



Tracking Satyrs,
MML Collective (Michał Mądracki, Maciej Mądracki & Gilles Lepore),
Eurimages Lab Project Award 2020

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Executive summary

Study on the feasibility, pertinence & design of a Lab Projects support programme for the Eurimages Fund



The Stand-In,
Rä di Martino (2017)

Executive summary

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By Matthieu Darras

Introduction

Filmmaking and film viewing in Europe have evolved dramatically in the last twenty years and will continue to mutate even more in the coming years. The set of categories (fiction/documentary; features/shorts/series; live action/animation; festivals/cinemas/television; mainstream/art house; etc.) that have long been used by each and every stakeholder in the field to create a mental map of European filmmaking where they would position themselves, have gradually lost much of their relevance in a digital era. The issue is that these maps inherited from the past are still very much defining the audiovisual policies in Europe today - locally, nationally, and internationally.

By nature, non-conventional filmmaking practices are more shape-shifting and agile than conventional ones, the latter favouring the status-quo. Yet in the current context, these protean characteristics, which have largely been difficult to define and previously incapacitated their chances of attaining visibility, are now increasingly gaining tremendous value. This makes them better equipped to apprehend and answer the enormous paradigm shifts of viewing practices currently in motion. Undoubtedly, non-conventional filmmaking now has a historical opportunity to have a greater impact, both rapidly and massively on the overall audiovisual ecosystem, and its set of norms, than ever before. Dominant cinema in fact must be observant enough in order to use all these experimentations to its own advantage; to quickly redefine itself and remain attractive, otherwise it soon risks becoming moribund and irrelevant - a danger that is unfortunately rapidly growing into a reality.

The label of non-conventional cinema is no longer about necessarily remaining stuck in a niche and so-called experimental filmmakers need not necessarily inhabit an 'underground ghetto' for their entire career. In fact, they don't! In the 20th century, film vanguards were most often only an influence on the next generations, and it could take a decade(s) for mainstream cinema to appropriate artistic breakthroughs from past cutting-edge films. Not only are borders far more porous today, but many filmmakers are nimbly navigating and crossing between different territories at a very quick pace, reaching audiences, whose nature and scope vary greatly depending on the given project. Such examples of dissident filmmakers making it to the mainstream not only explode, render the traditional categories obsolete.

That's the context of cinema & audiovisual industries as we see it, and that's what makes the study commissioned by Eurimages on the feasibility, pertinence, and design of its Lab Projects Award programme particularly exciting. It was our belief, supported by our expertise and intuition, and it is our certitude now, supported by our research, that Eurimages may have not truly seized the entire potential of this programme. What started, and still is considered, as a promotional programme motivated by the desire to address the few film projects that escape the cracks of its main support scheme could very much become the homing device to expand their experimental innovation in policy-making. Ultimately, it may unexpectedly and soon enough influence the whole approach of the Fund - and its mission.

By Matthieu Darras

Defining a framework of study

This study, commissioned by Eurimages and implemented by Tatino Films, was achieved over a 100-day period from November 2020 to February 2021. The aim of the study was **to assess the pertinence of a programme** aimed at supporting innovative or non-conventional cinema/audiovisual projects, and **to make recommendations on the format** of a new support programme.

In order to create a flexible framework that functions as a vehicle towards delivering the main objectives of the study, the process consisted in the following steps: **establishing a team, defining a methodology, and implementing a research strategy**.

The Team

In order to address a field as wide and shape-shifting as non-conventional cinema, the idea was to constitute a team of diverse people that are **complementary to one another**, and ultimately reflecting the **multiplicity of viewpoints** on innovative and non-conventional cinema in Europe.

The structure of the research team was as follows: Matthieu Darras (France/Slovakia) and Rebecca De Pas (Italy/Czech Republic/France) as **co-Heads of Studies**; Esra Demirkiran (Turkey), Anna Gudkova (Russia), Marina Gumzi (Slovenia/Germany), Elena López Riera

(Spain/Switzerland), and Natacha Seweryn (France) as **Research Associates**; Kristína Aschenbrennerová (Slovakia) as **Research Coordinator**.

Methodology & Strategy

The nature of the production models of innovative films, as well as the specificity linked to different practices that ultimately converge in the making of films, are a complex field of research. The method was to combine **desk research** with different forms of **field research: individual interviews** and **roundtables**.

