

African screenwriters selected for prestigious residency

Six talented African screenwriters were selected to be part of the Realness Screenwriter's Residency for 2017. Their names were announced at the Cannes Film Festival at an event hosted by La Fabrique Cinéma de l'Institut Français, one of the first supporters of the programme.



The selection of this year's Realness Screenwriter's Residency was announced at the Cannes Film Festival by Realness co-founder Cait Pansegrouw (second from right).

The selected residents for 2017 are: Lemohang Mosese from Lesotho; Mario Fradique Bastos from Angola; Rama Thiaw from Senegal; Samantha Nell from South Africa; and writer-director team Gloria Huwiler from Zambia and Jahmil XT Quebeka, from South Africa.

Realness, which was established in 2016, aims to provide scriptwriting talent on the continent with the space, time and support needed to create and develop their vision. This year, over 100 applications were received from 21 African countries. The international panel of industry experts with a stake in African Cinema, evaluated the submissions over three months, arriving at the five chosen residents in early May.

"The Realness initiative continues to unearth some of the rarest talent from the continent," said Thandeka Zwana, from the National Film and Video Foundation, one of the volunteer readers on the selection panel. "The most impressive part of reading the submissions was getting insights into the applicants' previous work and seeing real African cinema in terms of the aesthetic and storytelling. Some evoked memories of the old African greats and some spoke to a wave of new voices."

Marie Dubas, French producer of *The Wound* by John Trengove and one of the team that founded Realness, commented: "Selecting projects for Realness is a blessing and a huge responsibility. The projects are of a high quality, proving how rich the multiple African cultures are in nurturing unique stories. We know that for the scriptwriters behind these stories, Realness could be a life changing experience. We try to listen to the desires of these stories, and to allow the ones whose hearts beat the loudest to lead our choices."

Realness 2017 begins on 3 June 2017 when the participants begin their residency at the Nirox Foundation in the Cradle of Humankind, South Africa. They will be mentored by script consultant Nadja Dumouchel for their first week and will then enjoy four weeks of solid writing. In July they will attend the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF), where they will present their projects to the industry under the mentorship of Selina Ukwuoma at the Durban FilmMart.

Following this, the screenwriters will submit their work for awards consideration. Their projects stand the chance to be selected to participate at La Fabrique Cinéma de l'Institut Français, EAVE Producer's Workshop, Torino Film Lab Meeting Event, Locarno Filmmakers Academy and Midpoint Feature Launch.

The talent

Mario Fradique is an emerging voice in Angolan Cinema. His short films travelled to several festivals, winning awards along the way, while his first feature documentary, *Independence*, won Angola's National Culture Prize in 2015. He joins Realness with his debut fiction feature, *The Kingdom of Casuarinas*, based on the novel by Jose Luis Mendonça.

Gloria Huwiler is an actress and writer seeking to give a cinematic voice to her unique experience as a first generation mixed-race Zambian through *Victoria Falls*. Huwiler has teamed up with acclaimed South African writer/director Jahmil Quebka, best known for his second feature film, *Of Good Report*.

Lemohang Moses hails from Lesotho, a country which has not produced many films. He is a self-taught, award-winning filmmaker and artist, with short film work that has travelled to over 100 festivals, winning top honours in Moscow and Milan last year. His debut feature, *This Is Not A Burial It's A Resurrection*, is the selected project.

Rama Thiaw is a strong voice from Senegal. Her two feature length documentaries have garnered much success and awards, most notably the FIRPRESCI Prize at the Berlinale in 2016 for *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. She joins the residency with *Life In A Spiral*, her fiction debut.

South African Samantha Nell whose short film *The Beast* premiered in Cannes last year, brings her debut feature, *Miles From Nowhere*. Set in Johannesburg, the film is an absurdist dark comedy that takes place in an old age home following four of its residents. The project is also supported by the NFVF for development.

Realness is an initiative founded and curated by Urucu Media, under the mentorship of Berlinale Talents and in partnership with the Nirox Foundation, 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, Midpoint Feature Launch, Locarno Filmmaker's Academy, Produire Au Sud, Fairbridges Wertheim Becker, the Goethe Institute and Le Centre National du Cinéma et de L'image Animée (CNC).

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