

Q&A: Nayaab Rais

Creative Director, FP7 McCann, Dubai



FP7 McCann had a rather good year at The Caples Awards in 2021 with Golds for Mastercard and for WH Smiths and Silvers for 'Baby Shop and Home Centre. Nayaab's name was on several of those winners. Since it takes one to spot one, we too did a little happy dance when she accepted the invitation to judge in 2022.

Here she is telling us a bit about herself and what she's hoping to see at The Caples Awards this year.

Q: These are strange and unusual times. How has the pandemic been for you personally?

N: As a self-diagnosed introvert I feel that I have thrived in the pandemic. It has given me a lot of time and personal space to recharge and disconnect from unnecessary social engagements so I can be my most productive (and hermit) self. It has also given me the chance to observe and understand people better, seeing how they have all coped with this crisis in so many different ways. Lastly (and perhaps most importantly), it gave me a chance to experiment with my hair and discover that it is actually curly and not straight.

Q: Do you have a side-hustle? What do you do outside your job as a counterbalance to the stresses and strains of your job?

N: I'm an armchair psychologist with experience of almost four decades, serving my first client at the seasoned age of 6, when I diagnosed them as "being sad". On a serious note, I do enjoy delving into psychology and the human mind is of great interest to me, just as it is to pick one apart. Gaining as much insight as I can into our thinking from a psychological science perspective is something I find truly rewarding.

Q: In your career, which one piece of work are you most proud of?

N: At the risk of sounding clichéd, I love all the charity work that I have had the chance to be a part of. Two of my passion projects were the ones we did for blue-collar workers in the UAE called "Sapna" and "Akshar" with a local NGO, Smartlife, as well as work we did with children that had Down Syndrome called "Perspectives" with Emirates NBD. If not charity, one of my favourite pieces done for a brand was the symbolic "Remove Labels this Ramadan" for Coca-Cola.

Q: If you weren't in advertising, what would you be doing now?

N: I would trade in my armchair for a professional psychology degree and become a clinical psychologist. But for now, cracking consumer minds will have to do!

Q: Are awards important?

N: Absolutely. At a superficial level, it is a great ego boost and it is encouraging that your thinking is among the best of the best. And if you dig deeper, it's a validation for all those sleepless nights, where you wake up screaming "YOUTUBE PRE-ROLL ADS" or "SLIDE 42". Dig further, and you'll find that awards help re-define, year after year, what it means to do "great work" and it is this yardstick that drives our industry forward. Back to the superficial level, who doesn't like shiny things?

Q: What does it mean to be a juror of The Caples Awards 2022?

N: I did a little happy dance when I received the invitation to be a part of the jury at The Caples Awards, because it is a massive honour to be part of such a democratic and truly "creatively-driven" process, run by the creative community. Then I recomposed myself and realised that with "Great power comes great responsibility" (yes, I just saw the new Spiderman movie), and I really look forward to working hard to award all the hard work behind the great ideas this year.

Q: What sort of work are you hoping to see?

N: I expect to see work around the new digital buzzwords like "metaverse", "NFTs", and so on, but what I hope to see is ideas that add meaning to people's lives, by either changing their perspectives (even if for a few seconds) or by answering their real needs in surprising and delightful ways. Caples has always been home to ideas that surprise and delight, so I am really looking forward to the experience.

Q: What is your one all-time favourite piece of advertising, the one idea you both admire and envy and wish that you'd done yourself?

N: As someone from a copywriting background, and also as a dinosaur, I have always had the poster of the VW ad titled "Lemon" up on my wall. It's from the 60s but it still has stopping power and can still engage people from the first word till the last. There's a reason it was voted the best ad of all time!