The study strongly relied on field research, and on **70 interviews** that have definitely paved the way to the formulated set of recommendations. In order to have a **panoptic view** of the instances of the stakeholders, the interviews were implemented to **consider different fields of work**.

The study's strategy followed the aim of properly addressing the defined objectives. To do so, our main tasks were to:

- **evaluate the old format,**
- **map the field,**
- **identify stakeholders,**
- **innovate public policy making.**

By Rebecca De Pas

The Eurimages Lab Project Award 2016 – 2020 An Analysis

Weaknesses

In its external evaluation about the functioning of the Lab Project Award's old scheme, Ernst & Young's words highlighted the **incoherence between the choice of the partner festivals and the aim of the award** as the main issue. Beside this factor, our analysis recognized additional obstacles that prevented the programme from being entirely successful. Those pitfalls were the general disconnect from the kind of films that could be supported, the absence of people coming from other creative fields in the juries and the difficulty in scouting the projects. Other factors that have been mentioned on multiple occasions are that, even if softened, the **eligibility criteria** of the Eurimages Lab Project Award would still present an obstacle to finding and supporting non-conventional films.

The Eurimages Lab Project Award has been **an important pilot programme capable of giving a strong signal to the industry**. Thanks to its achievements, the Award has created a solid base for the development of an enhanced scheme to support non-conventional films in Europe. In the end the speakers agreed about distribution being the most challenging aspect of the organized landscape. The need for more and better calibrated distribution support was expressed repeatedly.

The general outcome of our research underlines that, despite the inadequacies identified, the Eurimages Lab Project Award has been a positive experience for the film industry, with resonance that goes far beyond the individual awards.

Strengths

The main strength of the programme, besides the clear advantages linked to the cash prize, was in the **branding and the marketing effect**. Each of the partner festivals worked hard to put the Eurimages Lab Project Award's projects on display, bringing them to the attention of their high-profile network of professionals.

Another positive aspect that has been identified was the possibility for the projects presented in the Eurimages Lab Project Award **to be 'mainstreamed'**, meaning they were able to access a market that would otherwise have been alien to them.

Last but not least, it has been pointed out that the Eurimages Lab Project Award 'label' is important for getting **completion and distribution support for the film**, creating awareness among national institutions.



Leviathan,
Andreï Zviaguintsev (2014)

Chapter 1.

Non-conventional cinema in history & today

By Natacha Seweryn

Historical notions about unconventional cinema

Laying the groundwork for a study of unconventional cinema could be similar to a history of the avant-gardes. However, non-conventional cinema is not exclusive to the avant-garde, as some of these trends are not clearly identified as such. If there are certain patterns, there is no unanimity about what is unconventional, except its questioning of certain aesthetic and political norms. What we can agree on is that non-conventional cinema inevitably refers to conventional cinema, even if this term depends on many aspects.

Over the last century, issues about conventions in cinema have been numerous and varied. The use of cinematic language by the great artistic movements of the beginning of the 20th century, such as Surrealism, Dadaism or Expressionism mark the beginning of a long-lasting love affair between avant-gardes and cinema.

After the Second World War, phenomena like Neorealism or the later French New Wave shook up the norms of narrative cinema and opened the way for auteur cinema as we call it today. If those creative clusters were so strong

that they changed cinematic language forever, other movements today keep questioning the norms that the film industry imposes.

The arrival of new technologies and new media created new possibilities for filmmakers defying the conventions of the mainstream industry. The actual accessibility of those work has been exponential in the last decade, thanks mainly to the development of streaming technologies. This rather new situation has its own challenges, linked mainly to the sustainability of the exploitation models, but also has its own potential, as it is opening the way to a greater and more diverse audience for avant-garde as well as for non-conventional films.

The words of the academic Erika Balsom summarize well the issues that institutions have to face when working with non-conventional and avant-garde cinema: "Avant-gardes were not made by a few geniuses, but it was a bigger system built for pushing some boundaries. We have to consider the bigger picture of our cinema history."

