



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

## Report

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

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*Diamantino,*  
Gabriel Abrantes & Daniel Schmidt (2018)

## Report

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

eurimages



Opinions expressed in this publication are personal to the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of Eurimages, its members or the Council of Europe.

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## Contents.

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4.</b>
<b>Defining a framework</b> of study	<b>6.</b>
<b>The Eurimages Lab Project Award 2016-2020</b> An analysis	<b>10.</b>
<b>Chapter 1.</b> <b>Non-conventional cinema in history &amp; today</b>	<b>18.</b>
<b>Historical notions</b> about unconventional cinema	20
<b>Low-budget filmmaking in Europe</b> – Retrospective & current trends	24
<b>Practices of non-conventional cinema</b> – Non-fiction, hybrid & artist films	32
<b>Internet and new aesthetic forms</b> of contemporary cinema	36
<b>Chapter 2.</b> <b>Mapping the field of non-conventional cinema in Europe</b>	<b>42.</b>
<b>Filmmakers &amp; visual artists</b> – Juggling creative processes & funding strategies	44
<b>Producers</b> – Empowering a vivid & collaborative community	50
<b>Incubators &amp; Exhibitors</b> – Championing radical cinema	56
<b>Chapter 3.</b> <b>Innovating public policy making</b>	<b>67.</b>
<b>Non-conventionality</b> in public support mechanisms	68
<b>A new scheme</b> – The Design, Audience, and Carte Blanche Lab Awards	78
<b>Guidelines</b>	88
<b>Conclusion</b> <b>List of people</b> interviewed <b>Photo credits</b>	<b>94.</b> 96 98



*The Stand-In,*  
Rä di Martino (2017)

## 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 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, but render 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

# Introduction



Maesta,  
Andy Guérif (2015)

## Defining a framework of study.

The commission of a study on the feasibility, pertinence and design of a Lab Projects support programme for the Eurimages fund is the **direct result of the work of an Evaluation Study Group** set up by the Board of Management of the Fund in December 2018. Generally, the Evaluation Study Group stressed that Eurimages will inevitably have **to define recommendations** in order to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

This is the object of this study by Tatino Films, commissioned by Eurimages, that was achieved over a 100 day-period from November 2020 to February 2021. This article intends to detail what our process has been in order to create **a flexible framework** that functions as a vehicle towards delivering the main objectives of the study, which are: **to assess the pertinence of a programme** aimed at supporting innovative or non-conventional cinema/audiovisual projects; **to make recommendations** on the format of a new support programme.

Our 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/non-conventional cinema in Europe. Their practice in their respective fields, combined with a genuine interest reflection on public policy and a know-how in carrying research & studies, was decisive.

The team members have worked in different capacities in the film and audiovisual sector in Europe, together they combine a **wide range of expertise and experiences**, notably as: Heads of film labs/ industry platforms/ trainings; festival directors/ curators; filmmaker/ visual artist; producers; journalist; TV broadcaster editor; film institute officer. These different levels of engagement were a guarantee for an **approach that was not one-sided**, to prevent conflicts of interest and to **foster enriching & contradictory debates** within the team.

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**.
- Kristina Aschenbrennerová (Slovakia) as **Research Coordinator**.

The co-Heads of Studies were both experienced in the field of non-conventional & innovative cinema, principally – but not exclusively – as Heads of Labs & curators. They have, for many years and in different capacities, faced some of the challenges that are at the core of this study. For instance, they had to ideate structures and to design decision-making processes, in order to be relevant and to maximize the impact of their actions within specific limitations. Their combined contributions to a long list of leading film initiatives that are active in the field guaranteed extensive knowledge of the specific issues involved in the study, together with an independence vis-à-vis the players in the field.

The role of the Research Associates, each with their unique profile, was to enlarge the scope of the brainstorming, to generate new ideas, to challenge certainties, to reach out towards a large scope of professionals in many member countries, and generally to enrich the study.

By Matthieu Darras

# Defining a framework of study

## The Methodology

Adopting an **efficient study methodology** was crucial, considering the strict time constraints and the necessity of delivering tangible results. After setting up a team, the next step was to define a **smooth working process** for the team to collaborate together, and in relation with the Secretariat of Eurimages, with a clear division of tasks, simple flows of communication, well-defined objectives and deadlines.

'Innovative films' being a **label in constant development**, the independent nature of the production models, as well as the specificity linked to different practices that ultimately converge in the making of films, are a complex field of research. An often too fast labelling creates **the risk of over-simplification that leads to ineffective funding patterns**. It was thus very important **to constantly question our field of study**.

Regarding **the activities planned**, the method was to combine **desk research** (that was handled more specifically to two research associates experienced with academic research themselves) with different forms of **field research**: individual **interviews and round tables**.

The study strongly relied on **field research**, and on a **series of interviews**, whose findings have definitely paved the way to the recommendations that are formulated. They were initiated with the different stakeholders identified. Most of the interviews took the form of **individual interviews** lasting one hour on average. Obviously, interviews belonging to the **method of qualitative research**, each interviewer brought their own specific approach, experience and sensitivity. In order to have a **panoptic view** of the instances of the different stakeholders, the interviews were implemented **to consider different fields of work**. We made sure that a wide range of practices and realities are represented in the interviews, but we refrained ourselves from pre-establishing such 'categorizations'.

It was crucial to have in-depth Interviews with the potential beneficiaries of the Eurimages Lab Award themselves, including leading artistic figures in the field directors, visual artists, and producers, whose work is emblematic in pushing boundaries of representation, and able to express what they perceive as their needs in terms of support. The museum and art centre directors & curators, festival programmers & artistic directors were decisive in order to map the field thanks to their thorough knowledge, as were the distributors, broadcasters and SVOD platforms representatives as well. Interviews with Heads of Labs, trainings, forums, & artist residencies were most valuable.

In total, **71 interviews were carried out** with people belonging to the following 5 main identified groups: Filmmakers (13), Producers (14), Incubators (15), Exhibitors (14), and Funders (15).

Two **round tables** were also organized, **on festivals and on XR**, with film festival directors and producers/exhibitors of digital, XR, and immersive content. Finally, **informal consultations** took place, together and under the supervision of the Eurimages' secretariat.

## The Strategy

Having a research strategy is about creating a trajectory that ensures the main points identified as objectives for the study are properly addressed.

The tasks we set for ourselves consisted in:

- Evaluating the past formats
- Mapping the field
- Identifying stakeholders
- Innovating public policy making

**Evaluating the past format** consists in making an analysis of the Eurimages Lab Projects Programme 2016-2020, and this is the object of the following article by Rebecca De Pas, after extensive exchanges with all the different partners involved in the programme, but also with selected beneficiaries and participants.

