

Lauren Beukes on enhancing your own creativity through inclusivity

 By Leigh Andrews

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Award-winning, best-selling South African novelist Lauren Beukes, who also writes comics, screenplays, TV shows and started out in journalism, was speaker of the April Creative Mornings Cape Town talk at new venue, AAA School. Amongst other things, she shared five tips on the power of inclusivity in enhancing your creativity.



Lauren Beukes, pics via Creative Mornings Cape Town on [Twitter](#).

Our key outtake of Beukes' 2014 Design Indaba talk was: "Be inspired, be creative, be great! The end." But there's a lot more to it than that.



What's in the box Lauren Beukes?

Ruth Cooper 3 Mar 2014



Having covered everything from HIV+ beauty pageants to gangland cops and great white shark tourism, Lauren Beukes has had a wealth of journalistic experience.

And with novels along the lines of the genre-bending *The Shining Girls*, *Broken Monsters* and *Zoo City*, which have been published in over 20 languages and are now being developed for film and TV, and *Game of Thrones* author GRRM or George RR Martin himself describing her as "a major, major talent", she's definitely a shining light in the local publishing industry.

But while she dreamed of being a novelist as early as the age of five, Beukes' talk highlighted that it took a long time to get her writing career off the ground – it's been a winding path with many bends, coloured by the stories of those she's met along the way.



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Who better to highlight the Creative Mornings Cape Town theme of being inclusive, as Beukes is living proof that when different people come into our lives, they bring gifts that enhance our own.

She mentioned that the ideas don't always flow and that creating is definitely hard. That said, by aiming for inclusivity through the following five steps, you can ease the process...

1: Eat the world

Be curious, be engaged and connect with the world to ensure you're writing stories that resonate with people.

Creativity can definitely serve as a form of activism.

“ Be creative, eat the world! Art is the fire we light against the darkness [#CreativeMornings](#) [#CreativeMorningsCT](#)

Thank you [@laurenbeukes](#)— Katharina Riebesel (@KRiebesel) [April 26, 2019](#) ”

2: Do something interesting

Beukes said her experiences as a journalist have served as a backstage pass to the world.

Use those experiences, but show something different – Beukes said she loved koeksusters, which are essentially 'twisted doughnuts', as that's essentially what she does with the stories she tells.

3: Get out there

Real life is often more surprising and inventive than you'd imagine.

Do your research and remember to listen to people's stories. Look for the pullquote in their dialogue and learn their myths.

“ Great insights from [@laurenbeukes](#) on how real life is stranger than fiction [#creativemornings](#) [#capetown](#)

[pic.twitter.com/azxf4sa73i](#)— Elizabeth Lee Ming (@ElizabethLMing) [April 26, 2019](#) ”

Beukes wouldn't know about white cockroaches, which exist below ground as they never see light, if she hadn't taken an underground tunnel tour beneath the city.

4: Give a damn

Beukes' version used a more powerful swear word, but you get the point: People who include with intention, raise their hand to do the work of embracing what is unfamiliar.



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Beukes says it's incredibly difficult to separate the art from the artist. Understand that your work is an expression of who you are and your passions then follow them.

That way you're more likely to be telling the stories of real people – include their insights in your work, and work against the stereotype.

5: Collaborate

Beukes said:

“ Others' words are magic. ”

Your truth is not the only truth, so weave them into your work (with their permission, of course), as we can blend the best of our wisdom with the best of theirs and can teach and learn from each other to produce closer circles that foster community and commit to diversity.

“The more competent you are, the more self-doubt you have.” @CapeTown_CM @laurenbeukes— Without A Doubt (@withoutadoubtZA) [April 26, 2019](#) ”

Working with others helps overcome those moments where you doubt your own creativity.

Overall, the Creative Mornings session brought home the message that inclusion is an attitude to consciously be open to ideas that come from outside of our settled ways of thinking or feeling. It's about making a decision that comes from a place of love, of caring for others, of listening to their stories and telling them along with your own.



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Because when you place inclusivity at the centre of how you live, it has great power to heal, elevate new voices, and change the narrative of who belongs. As diversity advocate Vernā Myers once said, “Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.”

Let's all strive to broaden our views and listen to others, in the hope that inclusion powers our own creativity. [Click here](#) for more on Creative Mornings and [here](#) for more from Beukes.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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