By Matthieu Darras

Low-budget filmmaking in Europe

Retrospective & current trends

Low-budget filmmaking in Europe is a concept that refers back to practices and movements as ancient as neorealism. Over the last ten years or so, many films have been shot and produced outside the traditional filmmaking framework (guerrilla shooting, etc.). These films rarely benefit from national funding and cannot apply to Eurimages for funding as they would be ineligible. Non-conventional cinema is most often automatically associated with limited budgets.

If most often correct in practice, this association of ideas is misleading, as it shapes the misconception that non-conventional cinema is necessarily cheaper and doesn't require the same level of resources as conventional cinema – something that has been completely institutionalized by film funds today.

Low-budget filmmaking refers to a certain norm, a 'normal budget'. Compared to these conventional practices, low-budget filmmakers are positioned at the margins – by choice or necessity – of a system. During the 1990s, stories of maverick film buffs, who self-finance to fulfil their filmmaking dreams return every now and then. Things change drastically around

1998 with the arrival of DV cameras. In Europe, due to an established ecosystem of public support, the massive use of affordable digital technologies arrives years later. From the mid-2000s, digital means of production facilitated the practice of shooting a film without first obtaining a budget, and without necessarily having a prior script, a practice that up until then had been the reserve of documentary filmmakers, bar notable exceptions.

Film agencies have long ignored and/or not observed attentively the emerging practices of the 2000s. In the last decade, they have engaged differently with these realities, up to the point of embracing them, creating schemes that often resulted in depriving some practices from their abrasive and non-conventional natures. In parallel to this process of 'mainstreaming' low-budget productions, a conspicuous number of incubators and labs have focused their activities on sustaining these productions. The strengthening of a support network for low-budget films in the past 20 years can be read as a trend that is leading to similar initiatives for non-conventional cinema.

films. Their freedom in writing these works and their capacity to gather creative elements from different genres can help to define what is often called contemporary non-fiction/hybrid cinema.

By Rebecca De Pas

Practices of non-conventional cinema:

Non-fiction, hybrid & artist film

Since the beginning of the 21st century, non-conventional cinema has been characterized by an increasing blurring of the lines between classical fiction and other genres such as documentary, or more daring open-ended

The use of non-professional actors, the contamination between fiction and documentary elements, an essayist approach to narration, and an emphasis on cinema as a tool to create visually striking works, are some of the elements that can characterize this genre. These creative practices also impacted the classic script/development/production/post-production model, which has become a rather anachronistic concept.

Parallel to the growth of non-fiction films, the phenomenon of artists directing films needs to be understood in order to fully grasp the diversity of non-conventional films in Europe. One of the main issues that the film industry faces in understanding artist film is the ambiguity of their status. Their elusive nature, whilst being fit for a classic audience have different layers of

interpretations and are readily compared to an 'art piece', which makes them the ideal outcast for the classic film market.

In the past decade, the film industry has tried to attract and to assimilate creative energies from contemporary arts through different initiatives such as dedicated co-production forums, seminars and training. If it would be reductive to categorize the aesthetic possibilities that non-fiction filmmakers and artists are investigating in films, it is possible to use their example to point out the inadequacies of the European funding system when it tries to support non-conventional film. The undeniable innovative force that these filmmakers represent and their fundamental contribution to the cinematic ecosystem has yet to be fully acknowledged by film funds both on a national and international level.

By Natacha Seweryn

Internet and new aesthetic forms

of contemporary cinema

Since the democratization of the internet, the digital fabric of our daily lives is becoming more and more complex and shape-shifting. Over the years, all this material that only seemed to have virtual potential has become consistent, heavy, and full. This is a new phenomenon in the history of humanity, notably in cinema, since filmmakers are increasingly using this new material, dealing with atypical issues. The endless reservoir of images on the internet has invaded films in many forms.

In the past years, 3 main practices used by cinema to absorb the material coming from the Internet have emerged. The first is **Saved Footage** films, which consists of collecting videos posted on platforms that provide online content. The second is **Machinimas**: these are videos that are taken from the inside of video games. Their distribution in the feature film market is impossible because it would require expensive right clearances, unsustainable for such independent productions. It is nevertheless

possible to see these films in arts centres, festivals and other non-commercial contexts. The third practice is the **Desktop Film**. In this category, the artists ask their viewers to immerse themselves into their computer screen. In this case, the computer is the camera.