**Mapping the field** often means taking a step back, as we wanted to provide a context for the practices of non-conventional & innovative cinema in Europe. This is what **Chapter 1** is about, with articles by Natacha Seweryn, Matthieu Darras and Rebecca De Pas that notably look at the history of avant-gardes and apprehend non-conventional cinema with perspectives that are in turns economic, aesthetic and technological.

**Identifying stakeholders** is going to meet a diverse range of representative players (filmmakers & producers and incubators/exhibitors) active in the field – and possible future beneficiaries & partners, with demonstrable expertise, innovative practices, and overall recognized excellence, and listening to their concerns and their challenges. It is about highlighting best practices and identifying the stakeholders' needs in terms of support. This process has been carried out

by Elena Lopez Riera, Anna Gudkova, and Esra Desmirkiran in **Chapter 2**.

**Innovating public policy**, the title of **Chapter 3**, is actually the ambition of this study, which considers the Lab Project Award as an opportunity for Eurimages to innovate and to reinvent its mission. In order to translate this aim into action, it was necessary for Marina Gumzi to analyse several support mechanisms in Europe – a prerequisite to relevant recommendations. Only then could Matthieu Darras & Rebecca De Pas design a new scheme, and its guidelines, for the new cycle of the Eurimages Lab Projects programme starting in 2022.

Non-conventional films **need to be recognized wholeheartedly at institutional level and deserve to be significantly supported**. We are convinced that a pertinent support programme in the frame of Eurimages can be designed, which will deliver results, impact and visibility.



## The Team



**Matthieu Darras**

France, Slovakia



**Marina Gumzi**

Slovenia, Germany



**Rebecca De Pas**

Italy, Czech Republic, France



**Elena López Riera**

Spain, Switzerland



**Esra Demirkiran**

Turkey



**Natacha Seweryn**

France



**Anna Gudkova**

Russia



**Kristina Aschenbrennerová**

Slovakia



*The Hidden City,*  
Victor Moreno (2018)

By Rebecca De Pas

# The Eurimages Lab Project Award 2016 – 2020

## An Analysis

For five years the Eurimages Lab Project Award supported 20 feature film projects to a total of one million Euros. The general outcome of our research, combined with the number of films that have completed their production processes, 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

Proof of the scheme's successful impact is that **all the** awarded projects completed **films went on to premiere** in prestigious festivals: Venice IFF, Toronto IFF, Locarno IFF among others (see full list at the end of the article).

Katrín Ólafsdóttir, Icelandic filmmaker, visual artist, and award recipient (*And The Wind Blew*, The Norwegian IFF Haugesund), insists that it is a **programme almost ahead of its time**: “I think the Eurimages Lab Project Award was an extremely important one, it was almost like a pioneer programme and maybe it was too much of a pioneer. Maybe in that sense, it was perfect because it served films that are telling stories more for people in the near future rather than for people today.”



### Speakers - Eurimages Lab Project Award Recipients



**Marco Alessi**  
Producer |  
Dugong Films |  
Italy



**Katrín Ólafsdóttir**  
Filmmaker  
& Producer |  
Iceland

## An Analysis

The main strength of the programme, besides the clear advantages linked to the cash prize, is in the **branding and the marketing effect** that the award has on the chosen projects. Often produced in a very independent and precarious way, the award gave a great boost in getting the films on the radar of the film industry. To this end, each of the partners has 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**. This produced important additional visibility to the ensemble of their selected works in progress. Marketing-wise, the partnering events could rely on the Eurimages Lab Project Award to attract more filmmakers and dedicated industry, due to the significant cash prize on offer. In all the partner events, the amount offered through the Eurimages Lab Project Award was the most generous cash prize and it quickly became an important attraction for project holders.

Another positive aspect that has been pointed out 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. It is this aspect that is paramount to measure the importance of an initiative such as the Eurimages Lab Project Award, as it sets an example of how to create bridges between different market models.

Marco Alessi, Italian producer and award recipient for three different films (*The Stand In*, Karlovy Vary IFF; *Gold is all there is* - Les Arcs FF; *Atlantide*, Karlovy Vary IFF), explains: "For certain kind of projects, falling between experimentation

and craftsmanship, the Eurimages Lab Project Award endorsement positions them directly in the film industry. It gives you a "place" where research becomes an achievement and where new languages can develop under the attentive scrutiny of a market looking for its own future."

Last but not least, it has been pointed out that the "label" Eurimages Lab Project Award is **important for getting completion and distribution support for the film**, creating awareness among national institutions, and thus helping to overcome the idea of those projects being "non-exploitable".

Hugo Rosák, Head of Industry of the Karlovy Vary IFF, recalls: "We were introducing these refreshing and original films for the film industry people and we discovered that many of those films got the support after being presented at our festival – because they were noticed and for example, their national financial institutes, which normally wouldn't give them anything, changed their mind after the project got this kind of 'quality mark' from us."

The **impact in terms of visibility for Eurimages** was also consistent. The programme represented a first step in communicating new possibilities the fund could offer to filmmakers and producers that would otherwise consider Eurimages out of reach to them because of its usual eligibility criteria. The softening of those criteria for the Lab Project Award (i.e. not requiring a theatrical release or allowing co-productions outside the international treaties) has been a clever decision that opened the door to a wide number of projects.

## Weaknesses

An important reference for our analysis of the Eurimages Lab Projects Award has been the words that Ernst & Young wrote about the functioning of Eurimages in its external evaluation. Whereas the findings of E&Y underline the **incoherence between the choice of the partner festivals and the aim of the award** as the main issue, we have detected other factors that weakened the results of the programme.

One of the main issues revealed by our interviews and research was a **general disconnect or misunderstanding on the kind of films that could be supported**. This is perhaps directly linked to the difficulties of defining the nature of non-conventional cinema.

Nevertheless, this is not the sole factor. The festivals described their process of selecting the projects primarily in relation to their more established line up. Any specific and active thinking in what the Eurimages Lab Project Award should address in terms of the form, content, and production model, were not systematically considered by the partners, or were just vaguely addressed. This could explain the poor coherence among the events, but also the offer within the same event itself.

Another pitfall mentioned by the partner festivals was the **difficulty in scouting the projects**. All four events mentioned that the range of films they were able to gather through proactive research and applications was limited. This was another factor that created difficulties in establishing the editorial line of the award.

This could be due to multiple factors, for instance the fact that each event has a marked identity: either a regional focus (Haugesund, Karlovy Vary, and Thessaloniki) or an affiliation towards classical, art house, and commercial films (Les Arcs).



### Speaker - Jury member Eurimages Lab Project Award



**Marianne Slot**

Producer I  
Slot Machine I  
Denmark, France

This in general limited the **capacity of each event to reach out beyond their usual network**. It has also been pointed out that the realm in between film and other artistic disciplines was not a part of their usual pool of professionals. Marianne Slot, Danish/French producer, and jury member for the Eurimages Lab Project Award Haugesund, says: "The geographical focus was interesting, but it limited the scope of the selection. It would be better to open up to a more international presence. There were only five projects in the selection and the jury was composed by four people with very different profiles. The projects were very different and not always interesting."

