DOK Leipzig Sets Quota for Female Directors in German Competition
Selection Committee for 2018 Predominantly Composed of Women

During last year’s festival opening, festival director Leena Pasanen announced the introduction of a quota for female directors in the German Competition Long Documentary and Animated Film. Pasanen and programmer Ralph Eue have now arrived at the ultimate form this quota is to take. Valid for an initial period of two years, the quota will be derived from the submission ratio between male and female directors whose films are considered for the German Competition Long Documentary and Animated Film. In the past years, approximately 40% of these films came from women, while roughly 60% were from men. “That is why we are initially setting the quota at 40/60, with the aim and expectation of reaching a totally balanced gender ratio in the German Competition Long Documentary and Animated Film, as well as in our film programme as a whole,” as Pasanen commented.

The impetus for the introduction of the quota in the German Competition Long Documentary and Animated Film was the radical disparity between male and female directors last year. In 2017, only a single woman was represented as a co-director in the section, alongside ten male directors. “We are introducing a quota regarding our film programme in the German Competition Long Documentary and Animated Film and we see that as a start. Fundamentally, we need female voices to be constantly represented in all of our sections of course. For us, that means that we are keeping a sharp eye on reaching a balanced gender mix in our other sections as well, continually evaluating our work and placing even more emphasis on the subject of diversity on the whole,” explained Pasanen, adding: “For us the problem also seems to be one that frequently appears with the feature-length films. The gender mix is significantly more balanced in our short film competitions.”

Ralph Eue, who in addition to his role as programmer also serves as head of Selection Committee, explained further: “We see this as a tool with which we can confront an obvious problem within our area of influence here at the festival. We want to set an example with care and vigilance. It is not a good strategy to shrug off the responsibility for change in matters of gender equality in the context of film onto other people or institutions and to wait in a self-satisfied way for something to move there. Movement is only good for anything when you get your own self moving.”

In 2018, the membership of the festival’s Selection Committee is also predominantly female, featuring four women and three men. Starting this year, films will be presented to them in the first round of viewing as anonymous as possible – this means that committee members will initially receive films labelled only with a reference number, with no further information regarding the team. The film experts will view all of the submitted films for the festival before finally deciding together with festival director Leena Pasanen which films are to be shown in the Official Selection, and by extension in the festival’s competition sections. In addition, DOK Leipzig also pays particular attention to achieving a balanced presence of both men and women in the composition of its juries and the choice of its festival advisors.

At DOK Industry, the festival has already embraced measures to support female filmmakers in the development of documentary films. For instance, two awards are presented to female filmmakers in the scope of the DOK Co-Pro Market. Support for the DOK Leipzig and EWA Development Prize comes from the European Women’s Audiovisual Network – the patron of the prize is Saxony’s State Minister for Arts and Sciences Dr. Eva-Maria Stange. In addition, with the help of the ZONTA Club Leipzig Elster, a grant for travel expenses has been made available to help one selected female director or producer attend the DOK Co-Pro Market.

Programmer Ralph Eue summed up the festival’s efforts thusly: “We want to be able to have a film selection in which societal conditions and above all processes are represented. The introduction of a quota is one instrument to achieve this.”

You can find logos and impressions of the festival here: http://www.dok-leipzig.de/de/dok/presse/download.

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