This visual content raises new questions about production, since it seems impossible to obtain the agreement of all the people concerned by this new flux of images. Nonetheless, it is an important creative addition to the visual material of our times. Parallel to these aesthetic evolutions that integrate new image formats, cinema is in constant negotiation with technological evolutions that challenge its mode of being shown in cinemas. Outside the screen, the fast rise of **Expanded Reality** in all its forms deserves a place on its own. If the content of XR is made by moving images, the narrative & industry dynamics are very specific. It should thus be considered as a unique medium, with its specific rules.



2 Lizards,
Orian Barki, Meriem Bennani (2020)

Chapter 2.

Mapping the field of non- conventional cinema in Europe

By Elena López Riera

Filmmakers & visual artists

Juggling creative processes & funding strategies

This part of the study is based on interviews with filmmakers and visual artists, whose work show a steady interest in subverting standardised forms and exceeding expected narratives, and so challenge the relevancy of contemporary moving image. The investigation was conducted with the aim of finding out more about the nature of non-conventional filmmaking practices, especially in relation to conventional workflows and production as they are maintained through the support of funding bodies.

The speakers were unanimous in expressing their wish for funding institutions to be more open in terms of permeability of genres and formats, and to put more effort in avoiding outdated definitions, which in the end delineate what kind of films can get supported and with what means. Moreover, several speakers described the challenges of packaging their projects into formats that are requested by the funds, especially in the development stage. While some expressed their disagreement about needing to provide scripts and so force an unsuitable format upon their proposals, others pointed to the fact that scripts aren't the root of the problem, but instead criticized the limited 'openness' for different kinds of proposals by decision-makers.

In addition, the filmmakers suggested that the workflow be considered in a more diversified

way by the institutions, and that they be more flexible in supporting different stages of the process, which, in more open practices, can be equally creative and unexpected. Regarding the financing of their projects, the conviction about non-conventional films costing less than conventional ones was disputed as an unjust generalization. An argument was raised about the crew often costing the same regardless of how conventional the film is.

Juggling between rules and expectations of different ecosystems and value chains was discussed, and differences between different funding bodies were identified: regardless to the lower amounts of support, museums or private investors are considered valuable partners for non-conventional cinema, especially as they tend to leave the artists more freedom than most film institutions. On the other hand, juries and evaluating commissions within the public film funding bodies were identified as a serious concern. Some speakers recognized the traditional funding mechanisms as generators of standardization of cinema when they should instead help unique and diverse visions.

Finally, the speakers agreed that distribution is one of the most challenging aspects of the organized landscape. The need for more and better calibrated distribution support was expressed several times.

By Anna Gudkova

Producers

Empowering a vivid & collaborative community

Producers have been key stakeholders when trying to determine the future potential of the Lab Project Award scheme. The speakers that contributed to this part of the study were selected on the basis of their festival track-record and/or their involvement in prominent art contexts.

When discussing the initiation stages of the work, the factor of trust has been repeatedly mentioned as crucial. Looking for a specific perspective or an individual way of handling the content, producers sensitive to more radical filmmaking tend to choose people and their previous work, and not just the stories or topics. While this creates strong bonds between creators, it automatically excludes first-time filmmakers with no defined track-record. Several speakers recognized the importance of encouraging encounters between young filmmakers and producers in a more active way. Focused support of first-time directors seems to be especially scarce in environments with limited production capacities.

While the speakers generally agreed that an award received in late production or postproduction may be useful, they further pointed to the fact that filmmakers and artists often miss protection and support at the very beginning of their creative process the most.

Producers with experience in the contemporary art world further hinted at the 'free-to-spend scholarships' as the most beneficial means of supporting early stages of creation.

One of the thoughts that were shared by most speakers, dealt with the distribution. How and where the film will be shown, influences the way it is developed, meaning that the support should also foster the design of strategies for the enhancement of the films' visibility. Producers agreed about the potential to collaborate more systematically with museums, art galleries and other public venues as these could attract a wider and more diverse audience, who might currently not be addressed.

Finally, the speakers expressed the need for more and more inclusive professional community-building opportunities - training programmes, platforms, residences, etc., where they would not be simply required to pitch their projects, but really share their ideas and proposals with others.