## An Analysis

Hugo Rosák adds: “The fact that we had to struggle with too many irrelevant projects in the application was connected with the obstacle that there’re too many festivals for the [low – ed.] number of existing projects.” For Gyda Velvin Myklebust, programme director of the New Nordic Films industry section of the Norwegian Film Festival in Haugesund: “It was difficult to find these projects for our Industry programme. We really struggled for them. Nevertheless, we managed to find from 8 to 10 projects every year.”

The last aspect that prevented the programme from fully embracing the crossover between different disciplines **was the absence of people coming from other creative fields in the juries**. If some of the festivals included at least one director, none of them invited a creative person who was active outside the cinema industry. Both Thessaloniki and Les Arcs representatives shared some difficulties encountered in the functionality of the jury –

### Filmmakers with practices in other art forms

**Katrín Ólafsdóttir**  
Contemporary dance

**Yuri Ancarani**  
Visual artist

**Rä di Martino**  
Visual artist

**Ekaterina Selenkina**  
Visual artist

**Chloé Galibert - Laîné**  
Visual artist

**Itonje Søjmer Guttormsen**  
Visual artist

often related to the presence of a Eurimages representative having too much say in the final decision.

In general, as shown by the interviews, the recipients were grateful and happy to receive the award. If a concern was expressed, it was about the **misunderstanding on the nature of the support that caused a disproportionate amount of work** compared to its monetary benefit.

### Speaker - Eurimages Lab Project Award Recipient



**Siniša Juričić**  
Producer |  
Nukleus Film |  
Croatia

Siniša Juričić, Croatian producer and award recipient (*Perseverance*, *Karlovy Vary*), details: “Something that we all understood to be an award turned into a Eurimages grant. I had to complete as much paperwork with all the requirements of the usual fund for four times less money than I’d get if I’d applied for a regular coproduction scheme of Eurimages.”

Another point that has been stressed by the participants is the **difficulties experienced by the artists, who produce films on their own**. Chloé Galibert-Lainé, a French researcher, multimedia artist, and award recipient (*Bottled song*, *Karlovy Vary*), shares her hardships: “We haven’t yet received the money from this grant. It took us a few months to understand that we needed a production company in order to receive it. We were used to working on our own, via an auto production process. At some point, we considered creating our own production company to receive this grant, but

it would have required particular skills that we don’t have.”

This is a particularly sensitive point when trying to reach filmmakers or artists coming from more heterodox production models. The **eligibility criteria** that Eurimages requested for the Lab

Project Award, excludes filmmakers working alone or those supported by a structure that is not recognized as a production company. This constraint most probably played a role in the the scheme’s capacity to attract films that are not made through classic modes of production.



### Speakers - Partner festivals



**Frédéric Boyer**  
Artistic Director |  
Les Arcs Film  
Festival | France



**Gyda Velvin Myklebust**  
Programme Director  
| New Nordic Films,  
Norwegian Film  
Festival in Haugesund |  
Norway



**Anna Ciennik**  
Industry Village  
Manager | Les Arcs  
Film Festival | France



**Yianna Sarri**  
Head of Agora –  
Consultant for  
Innovative Programs |  
Thessaloniki  
International Film  
Festival | Greece



**Hugo Rosák**  
Head of Industry |  
Karlovy Vary  
International Film  
Festival | Czech Republic



**Jérémy Zelnik**  
Head of Industry |  
Les Arcs Film Festival |  
France



### Speakers - Eurimages Secretariat



**Sergio Garcia de Leaniz**  
Project Manager |  
Eurimages | France



**Nathalie Monteillet**  
Public relations  
& promotion |  
Eurimages | France

## Conclusions

This article intends to provide a brief overview of the Eurimages Lab Project Award 2016 – 2020. As we discussed with the interviewees and brainstormed within our researching team, it is irrefutable that **the Eurimages Lab Project Award has been welcomed as a pioneering initiative on an institutional level.**

If the programme presented structural inadequacies, in particular failing to create a strong editorial line, it is **not solely due to the choice of the partner festivals**, as underlined by E&Y, but also because of an **unclear idea of the films that could be targeted by the award.** 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.

Nevertheless, the track record of the projects that have been completed since receiving support by the Eurimages Lab Project Award does provide solid examples of films that are capable of mingling in the established film industry marketplace. The presence of non-conventional cinema filmmakers with a work practice beyond classic forms of film has been rather weak, a factor that further underlines the **lack of interaction between the Eurimages Lab Project Award and potential “non-conventional” beneficiaries.**

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.

### Eurimages Lab Project Award 2016-2020

#### 12 **Number of films completed** films out of 20

have been completed and 11 have already premiered. This data is positive (especially considered the delays due to Covid-19) and shows the accelerating capacity of a cash prize awarded during post-production.

#### 17 **Country Diversity** **(co-production included)** represented countries

This data shows a concentration of the awards for countries that gravitate around the festivals hosting the award.

## Key Figures

#### 8 **Gender Figures** women directors

(including a co-direction): roughly 38% of the total, in line with the actual status of gender balance within the overall Eurimages activities (38%).

#### 1 film

Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Island, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden.

#### 2 films

Serbia, Spain, Switzerland.

#### 6 films

France, Italy.

## Eurimages Lab Project Award 2016-2020

**Blind Man Who Did Not Want to See Titanic** by Teemu Nikki (m), produced by Jani Pösö from the company It's Alive Films (FIN) – Haugesund

**Atlantide** by Yuri Ancarani (m), produced by Marco Alessi from the company Dugong Film (IT) in co-operation with France - Karlovy Vary

**Bottled Songs** written, directed and produced by Kevin B. Lee (m) and Chloé Galibert (f) respectively from Germany and France - Karlovy Vary

**Burning Man** by Itonje Søimer Guttormsen (f), produced by Maria Ekerhovd from the company Mer Film (NO) – Haugesund FILM COMPLETED

**Figures in the Urban Landscape** by Ekaterina Selenkina (f) and produced by Vladimir Nadein (RU) - Les Arcs

**Gold Is All There Is** by Andrea Caccia (m), produced by Dugong Films (IT), Picofilms (FR) and Rough Cat (CH) - Les Arcs FILM COMPLETED

**Him** by Guro Bruusgaard (f), produced by the Norwegian company Alternativet Produksjon – Haugesund

**Jimmie** by Jesper Ganslandt (m), produced by Jesper Kurlandsky, Hedvig Lundgren and Juan Libossart from the company Fasad (SE) – Haugesund FILM COMPLETED

