



## THE PRODUCERS' PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN

### **An Initiative by the Austrian Film Institute to Strengthen Austrian Female Film Producers**

Women are generally under-represented in Austrian cinema. They account for about a quarter of individuals active in the fields of screenplay and directorship, and the figure is even lower for producers. The few women who own their own film production companies are mostly working in the low-budget sector, where self-exploitation is not an uncommon practice.

The Austrian Film Institute wants to make a concrete contribution to remedy this misbalance through its initiative: **ProPro – The Producers' Programme**.

The 13 selected Austrian producers worked together with high-level women mentors from all over Europe, among them **Bettina Brokemper**, (Hannah Arendt), **Lise Lense-Møller** (Burma VJ), and **Gabriela Bacher** (What a Man) to further develop their film projects and careers. Further strategic input was provided by financing expert **Linda Beath** (Ideal Filmworks, EAVE), distribution expert **Annick Mahnert** (Screen Division) and business coach **Monika Schubert**.

Complementing the tailored workshop programme, there were **impulse presentations, discussions** and **testimonies** of further Austrian and international industry insiders dealing with topics relevant to film production and the question on how film production could be made more gender equal. This public programme ensured that a wider circle of interested people from the film industry were able to profit from the presence of top-class experts in Vienna.

**Helene Granqvist** (producer and president of WIFT – Women in Film and Television Sweden), opened the conference with a keynote on the sustainability of fair resource allocation.

After her presentation she took part in a discussion with **Karin Gutiérrez-Lobos** (former vice rector of Vienna Medical University), **Danny Krausz** (Das ewige Leben, professor of production at Vienna Film Academy) and **Katharina Mückstein** (director/producer of Talea), about strategies and structural changes necessary to help alleviate the existing unbalance.

**Hanka Kastelicová** (HBO Europe), **Lise Lense-Møller**, **Salma Abdalla** (Autlook Filmsales) and **Arash T. Riahi** (Everyday Rebellion) discussed sustainable ideas for the exploitation of documentary film and which formats, contents and topics would be viable in this highly contested market in the future.

**Bettina Brokemper** gave an insight into the long and complicated genesis of **Hannah Arendt**, a film which was not easy to finance: "Who would like to watch an old woman smoke and think?", but became the second largest box office hit in European cinema when it was finally released.

ORF TV director **Kathrin Zechner** and former TV director of Bavarian station BR **Bettina Reitz** exchanged views as to how women in the film industry could be strengthened: Zechner acknowledged her support by promoting women in cases where submitted ideas were of equal merit in terms of content and production value. She encouraged producers not to copy what others were doing, but instead to trust in their instincts and show their colours: “Content is Queen.” Bettina Reitz pointed towards a large number of German and US women producers who had to cope with tough opposition, but ended up being exceptionally successful. Both agreed that it made no sense for producers to demand of themselves that they had to cover every aspect of their highly complex profession on their own; instead they encouraged the producers present in the audience to delegate and establish long-term partnerships with complementary talents.

Concluding feedback from participants was overwhelming and the Austrian Film Institute is planning a continuation of **ProPro – The Producers’ Programme** in autumn of 2016.

Selected feedback from participants:

**Viktoria Salcher** (Alphabeth): “A wonderful platform for constructive discussions with remarkable women producers from all over Europe“

**Gabriele Kranzelbinder** (We Come as Friends): An intensive exchange that brought me many new ideas and inspiration.”

**Katja Dor-Helmer** (Das Pferd auf dem Balkon): “The selection of women mentors and the enthusiasm of the participants made ProPro the best workshop I have ever attended.”

**Ebba Sinzinger** (Pianomania): “Great. A real energy boost!”

The propro Producers’ Programme is an initiative of the **Austrian Film Institute** to empower Austrian female producers. propro was designed by **Ursula Wolschlager** (Witcraft Szenario OG, FC Gloria, Diverse Geschichten) and **Esther Krausz** (Austrian Film Institute Creative Europe MEDIA-Desk, former EAVE workshop manager) with the support of **FC Gloria Womens’ Film Network (Wilbirg Brainin-Donnenberg )** and **Austrian Film Institute, Gender Issues (Iris Zappe-Heller)**.

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