Recognition of the relevance and the symbolic authority of the Eurimages Lab Project Award in showing the way how to treat new cinematic languages, and so proving their importance in the contemporary society has, also, been repeatedly mentioned by the speakers.

By Esra Demirkiran

Incubators & Exhibitors

Championing radical cinema

The expression 'Incubators & Exhibitors' covers a diverse range of stakeholders and practices. It encompasses festivals and cinemas, as well as labs, training programmes, residencies, museums, art centres, schools, and even streaming platforms. Our study aimed to meet a wide variety of these people from across Europe, who all in a way or another have for mission to 'pass on cinema' – whether this is knowledge, passion, network or value, etc. More than 20 representatives of organizations/initiatives were interviewed, a round table of festivals was organized, and there was a focus on two initiatives: Tabakalera (Spain) and IFF Rotterdam (Netherlands).

The festivals and programmers mainly discussed the issue of the audience: from its mere existence as a concept to how to extend it by introducing films to a larger community of viewers, sharing best practice of projects and initiatives that promote non-conventional filmmakers and visual artists.

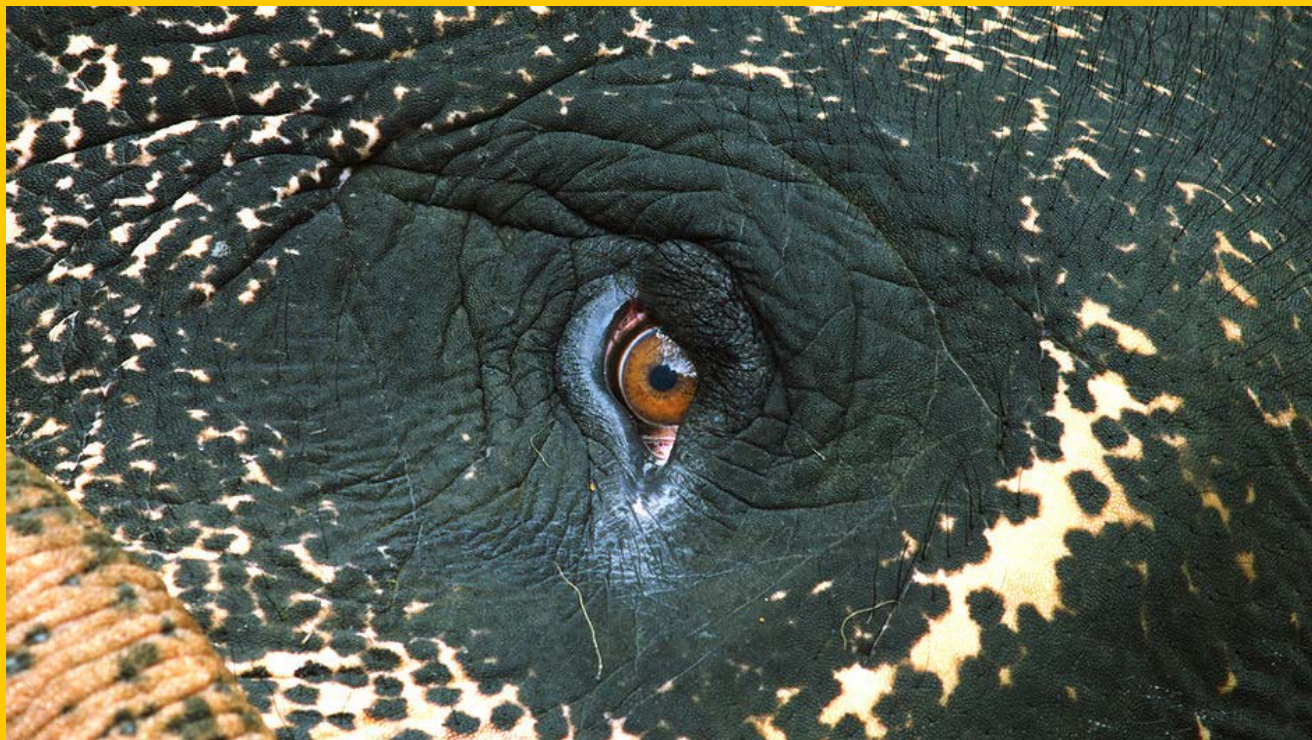
Whilst working with non-conventional filmmakers and artists, museums and art centres discussed two areas: screening/exhibiting and financing the work.