**Magdala** by Damien Manivel (m), produced by Mld Films (FR) - Les Arcs

**Mother Lode** by Matteo Tortone, produced by Alexis Taillant and Nadège Labé from the company Wendigo Films (FR), in cooperation with Benjamin Poumey from C-Side Productions (CH) and Margot Mecca from Malfé Films (IT) – Thessaloniki FILM COMPLETED

## List of Awards

**Normal** by Adele Tulli (f), produced by Valeria Adilardi, Laura Romano and Luca Ricciardi from the company FilmAffair (IT) – Karlovy Vary FILM COMPLETED

**Perseverance** (SI, HR, IT, RS) by Miha Knific (m), produced by Siniša Juričić – Karlovy Vary FILM COMPLETED

**Speak So I Can See You** by Marija Stojnic (f), produced by Marija Stojnic and Milos Ivanovic from the company Bilboke (RS) – Thessaloniki FILM COMPLETED

**The Hidden City** by Victor Moreno (m), produced by the companies El Viaje Films (ES) and Pomme Hurlante (FR) - Les Arcs FILM COMPLETED

**The Stand-In** by Ră di Martino (f), produced by Dugong Srl (IT) in co-operation with France and Morocco – Karlovy Vary FILM COMPLETED

**The Wind Blew On** (IS) by Katrín Ólafsdóttir (f), produced by par Incoherence Cinema Limited – Haugesund

**Thorn** (GR, DK) by Gabriel Tzafka (m), produced by Panayiotis Kakavias (Kakavias Film) and Michael Bille Frandsen & Theis Nørgaard (Nitrat Film) – Thessaloniki FILM COMPLETED

**Tracking Satyrs** by Maciej & Michal Madraccy (m) and Gilles Lepore (m), produced by Beata Rzeźniczek from the company Madants (PL) - Thessaloniki

**White on White** by Theo Court (m), produced by Jose Alayon from the company El Viaje Films (ES) – Les Arcs FILM COMPLETED

**Undergrown** by Marta Ribeiro (f), produced by Joana Peralta from the company Videolotion (PT) – Thessaloniki FILM COMPLETED



## Chapter 1.

*Leviathan*,  
Verena Paravel & Lucien Castaing-Taylor (2012)

# Non-conventional cinema in history & today

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*The Seashell and the Clergyman,*  
Germaine Dulac (1928)

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**, to the extent that they questioned the **norms and conventions** of this art. However, nonconventional 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 unity in what is unconventional**, except for the 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. Some major movements are helpful to better understand how norms and conventions have been questioned since the creation of the cinema.

## The early ages of cinema until the WWII

Much has already been written about the beginnings of cinema: at first, considered as entertainment in the context of fairground attractions, it took a long time to be developed as an art in its own right. **German Expressionism, taking place in the 1920s**, is often considered as one of these important moments for cinema. It describes an exaggerated distortion of reality in order to provoke an emotion. This early movement develops a clearly identifiable film style and seems to address the evolution of

society and its potential drifts. Nevertheless, there are multiple possible interpretations of this movement, as evidenced by the divergent analyses of Siegfried Kracauer or Lotte Eisner.

**Dziga Vertov's Cine-Eye is another part of this dynamic, in the late 1920s.** The manifesto *We: Variant of a Manifesto* describes the major trends of Kino-Pravda. Freed from the shackles of bourgeois scripts, the operator goes out into the street to film the world as it is and creates film materials freed from too many artifacts. These first two movements also allow us to think that two avant-gardes can also explore different meanings: **there is no uniqueness in what the periphery of conventions explore.** In both cases, the cinema of these avant-gardes questions norms that already exist.

A third trend that seems relevant to cite here is **Germaine Dulac's research of a "pure cinema"**. Known as a filmmaker before theorizing her concept of cinema in *What is cinema?*, she develops an approach in her films that could be described as impressionistic. In her essay, she defines what her concept of pure cinema could be: "Between cinema-industry and avant-garde cinema is cinema without qualification. It is the only one that is worthwhile because it represents plenitude." She develops the practice of a cinema of perception, at the same time as a cinema accessible to all, based on narrative frames. She breaks certain conventions of the time by being one of the rare directors to install a female point of view.

## Historical notions about unconventional cinema

### After the WWII – Neo-Realism and the French New Wave

After the Second World War, Europe is in ruins, and necessarily wonders about the conditions of production of films and the way in which cinema represents reality. Two movements seem to be most representative.

The Italian neorealism movement, with **Cesare Zavattini** as one of its key figures. He cultivates the same ideal as the director Vittorio de Sica: a cinema that is close to reality, responsible, and lucid and immersed in everyday life. Their first collaboration is the film *Teresa Venerdì*, before the more famous *Bicycle Thieves*. In 1952, Zavattini gave an interview to an Italian film magazine, published in English as *Some Ideas on the Cinema*. The thirteen points Zavattini outlined are widely regarded as his manifesto to Italian neorealism.

At the same time in France, the formula 'caméra-stylo (camera-pen)' comes from an article called *Birth of a new avant-garde* written by the journalist Alexandre Astruc. "The author writes with his camera like a writer with a pen." This idea has a major influence on the filmmakers of the Nouvelle Vague, who develop new filming methods often writing screenplays during the shoot, whilst using natural settings and small crews. Godard's *A bout de souffle* is one of the representative films of this movement.

### The development of filmmaker cooperatives and the role of the curator (from the 1960s)

**Amos Vogel**, both filmmaker and curator, is well-known for his catalogue of films that broke aesthetic, sexual and ideological boundaries. This anthology is entitled *Film as a subversive art*. According to him, subversion would allow society to get out of a dead-end. He is also

reputed for having created an avant-garde film club Cinema 16, in which he introduced films by major filmmakers to the United States.

In the same trend as the film club set up by Amos Vogel, alternative distribution networks were created from the 1960s onwards to bring the hard to find new forms of cinema to audiences. Jonas Mekas and his friends founded **The Film-Makers' Cooperative** in 1962 in New York.

The filmmakers themselves managed the rental and distribution of their films, with a percentage going to the artists and the rest allowing the structure to exist. In France, cooperatives based on the same model were created such as the Collectif Jeune Cinéma in 1971 or the Light Cone association in 1982. We could also mention the guerrilla television, a particular model of video circulation, or Ubuweb, created by Kenneth Goldsmith, which is one of the most recent precursors of alternative onlinedistribution, and which announces an exchange of video that breaks away from the cinema to reach audiences in a different way.



*Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*,  
Jonas Mekas (1972)

## Women question the gendered gaze of cinema

The best-known researcher and filmmaker, who has put forward what she defined as the male gaze, is **Laura Mulvey**. As a filmmaker and film theorist, she questions audiovisual productions from the point of view of the genre. Her most acknowledged essay is called *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). According to her, scripts and mise-en-scène are mainly built on the patriarchal unconscious. It encourages overcoming the fetishistic fascination about the female body through the invention of a new cinematic grammar. She is herself an avant-garde filmmaker and in *Riddles of the Sphinx*, she explores a feminine everyday life.

