

African film residency announced at Cannes

Realness is a pioneering residency initiative conceived by Elias Ribeiro and Cait Pansegrouw of Urucu Media, that affords a new generation of filmmakers the opportunity to cultivate their talent as authentic voices in African cinema.



Africa screenwriter's residency 2018 participants announced by Realness co-founder Elias Ribeiro.

Since its inception, Realness has nurtured five African auteurs each year, growing into a prestigious incubator of emerging talent that is recognised throughout the global film community. Now in its third year, the residency has fostered cinematic voices from 12 countries on the continent, including Angola (Fradique Mario Bastos), Senegal (Rama Thiaw) and Kenya (Amirah Tajdin).

This past weekend, the five selected projects were announced at the Cannes Film Festival by Ribeiro: “After an extensive evaluation of more than 130 projects from 24 countries, it is my greatest pleasure to introduce you to the Realness Residents of 2018: Kantarama Gahigiri from Rwanda, Matthys Boshoff from South Africa, Ng'endo Mukii from Kenya and Reem Morsi and Mohammed Siam, both from Egypt.”

The five projects were chosen by an international panel of 16 prolific world cinema stakeholders, including sales agents Thembe Bhebhe and Efuru Flowers (Flourishing Films), Todd Brown (head of international acquisitions for XYZ films) and literary agent David Kayser (Casarotto Ramsay & Associates).

“These filmmakers herald an important and exciting new wave of African storytelling by Africans for Africans and the world.

The strength of the projects and the talent driving them will benefit hugely from the expertise exposure and incubation that Realness offers and I look forward to see how they mature. I've been introduced to some truly special emerging talent who have the potential to compete on the international stage and shine." said Kayser.

The 2018 Realness residents will move into the Nirox Foundation's beautiful residence and sculpture park in the Cradle of Humankind on June 11. They will work on their projects over the course of six weeks before participating in Africa's largest co-production market, the Durban FilmMart.

The most promising projects to emerge will be invited to participate in Locarno Filmmakers Academy, EAVE Producers Workshop, La Fabrique Cinéma de l'Institut Français, Torino Film Lab Meeting Event and TIFF Talent Lab, allowing them to progress closer to being realised.

Pan-African focus

"There is a reason residencies such as the Sundance Labs and the MacDowell Colony are so sought-after. They offer the opportunity to withdraw from the world to create without distractions while exchanging ideas with other exciting artists and receiving expert feedback at carefully considered intervals. Realness brings that opportunity to Africa," said international script consultant Selina Ukwuoma.

"With a pan-African focus, the diversity of Africans is celebrated yet the particular concerns that we have in common come to the fore."

Ukwuoma will join Realness for the third consecutive year, alongside top South African-based consultant Mmabatho Kau, who began her relationship with the residency in 2017 and who was recently selected for the esteemed Torino Film Lab's Story Editing programme.

The two will work in tandem, cross-consulting on all five of the selected projects for 2018. "Both Selina and I are rooted in the African narrative but have an international outlook on story. Selina's extensive work internationally and my work locally, gives the residents a holistic experience towards developing a world-class script," added Kau.

Partners

This year the residency welcomes new partnerships with Robert Bosch Stiftung and Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, as funders of the programme and Toronto International Film Festival has come on board offering a scholarship to their TIFF Talent Lab.

TIFF Programmer for Continental Africa and the Middle East, Kiva Reardon, commented on the partnership: "TIFF is very happy to support Realness and its aim of developing and supporting the next generation of screenwriting talent across the continent. We're looking forward to welcoming a Realness resident to take part in TIFF Talent Lab, where they can develop their artistic practice and meet with key industry professionals over the course of the Festival."

Realness is an initiative by Urucu Media in partnership with Nirox Foundation, Berlinale Talents, Durban FilmMart, The Durban International Film Festival, Durban Talents, The French Institute of South Africa and Institut Français, Torino Film Lab, EAVE Producer's Workshop, Locarno Filmmaker's Academy, Produire Au Sud, Fairbridges Wertheim Becker, CNC (Le Centre National du Cinéma et de L'image Animée), Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Toronto International Film Festival, TIFF Talent Lab, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Cocoon Productions and Deuxieme Ligne Films.