The screening of video artwork and films have a different set of requirements. The expectations of the artist for light, sound and the space are different from a film screened in a cinema. For

this reason, it is a challenge for museums and art centres to include films in their programmes. Regarding funding, there are some good examples in Europe of museums and art centres that financially support artist films. The rising force of the role of private investment in the support of non-conventional films should also be mentioned.

Labs, residencies, and schools are among the places where filmmakers and visual artists develop their projects, and unveil them to industry people. These are platforms where 'films-in-progress' get the first reactions from the market. According to the labs, residencies and schools, there are 3 main hindrances that non-conventional filmmakers face: the so-called 'script problem'; the issue of the timing to support non-conventional cinema; the composition of juries.

It was discussed that redefining the submission materials and the evaluation criteria is a necessity. Moreover, the speakers suggested that non-conventional cinema should be supported at the stages of development. Finally, the composition of selection committees should be reconsidered: jury members should come from backgrounds related to non-conventional & innovative cinema, and possibly from different disciplines like social sciences, technology, arts, etc.



Cemetery,
Carlos Casas (2019)

Chapter 3.

Innovating public policy making

By Marina Gumzi

Non-conventionality in public support mechanisms | Defining the elusive, organizing the unsystematic

The idea behind this part of the study was to bring into perspective the **manifold systematic approaches**, as they protect the most elusive part of the organized sector. By mapping the landscape from this perspective, we wanted to gain an overview of the institutional practices and draw as many conclusions about the commonalities and trends as possible. We can look at several aspects of the support mechanisms and recognize in them various backgrounds and strategies.

The mechanisms of support are managed by **differently structured bodies**, such as:

- An **autonomous funding body** that manages the support mechanism for innovative film practices (Example: Austria);
- An **autonomous department** operating under the main funding body (for example: the digital creation fund at the CNC in France);
- A **special scheme** operating under the main funding body that either **encourages artistic and experimental expression** or **supports debutants**, or both (examples: Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands, Hungary);
- **No specialized fund** or autonomous scheme to cater for the specific needs of non-conventional films. Projects are handled on a case-to-case basis there (Examples: Serbia, Slovenia and Portugal).

Support is allocated to the projects through **different funding models**. Some examples can be the Moving Sweden scheme of the Swedish Film Institute, the Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, or the Incubator Programme of National Film Institute, Hungary.

Funding is allocated to the projects though **different assessment processes** and **decision-making bodies**:

- A decision is taken by a sole appointed decision-maker;

- A decision is taken in a regulated decision-making process, which is carried out by an appointed group of experts;

- Different **gate-keeping bodies** assess the projects during the development process before the **final jury/selection committee** takes the final decision about production support.

The most glaring point arising from these decision-making models is the question of objectivity about the qualities of the films that are harder to measure and categorize.

The above-listed models result in significant differences concerning the **application requirements**, which means that an international project has to be able to adapt its presentation according to institutions.

During our research, we have come across three mechanisms that represent **outstanding examples of a systematic embracing of creative opportunities offered to filmmakers and other audio-visual content-creators by the new means of technology**:

- the scheme for new media within the regional fund of Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg;
- the Digital creation fund within the French CNC;
- Pixel, Bytes + Films, which has been introduced by the Austrian Film Department of the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport.

Recognizing good practices and adapting elements from individual national systems to design the second generation of the Project Lab Award scheme is the main aim of this study, but the learning process will certainly go the other way around too. Several representatives openly acknowledged that they would **use inspiration and suggestions to re-think and modernize their support structures**.

By Matthieu Darras

A new scheme

The Design, Audience and Carte Blanche Awards

The new scheme shall be composed of 3 complementary streams entitled:

- The **Design Lab Awards**;
- The **Audience Lab Awards**;
- The **Carte Blanche Lab Awards**.

We consider that combined together they will make a **comprehensive set of recommendations**, with a level of direct financial support to projects & filmmakers amounting to **225 000 Euros a year**. This represents a rather reasonable **12% increase** compared to the first generation of the Programme. We recommend establishing this model for a cycle of **3 years** at least, to be possibly extended following an evaluation. We would like to emphasize that the **relevance of the scheme is as a whole**.