Another woman cinema theorist, **Vivian Sobchack** insists on the importance of our bodies in film. In *Carnal Thoughts: embodiment and moving image culture* (2004), Vivian Sobchack considers the key role our bodies play in making sense of today's image-saturated culture. Emphasizing our corporeal rather than our intellectual engagements with film and other media, *Carnal Thoughts* shows how our experience always emerges through our senses and how our bodies are not just visible objects but also sense-making, visual subjects. She is not clearly related to a particular filmography but, in a way, she anticipates how the body will become more and more central in modern image-related devices.

### Contemporary cinema issues

After the arrival of television in the film funding system, another important paradigm shift is shaking up contemporary cinema. **Erika Balsom** (see interview), an English researcher, identifies some of the important challenges cinema has to face in her book, *After uniqueness: A history of film and video art in circulation* (2018). She analyses how image circulation is central to the history of film and video art as film copies are spreading everywhere and exponentially with the arrival of the Internet. Balsom signals that there is a **lack of study regarding audiences** (which has been emphasized in the two roundtables we organized with festival directors & XR experts). With the arrival of streaming platforms, these issues are

becoming crucial, since the algorithms help to automatically understand what audiences are looking for. She quotes Peter Decherney, "New media require new ethics": our industry needs to build new policies in consequence.



#### Erika Balsom

Senior Lecturer in Film  
Studies | King's College  
London | United Kingdom

In the conclusion of our interview, Erika Balsom said: "The promise of the copy is the promise of democratization and access: the potentiality of the mass audience. The idea is that it could travel easily. The threat of the copy is the economic exploitation through circulation. Artists are workers, and they need to get paid. The mythology of the artists about authenticity is a construction. Artists work and it has to be recognized. If we understand my whole conception, I want to make clear that 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."

The English academic **Karen Boyle** showed how a normative power of the organization of cinema was disrupted by a circulation of information on social networks, but also by a history of feminism present in a much earlier way. The way cinema is made, and thought of will be deeply impacted by this moment.

Karen Boyle's analysis allows us to finish this panorama on unconventional cinema by pointing out that we need to consider **the representation of certain minorities**, since conventions can also be understood as a form of bourgeois cinema that would have difficulty in renewing certain representations. New avant-gardes seem to be in every chapter of history in between new thoughts addressing politics and aesthetics.



*C'est arrivé près de chez vous,*  
Benoît Poelvoorde, Rémy Belvaux & André Bonzel (1992)

By Matthieu Darras

# Low-budget filmmaking in Europe

## Retrospective & current trends

“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.” To contextualize the scope of interest of its Lab Projects Support Programme in 2015, the Eurimages Fund explicitly mentions the rise of a specific production framework, coming down to low-budget filmmaking, as one of the two main defining elements together with the script.

With this article, we intend to recount the emergence of low-budget filmmaking in Europe. To provide an historical perspective proves valuable to better understand today's audiovisual landscape, a necessary precondition to design relevant proposals for the new generation of the Eurimages Lab Project Award. We are notably interested in highlighting a paradox: how low-budget filmmaking, once a practice in the service of predominantly subversive contents and forms, has largely been embraced and integrated by the European audiovisual ecosystem, and especially the public film agencies. This process has contributed to strikingly alter the 'guerrilla' and non-conventional aspects of these practices. Low-budget filmmaking, once translated into public policies, has often been distorted to address other pressing needs of these institutions, such as the democratization of filmmaking and the necessary support of new film talents. Non-conventional cinema is most often

### Non-conventional cinema = low-budget cinema?

automatically associated with limited budgets. Nearly all of the people interviewed for the study connected the two notions together, whether they were filmmakers, producers, incubators,

exhibitors, or funders. The link is so obviously established that most of the stakeholders do not even question it. Non-conventional cinema more or less equals non-commercial cinema, and therefore necessarily implies limited budgets.

Film professionals themselves spontaneously create categories based on the budget level. “In Germany, films that have a budget lower than average are considered arthouse; films that have a much lower budget are considered non-conventional”, Berlin-based film producer Michel Balagué details. 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 integrated 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<sup>1</sup>.

It's important to note that low-budget filmmaking practices do not mean that the filmmakers themselves are from modest social backgrounds. Historically speaking, most low-budget films were made by well-off directors, and the democratization of filmmaking practices was scarce until the 2000s. The few exceptions to the rule of cinema as a 'bourgeois art form', such as the experiences of collective filmmaking in the 1960s (think of Chris Marker and the Medvedkin groups for instance), remained very localized and short-lived. Who has access to the means of filmmaking? Which people are in control of the narratives – no matter if they are conventional or non-conventional ones? Low-budget filmmaking definitely also chimes strongly with the recent debates on diversity and inclusion.

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that this opposition between a dominant cinema and a peripheral cinema is not so marked in countries that don't have strong audiovisual industries, and for which this bipolarity between what is inside and what is outside is not prevalent (see interview with poducer Rodrigo Areias about the film landscape in Portugal).

## Low-budget filmmaking in Europe

### Retrospective & current trends

### The 1990s – From the mavericks to DV cameras

Even though low-budget filmmaking in Europe harks back to practices and movements as ancient as Italian neorealism, Central Europe New Waves, or German New Cinema, we decided to look at the period from when Eurimages was established till today. In 1989, when the Fund takes its first decisions, low-budget filmmaking is rather uncommon in Europe. To get access to the means of filmmaking is definitely not for anyone, as there's no way around putting together an important amount of money for the camera & sound equipment, and for the 35mm print. By then, the most notable exceptions are American, such as *Down by Law*, by Jim Jarmusch (Cannes' Caméra d'Or in 1984) or *She's Gotta Have it*, by Spike Lee (1986), known for their shoestring budgets.

The likes of Jarmusch or Lee in Europe, angry young men equally fed with counter-culture references, only come out a few years later, when the polemical Belgian mockumentary *Man Bites Dog* (Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, and Benoît Poelvoorde) is presented at the Cannes Critics' Week in 1992 – supposedly made for less than 30 000 Euros. During the 1990s, stories of maverick film buffs, who finance themselves to fulfil their rebellious filmmaking dreams return every now and then. Most come from the USA – using Sundance as a launching pad, with newcomers trying to turn their financial hardships into legends. They also carry the idea of passionate and committed individuals, who do not need a studio environment and/or family connection to make films – a prelude to the democratization of the 2000s. In Europe, Gaspar Noé fits this archetype. His *Seul contre tous*, shot sporadically over almost three years and presented at the Cannes Critics' Week in 1998, is possibly the last memorable example of these debut films that filmmakers had to finance out of their own pocket over years. With these long periods spent on financing even shoestring

budgets, scripts are honed to perfection. Most of these features share controversial topics and viewpoints, and supposedly public funding is out of question.

