to go in creating a higher purpose. You're correct, with all our social issues, brands should be demonstrating how they can improve people's lives.

Glover: What I've also loved about a lot of the 'brand for good' work is that it's fun, it's not all heavy, 'the world's going to end' - I think up to now lots of work for good has been very dour, one of my favourite pieces in this work is 'Nazis against Nazis' - it makes you laugh yet it's such a heavy, relevant topic done in a clever, ironic way.

Nurock: The other thing is that you can do work that has a higher purpose and still goes on to win Cannes awards.

Glover: Yes, it shows you the power of advertising, the power of creativity, brands and the conversations we're having. The higher purpose work needs to be more creative so more people stand up and pay attention.

Nurock: When you get back to work to your office on Monday, what is the first thing you're going to do?

Glover: I will start coming up with ideas, I want a Glass Lion now! I had a long conversation with Pepe that there is such opportunity in South Africa to do this great, higher purpose work and win the Cannes Glass Lion, We have the brands to do it, we just don't think to use them.

Nurock: Thank you, that's very insightful - see you next year, when you win your Glass Lion!

[Click here](#) for more of Glover's views in her pre-Cannes interview.

[Click here](#) for a reminder of this year's Cannes Lions Glass wins.

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