The scheme is designed to include **2 highlighting promotional events** a year:

- The **Design Lab & Audience Lab Awards shall be announced** in a different Eurimages member state, during an event made in association with a **partner organization**;
- The **Carte Blanche Award shall be announced during a partner festival** known for its expertise in non-conventional cinema, with a different festival hosting each year.

We would recommend for the selection committee **to be nominated for a non-renewable period of 3 years**, in order **to meet demands of responsibility & continuity**, and for their series of decisions **to define a much-needed editorial policy** that would ensure a better readability and visibility of the new programme. Festival juries will, on the other hand, be renewed each year.

The scheme will rely on the **scouting work of partner organizations & festival** based and active in Europe, identified for their expertise in the field.

The advantage of this structuring is that:

- it **involves initiatives & organizations** that are known for their expertise in the field.
- it **enlarges the base of talent to be considered**.
- it **minimizes the administrative burden generated** for Eurimages.

The Design Lab Awards

The Design Lab Awards aim to **encourage true experimentation and research**. The Design Awards will be annual and will directly support **5 individual filmmakers & visual artists** with **scholarships of 15 000 Euros each**. They will be selected by a 5-member selection committee from a maximum of 12 proposals - each of the 12 partner organizations will nominate 1 filmmaker annually. Priority will be given to **new talent**.

Besides the issue of conflict of interest, **the number of filmmakers nominated versus the number of awards given** has been thoughtfully and thoroughly considered.

The **question of definition of a new talent is a daunting one**. We suggest that targeting of **new generations of filmmakers** would generally be a welcomed move.

The **financial support shall directly benefit the filmmakers**, with simple processes of granting the awards, and of demonstrating the good use of public money. The **concept proposed will be absolutely new**.

The nominated filmmaker will have **45 days to create & to submit a concept note** to Eurimages **on the research/experimentation** they intend to carry out thanks to the Design Lab Award. The selection committee will assess all the proposals, and select 5 awards. The filmmakers will have then up to **8 months** to come up with **a proof of concept**.

The Audience Lab Awards aim at supporting

The Audience Lab Awards

ambitious non-conventional film projects, possibly crossing over to other art forms, on their **endeavours of reaching out to audiences**.

The Audience Lab Awards will be **annual, and will support 3 film projects with grants of 40 000 Euros each**, covering audience outreach costs. The Audience Lab Awards will be decided upon by a 5-member selection committee following an **open call with strict criteria**.

The Audience Lab Awards would be implemented as follows. Eurimages will launch an annual call for proposals with **strict eligibility criteria**. The projects submitted should **comply with some of the conditions of the Eurimages Co-Production Fund scheme**.

Innovative & daring projects crossing to other art forms would be explicitly encouraged to apply to the call and they would have to demonstrate an **innovative audience outreach strategy**. The beneficiaries will have up to 36 months to implement their audience outreach campaigns.

The Carte Blanche Lab Awards

The Carte Blanche Lab Awards aim at **promoting & celebrating non-conventional filmmakers and visual artists known for their daring works**. This award is meant to highlight exceptional figures in the field.

The Carte Blanche Lab Awards will be **annual**, and will support **1 filmmaker with a cash prize of 30 000 Euros** to be invested in the **director's upcoming film**. The Carte Blanche Lab Award will be decided upon by a 3-member jury composed by the **partner film festival**.

The Carte Blanche Lab Awards are largely designed under the model of the already existing **Eurimages' Audentia Award**. Film festivals will be the partner organizations concretely implementing the action.

By Rebecca De Pas

Guidelines

This article proposes a **set of guidelines**. Their objectives are to maximize the **capacity of Eurimages to support innovative film/cinematic languages and to identify the right stakeholders** – to build solid partnerships. The core idea of these requirements is to **ensure diversity**, both in terms of languages and accessibility.

In order to encourage research and innovation,

Partnerships Guidelines

authors shall express the essence of their projects **without having to adapt it to fit in a 'box'**. Another important priority is to imagine a scheme adaptable to production models that steps beyond the classical formats.