Things change drastically around 1998-1999 with the arrival of DV cameras, first used in Asian films. In Europe, thanks to – or because of – a more established ecosystem of public support, innovation in this field comes much later. As a matter of fact, one could say that innovation, and the leap to digital, did not come from the filmmakers first, but from a couple of institutions. A real pioneer in the field was the broadcaster ARTE, with its 'Petites Caméras' collection – the first films shot in digital in 1998. The commissioning editor Pierre Chevalier initiated a series of such collections between 1994 to 2000. In 1997, ARTE also created La Lucarne, a space for non-conventional films – mostly documentaries – that still exists today (we interviewed the current curator Rasha Salti as part of the study).

If innovation and low-budget filmmaking came in Europe, it was first an ideological viewpoint – not because of a lack of money, but an anti-bourgeois and puritan attempt for filmmakers to reinvent themselves. This is the sense of the Dogma Movement in 1995: a manifesto, created in Denmark, but widely picked up across Europe, as an attempt to "take back power for the directors as artists", as opposed to the studio/producer. The first Dogma film *Festen*, by Thomas Vinterberg, premieres in Cannes' competition in 1998. The same year, Lars von Trier is really a pioneer with *The Idiots*, one of the first films in Europe to be shot entirely with digital cameras. However, neither of these two films are low-budget films by any means. The real game-changer when it comes to digital filmmaking and low-budget cinema, and a good case of non-conventional practices that rapidly define new conventions is the US horror film *The Blair Witch Project* in 1999.

### The 2000s – Low-budget films challenging the mainstream

The early 2000s is marked by an increasing number of films shot for very little money, also because equipment has become cheaper. Financing comes in place once the film is shot for the film to be distributed. *Stuff and Dough* (Cristi Puiu, 2001), at the origin of the Romanian New Wave – the last designated film movement in Europe together with the Greek Weird Wave, is such a film. Across Europe low-budget first films pop up, shot with no or little budget. In Belgium alone, one could mention the first films by Joachim Lafosse (*Folie Privée*, 2004) or Félix van Groeningen (*Steve+Sky*, 2004). Italy for example witnesses a huge increase of self-produced films made with no public support in the 2000s; in the end most of them cannot find a theatrical release. A notable exception is Michelangelo Frammartino's *Il dono* in 2003.

From the mid-2000s, digital means of production facilitated the practice of shooting a film without first obtaining a budget or necessarily a prior script. A practice that had up until then mostly been the reserve of documentary filmmakers. It generated new filmmaking practices, very often labelled hybrid or non-fiction. Since then the trend towards the democratization of film production has not ceased, as proven by the increasing number of films submitted to festivals year after year<sup>2</sup>. In the late 2000s though, the digital revolution is only partial, since distribution is still done with film prints.

In France, two exemplary cases show how the system demonstrated strong resistance and reluctance towards these low budget filmmaking practices: *Donoma*, by Djinn Carrénard, a film

made for 150 Euros that opens the Cannes' ACID in 2010 and *Hold Back*, by Rachid Djaidani (Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2012). For *Hold Back* to get the chance to be distributed in cinemas, a well-established producer had to come on board after the film's premiere, and to invest for the film production to discharge its mandatory obligations (obviously not strictly observed in the process of shooting the film) a posteriori. This was the prerequisite to obtain a screening certificate. This issue intensified shortly after amongst film professionals, when labour agreements had to be re-negotiated again in 2012, causing heated debates on the issue of derogations for low-budget films.



*Donoma*,  
Djinn Carrénard (2010)

It is certainly not by chance that these two 'DIY films' are directed respectively by a Haitian-born filmmaker and by a son of two African migrants: two filmmakers that were not given access to the traditional means of production, despite the modest set of policies in favour of diversity recently created in France such as CNC's 'Fonds Images de la diversité' in 2007<sup>3</sup>. It's actually an unresolved question raised in our study group – with no consensus and opposing views, on whether the new generation of the Eurimages Lab Award Programme should include or not explicit criteria & measures in favour of diversity and inclusion.

<sup>2</sup> In 2020, 2000 feature films were submitted to the Cannes film festival, including 900 first features.

<sup>3</sup> One could observe that very recently in France, 'diverse' filmmakers are finally given more space on platforms such as the Cannes Film Festival, with the official competition in 2019 showcasing the debut feature films *Les Misérables*, by Ladj Ly, and *Atlantique*, by Mati Diop.

## Low-budget filmmaking in Europe

### Retrospective & current trends

### The 2010s – The “Normalization” of low-budget filmmaking

Film agencies had long ignored – or at least not observed attentively – the emerging practices of the 2000s, but eventually did react to these realities, to the point of embracing them by creating schemes that often resulted in depriving some practices from their abrasive and non-conventional natures.

#### UK & Ireland

UK & Ireland film agencies were the pioneers of micro-budget & low-budget schemes. The very first initiative, ‘Film London’s Microwave’, was launched even before entering the 2010s, since the scheme run from 2006 to 2012. The ‘iFeatures’ programme, labelled as a lab, to develop 12 feature projects and green-lighting three films per edition, was run by Creative England from 2010 to 2020. A notable outcome was *Lady Macbeth* by William Oldroyd (Toronto IFF 2016).

Advocated as tools to encourage innovation, originality, non-conventionality, these schemes are very much used as well as tools to manage other kinds of challenges:

- the democratization of filmmaking with an increasing number of film school graduates – and the funnel effect resulting from it: a low-budget scheme thus becomes a way to manage and to control the access to professionalization, and to ‘test’ talent;
- the rarefaction of public soft money, especially true in the case of a country like UK, where neoliberal cultural policies have notably led for films to rely primarily on support funded by the National Lottery as early as 1994.

In UK, the priority on inclusion & diversity support measures has been at the core of the public policies before anywhere else in Europe, both in terms of regional filmmaking (generating

stories & fostering talents outside of London) and in terms of representation of minorities (ethnicity, gender, LGBTIQ). To such an extent, that a range of schemes are now targeting different communities – for example, the ‘Flare & Bafta Crew Mentoring Scheme’.

Neighbouring Ireland, has launched a low-budget feature film scheme only open to female talents called ‘POV’ in 2019. The Irish Film Board (now Screen Ireland) actually initiated the first national low budget scheme in 2007 called ‘Catalyst Project’ under the impulse of its Head Simon Perry. With a mentoring programme coupled with a funding of 250 000 Euros, this scheme was inspired from the surprise success of low-budget films produced in the early-2000s, most notably *Once* (John Carney, 2007). The first film that came out of the scheme was *Eamon* (Margaret Corkery, 2009).



