

9 female African film professionals selected for Southern Africa-Locarno Industry Academy

Nine female film industry professionals from Africa have been chosen to take part in the second edition of the Southern Africa-Locarno Industry Academy - a dynamic and innovative film industry development programme presented by Realness Institute in partnership with the Locarno Film Festival and with the support of The Story Board Collective.



Nine women have been chosen for the programme. Source: Supplied.

The programme aims to support, upskill and network young film professionals working in distribution and sales, festival programming, theatrical exhibition, and other related sectors of the industry.

The participants are:

Abulele Njisane (South Africa) - lecturer in Cinema Studies at the School of Arts, Media and Cultural Studies department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

Lerato Bokako (South Africa) – film festival programmer and features writer.

Taryn Joffe (South Africa) - Festival Programmer and Industry Coordinator at Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, curator and writer.

Anga Mqingwana (South Africa) -producer with Big World Cinema team in Cape Town as a Production and Distribution Co-ordinator.

Khanyisile Zondi (South Africa)- founder of Sinema Agency, a start-up specialising in film marketing, public relations, and distribution.

Nozipho Swelindawo (South Africa) - founder and co-director of Mbudu Community Art Centre.

Victoria Ogar (Nigeria) - film account manager at Filmone Entertainment

Lucinda Van de Rhee (South Africa) - entrepreneur, writer and freelance line producer and researcher.

Seggen Mikael (Eritrea/ Germany) - freelance cultural manager, programmer and writer, Film Festival Programmer at DOK.fest Munich and Industry Programmer at the European Film Market (Berlinale).



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"We are thrilled to witness the Academy gearing up for this year's edition during the highly anticipated Fame Week," says Markus Duffner, head of Locarno Pro, and Marion Klotz, Industry Academy project manager. "We love that all the selected participants are women, as the global film industry requires more female voices to be heard. We believe that this initiative will help propel young professionals into the vibrant tapestry of the local and international film industry network. We look forward to the transformative impact it will have on the next generation of filmmakers."

Innovate and Build

"We believe this to be one of our most necessary industry initiatives," says Elias Ribeiro co-founder and executive director of Realness Institute and Regional Manager of Locarno Southern Africa Industry Academy. "Before producers can deliver their content to African audiences through established and profitable distribution avenues on a large scale, we will remain dependent on the North structures. Our content is also worth less than in its primary market, where it is most relevant. The emergence of solid distribution operations is urgent and costly, so we need to innovate while we develop and build."

The Locarno Southern Africa Industry Academy takes place during Fame Week Africa in Cape Town, South Africa from 3 to 9 September this year. Fame Week Africa is a growing platform for the development and networking of the creative industries on the continent.



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"In the heart of MIP Africa at Fame Week Africa, the Southern Africa-Locarno Industry Academy emerges as a transformative platform, empowering African film professionals to unlock their potential," says Martin Hiller, portfolio

director: Fame Week Africa.

“Through mentorship, networking, and curated programming, we pave the way for their journey into the global entertainment industry, celebrating diverse voices and captivating stories that will shape the future of African cinema.”

The participants will be given the opportunity to network with global experts, attend masterclasses, workshops, and panel discussions. They will also contribute to curating the short film programme, under the mentorship of Academy alumnus Lyse Nsengiyumva (Rwanda) which will be showcased at The Labia Cinema in Cape Town from 7 to 9 September and will feature conversations with high-profile filmmakers and Q & A's.

“As an alumnus of the first edition of the Academy, I'm thrilled and honoured to be part of this prestigious programme again, this time around as an artistic director of the Short Film Festival,” says Nsengiyumva. “I will be working closely with these professionals to curate a balanced and vibrant programme that promises to resonate with audiences. It is an extraordinary privilege to be involved with the Realness Institute which has been unwavering in its support of African cinema.

Fulfilling experience

Victoria Ogar (Nigeria) says that she is looking forward to meeting new people, learning about new cultures through the films, and having a fulfilling experience.”The sheer magnitude of having to consider the films submitted at the festivals through a selection process to explore the audience's potential and satisfaction will be a lifetime achievement for my career growth in the film space.”

“I hope to gain a wider valuable network of African film professionals and that the programme will empower us to promote African cinema globally and elevate its presence on the international stage,” says Seggen Mikael (Eritrea/ Germany).

Khanyisile Zondi (South Africa) looks forward to gaining insights into distribution through the Academy to help affirm her vision to contribute towards the development of film in Africa: “My aspirations for the distribution industry revolve around fostering an inclusive ecosystem and leveraging technology to facilitate easier access for filmmakers across the continent to sales agents, aggregators, and distribution networks.”

Many mentors and experts will be supporting these young professionals in looking for systems and innovations in this distribution sector including amongst others Dennis Ruh (European Film Market Director), Pamela Bienzobas (Locarno Film Festival - member of the feature film selection committee), Lyse Nsengiyumva (International Film Festival Rotterdam Programmer), Constanza Arenas (Luz Agency and Marketing Expert), Sydelle Willow Smith (Sunshine Cinema), Claire Diao (Sudu Connexion) and Elias Ribeiro.

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