The structures chosen shall be carefully evaluated with the following criteria:

- The general aim of the structure – is a mission to **promote, foster and facilitate innovative and diverse cinematic works** crossing genre boundaries and blending with other art forms;
- A **proven capacity to attract talent** from film and other disciplines;
- A **commitment to diversity and gender equality**;
- A genuine interest for the **possibilities offered by technologies for widening the audience**.

Those characteristics can be found in:

- Interdisciplinary institutions, residencies, training programmes, labs;
- Film festivals;
- Museums, art centres;
- Research/educational structures promoting cooperation between sciences and arts.

Expert Guidelines

Diverse points of view in assessing projects should be a condition *sine qua non* while forming an evaluating commission. In order to accurately evaluate a project, Eurimages should consider experts from the following categories:

- **Filmmakers and artists**
- **Producers**
- **Exhibitors and Incubators** (industry players active in the field of development, support, and/or promotion of non-conventional cinema).

All the experts shall have at least 5 years of experience, a true knowledge in the field and a capacity to interact in another artistic environment.

Project Guidelines

We detail here an application model that can be adapted for different productions. Keeping in mind the imperative need of Eurimages to be able to track the money granted, here are some steps to facilitate the accessibility of the support.

Filmmakers with no producer attached should be considered eligible for the Design Lab Award. Production models that do not follow the linear path from script to post-production should be considered.

To bypass the script as the main tool of evaluation, the application will include:

- A Director's Statement;
- A Treatment and Research Material;
- Visual elements;
- The Director's previous works and their circulation/exhibition;
- A Budget and financing plan including a detailed audience outreach strategy.

By Rebecca De Pas

Conclusion

For the past five years, the Eurimages Lab Project Award has shown the international cinema industry that European institutions were ready to take risks to support innovation and research. The vitality of non-conventional cinema is proof of the fascination that moving images still has on both artists and audiences. The study we have conducted in the past months has been an exciting journey in a rapidly mutating universe. We were welcomed with enthusiasm, a sign of a long-awaited interest by international institutions for innovative cinematic languages.

In the difficult attempt to define the essence of non-conventional cinema, we came up with the conclusion that what really unites these films is their continuous redefinition of the norms, their capacity to read our fast-changing society, question its dogmas and contradictions and, finally, translate its instances and myths through moving images. This cinema moves freely between genres and formats and it is capable of feeding itself with input from different disciplines.

Eurimages' capacity to adapt the Lab Project Award to this agility will be capital for the success of the programme. An important factor that should be considered attentively would be to engage professionals working in this field to evaluate the projects, as they are able to fully grasp the multiple facets of non-conventional films. These films represent an important occasion for the fund, not only to expand its mission, but also to truly promote its activity in a sector of the market that up until now has been underestimated by international funding bodies. If some national film agencies have been faster to understand just how important these players are to strengthening the cultural identity of a country, European institutions have yet to embrace the potential of these films ability to articulate the incredible richness of European creative energies.

Eurimages' intuition of partnering with festivals for its promotional activities opened the way to imagine more ambitious forms of cooperation that could reach out to those artists whose practices move across the borders of different disciplines. The cooperation with other prestigious institutions that are active on an international level represents a precious opportunity to involve a wider range of players and to create new synergies. Another factor that will maximize the impact of the Eurimages Lab Project Award is the contribution that the programme will provide in reaching out to wider audiences, not only through cinemas, when they finally re-open, but also through the different possibilities [that online digital] technology offers.

Since its inception, Eurimages has been a champion of the cultural excellence of European cinema, and has contributed substantially to the flourishing of our industry. The Eurimages Lab Project Award is a scheme that represents a step forward in this sense, as it could contribute to the mingling of innovative languages in a market that needs it today more than ever.

By reformulating the Lab Project Award programme, Eurimages has a great opportunity to create an organic continuity between its promotional activities and its main scheme supporting international coproductions. The number of projects successfully defying the conventions of cinema that Eurimages supports each year, through its main scheme, is proof enough that non-conventional cinema is an essential ingredient to the strength of European cinema. To this end, the new Lab Project Award will go up against the logic of ghetto and shall function as a launchpad for ambitious projects. The outcome of this study is that continuing this programme is a self-evident choice. The mutual benefit of this programme goes far beyond the exchange between money and communication: it is an alliance that ensures a healthy future for European cinema in its integrity.

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