*Eamon*,  
Margaret Corkery (2009)

### Incubators of Low Budget Films

No surprise that the first incubator/Lab specifically dedicated to low-budget filmmaking in 2008, the ‘Low Budget Film Forum’, originated from the UK. Led by the London Film School, this forum was run in cooperation with film schools from France, Germany, Hungary, and Romania from 2008 to 2013, and hosted by festivals such as Les Arcs FF (one of the Eurimages Lab Award hosting festivals). Created the same year, the ‘TorinoFilmLab’ during its first two years of existence debated whether to position itself exclusively in the niche of low-budget filmmaking or not. Finally deciding, that to be eligible to participate in its flagship programme, the projects had to have a budget cap of less than 2 million Euros. Established a year after, in 2009, the practice of the FIDLab Marseille (see interview with Fabienne Moris) has been to only consider films with a budget under 1 million Euros.

When it comes to film festivals, the Venice Film Festival also decided to position itself in this niche, as a strategy to catch up on its delay as an incubator of talents and film projects vis-à-vis both the Cannes Film Festival that initiated the ‘Cinefondation’ film residency in 2000, and the Berlinale, that organized its ‘Talent Campus’ since 2003. The ‘Biennale College Cinema’, launched in 2012, is largely inspired by the ‘iFeatures’ model, firstly incubating a dozen of film projects and then fully financing 3 of them with a 150 000 Euros grant for the film to be

made within less than a year. Limitation is not only financial, but temporal. The programme also developed a spin-off for VR projects directed by Michel Reilhac (see interview).

The first film made within this scheme, Thai *Mary is Happy, Mary is Happy* (Nawapol Thamrongrattanarit, 2013) was a clear sign of artistic innovation and non-conventionality, and also a milestone when it comes to the impact of Internet on storytelling considering the film is an adaptation of a one-year Twitter stream. The majority of the films made though are neither non-conventional or innovative<sup>4</sup>.

Even before these forums and labs were initiated by established film schools, museums or festivals, other – more at the margins and self-organized – film schools, labs and collectives of filmmakers existed in Europe, incubating low-budget shorts and feature films. There were many of them, but we can mention: in France, the ‘collectif Kourtrajmé’ was created in 1994; in Denmark the alternative ‘Super16 Film School’ was established in 1999; in Germany, the self-organized ‘FilmArche’ was created in 2001; and all over Europe, the ‘NISI MASA network’ was initiated in 2001 growing with its member organizations to more than twenty countries. The ‘Less is More’ (LIM) European training, initiated by Le Groupe Ouest in 2017 (see interview with Antoine Le Bos) follows the spirit of those various hatchers. For them low budget is not a goal in itself: “LIM uses creative limitations as a tool. Its spirit and ambition far exceed the facile business of restricting budgets. Self-imposed limitations are a catalyst for wall-breaking film-experiences. (...) LIM (was) set up to empower a generation of filmmakers, who intend on opening new avenues and finding new audiences by tackling new issues. Our motto is Igor Stravinsky’s ‘The more art is bound by limitations, the freer it is.’” One could also mention the regional programme ‘Film+’, initiated in 2016, an alternative program supporting independent low budget film productions from Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria & Moldova.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that another film of Biennale College Cinema, *Baby Bump* (Kuba Czekaj, 2015), was pivotal for the Polish film institute to establish a low-budget scheme in 2018 – complementing already existing actions for limited budget film projects such as the Munk Studio created in 2008.

## Low-budget filmmaking in Europe

Retrospective & current trends



*Baby Bump,*  
Kuba Czekaj (2015)

### Low & Micro-budget schemes initiated by public funds

All through the 2010s, a myriad of low budget schemes were created in most European countries following the British-Irish examples. Even in 2021, new schemes are still in the pipeline, for example in Croatia and in Slovenia (see interview with Nataša Bučar, managing director of the Slovenian Film Centre). Only the bigger countries of Europe (France, Germany, Italy, Spain) have been reluctant to the trend so far. The generalization of such schemes, however, covers different realities.

In Sweden, the scheme 'Moving Sweden' (see interview with Helen Ahlsson – Film Commissioner at the Swedish Film Institute) was launched in 2013 to push "filmmaking boundaries and stimulate innovative storytelling". Initially welcoming short film formats, such as David Sandberg's *Kung Fury* (Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2015; 38 million Youtube views), the scheme now accepts feature film projects only, and is financed half by the Institute and half by the public television channel.

In Denmark, the DFI Low-Budget Initiative (see interview with Silje Riise Næss – Film Commissioner at the Danish Film Institute) was launched in 2015. Definitely, the tradition of commissioning editors within the film agencies in Scandinavia and Northern Europe is not indifferent to the fact that these were amongst the first film institutes, where such schemes were created.

Before, these schemes film funds and film agencies rarely saw their mission as funders to include being incubators of projects. They now take a more decisive and active part in the creative process – often having their say, and getting sometimes closer to the patterns of a film lab. 'Incubator' is even the name chosen by the Film Institute Hungary for the scheme it launched in 2015 (see interview excerpt with Dániel Deák). The ambition is for Hungarian filmmakers to make their first film "as simple as possible". The Institute provides a low-budget financial support amounting to a maximum of 70 000 Euros for each feature documentary and 200 000 Euros for each feature film.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, we can finally mention the low budget schemes by the Polish Film Institute, the National Film Centre of Latvia and by the Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel Wallonie-Bruxelles of the French Community of Belgium ('Aide Aux Productions Légères' since 2017).

Popping up everywhere, it is as if these low budget production schemes, which have definitely given an impetus for a new generation of filmmakers, have become the miraculous answer to many of the challenges that these institutions are currently facing. However, if allocating less money to each project mathematically helps to support more projects, it is neither a guarantee of creative freedom, nor of innovation. Even if the Lab Award Project does not cover the exact same range of filmmaking realities as these low-budget schemes, the Eurimages fund can definitely learn from this wide scope of experiences, where best practices and successes stand alongside failures yet to be acknowledged.



**Dániel Deák**

Coordinator  
of the Incubator  
Programme | National  
Film Institute | Hungary

**Have you noticed, with the filmmakers that received support from your fund, any pronounced tendency to experiment with the formats or the narration?**

That is actually very interesting, and I was quite surprised after the first two

editions: I realized there is no real hunger for experimentation. To be honest, I was a little bit upset about this. Who else if not the newcomers will challenge the industry? But in most cases, these filmmakers seem to only want to be good girls and good boys; they want to do well-made films. There were some, of course, that tried out new things, but the general trend seems to be, instead of disrupting the system in any real way, to make 'proper' films and fit with them into the existing mainstream industry.



**Roi Soleil,**  
Albert Serra (2018)

By Rebecca De Pas

# Practices of non-conventional cinema:

## Non-fiction, hybrid & artist films

This article is meant as a short memorandum for the actuation of an international scheme of support for non-conventional films. It is relevant to the aim of the study to give a brief introduction to some of the most interesting tendencies that are shaping contemporary European cinema.

### Non-fiction and hybrid films

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 works. The so-called 'democratization' of production costs has created a flourishing arena for films that would have been too difficult to finance before the digital era.

Films such as *Our Beloved Month of August* (Miguel Gomes, 2008), *Le Quattro Volte* (Michelangelo Frammartino, 2010), *Nana* (Valerie Massadian, 2011), *Leviathan* (Verena Paravel & Lucien Castaing-Taylor, 2012), *Bella e Perduta* (Pietro Marcello, 2015), in their lively diversity, took cinema by storm, each showing a new way of narrating a story. Their freedom in writing and their capacity to gather creative elements from both fiction and documentary realms made them unique; each one was a game-changer for the next generation.

These titles and many others that followed are considered contemporary classics and show a freedom and an inspiration that can help to define what is often called non-fiction/hybrid cinema. The cinematic ambitions of these non-fiction films enabled them to be screened in A-list festivals' main competitive strands. Directors such as Adina Pintilie, Pedro Costa, Mati Diop,

and Albert Serra accumulated prestigious awards and opened up festival programmes to more daring films.

The use of non-professional actors, the contamination between fiction and documentary elements, an essayist approach to narration, and an emphasis on cinema as tool to create visually striking works, are some of the elements that can characterize this genre. Those creative practices also impacted the classic script / development / production / post-production model, that became a rather anachronistic concept. The script is no longer a mandatory first step in the production process and less-structured written elements are used to define a project that has in its own DNA the possibility and capacity to mutate during its making.

The pragmatic answer to why there is a proliferation of these films can be directly connected to the significant improvement of digital resources on one hand, and on the other hand to the growth of film events and festivals that have informally taken over the space left by classical distribution modes to spread new ideas and forms to a strongly connected community of filmmakers. Non-fiction is fostered and acknowledged by festivals and online providers (Mubi and Dafilms are good examples), showing the potential of this genre and an interest by a general audience.

In contrast, the international and national funding systems have so far been reluctant to adjust their schemes to works that practise a hybridization of genres, despite their critical success. The effect of this delay means that less well-known authors are underrepresented, and that national and international funds may also fail to detect important and successful projects.

## Practices of non-conventional cinema: Non-fiction, hybrid & artist films

### Artist films

Parallel to the increase 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. At the end of the 2000s, films such as *as Zidane, a 21st Century Portrait* (Philippe Parreno & Douglas Gordon, 2006), *Hunger* (Steve McQueen, 2008) or *Women Without Men* (Shirin Neshat, 2009), were all awarded prizes in classic cinema spaces, revealing the work of prominent visual artists to moviegoers.

These films have nothing in common besides the fact that their directors have an established career in a creative field beyond the film industry. As in every other artistic discipline, the success and recognition of the titles mentioned above have also been fed by a less well-known, yet equally remarkable research in the film field by many visual artists. Some of the people we interviewed have been cast in this particular area: Carlos Casas, Fiona Tan, Eric Baudelaire, or Rosa Barba are important examples of artists that have been adopted by the cinema world and who adopted cinema as their privileged medium. Their films are regularly exhibited in contemporary art galleries whilst also being screened at international film festivals, their work is exemplary at conjugating an artistic practice with a cinematic one.

One of the main issues that the film industry faces in understanding artist films 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. The constant need by cinema institutions to invent labels for audiovisual works has up until now created misunderstandings about the intermingling between visual art and cinema.

Artists and filmmakers approach to making films can be radically different. Although the finished films may be similar for both, and classification is still possible within the genre codes, their artistic approach to film language remains unique.

For an artist, moving image is one medium amongst others. In this context conventions such as the distinction between fiction and documentary or between feature or short format lose their significance in favour of the idea of making an art piece that can be enjoyed in a classical cinema setting.



*History's Future,*  
Fiona Tan (2016)

This last point is of paramount importance. Whereas video art remains intended for installation in an exhibition context, an artist film is a piece to be 'consumed' via a single screen (big or small), for all its duration. Artist films are perhaps exemplary of the idea of 'non-conventional cinema' as they are often conceived outside the classic production workflow, involving sources of financing beyond the film bubble.

In the past decade, the film industry has tried to attract and to assimilate creative energies from contemporary arts through different initiatives. Artist films have been the subject of seminars as in Art:Film in IFF Rotterdam, or training programmes such as the UK/Italian initiative 'Feature Expanded.' They have had space dedicated to them at industry platforms such as CPH:DOX Forum. Prestigious events such as Berlinale Forum, Locarno, FID Marseille, or less known but equally interesting spaces such as Courtisane Festival or Les Rencontres Internationales Paris Madrid Berlin, have all

gathered films conceived in between art and film. The ever growing number of film pieces exposed in prominent events such as *dokumenta* or the Venice Biennale, and the increase of cinema spaces in museums and art foundations also provides clear evidence of an expanding consideration of cinematic language by the art world stakeholders.

The paucity of funds dedicated to these practices has forced artists wanting to direct work with a medium to high budget to adapt to the classic film funding system, with all the limitations and consequences that our study underlines. This forced transition often results in a failure by the funds to correctly assess these projects, in consequence, leading to the loss of funding for these talents.

The difference between the languages of the two industries has resulted in our speakers to define working within the film industry model with words such as "a hide and seek game", "mutually accepted lie", "a need for more breathing space" or "a lack of trust from the funding system". Producers and artists working in both visual art and film have, by adapting their model of work to the cinematic one, literally opened the way to new norms, to reveal opportunities in overlapping private and public funding in different areas and to overcome the idea of 'phases' for the creation of a film. Despite these efforts, the lack of institutional support still prevents artists' films from developing a reference model that is sustainable from the perspective of both art and film. Issues such as the ownership of the oeuvre, and its circulation, remain crucial obstacles for the mutual understanding of these two worlds.

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 or international level.

The Eurimages Lab Project Award offered a possibility to these non-conventional films to enter a more classic market environment. Their participation in the programme was still fragile and highlighted its limits, in terms of communication and scouting. Eurimages' capacity to identify and understand these phenomena will be one of the main factors for the success of any future Lab Project Award scheme.



*Swatted*,  
Ismaël Joffroy Chandoutis (2018)

By Natacha Seweryn

# Internet & new aesthetic forms of contemporary cinema

Artists have carved and still are carving works out of marble and wood, but filmmakers are dealing with a visual material that has evolved due to the evolution of our different techniques. 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.

From now on, our identity is discoverable through abundant traces that we leave in the flux, on Facebook, on Instagram, etc. They are so numerous and familiar to us that they've ended up feeling less and less virtual. Though, 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. If the term 'avant-garde' disappeared from the history of art textbooks over a decade ago, it seems opportune to reactivate it now, in as far as this movement signals philosophical, technological, and aesthetic innovation.

## Saved Footage, Machinimas, Desktop Film

We can distinguish three main practices:

- **Saved Footage** – The Canadian Dominic Gagnon figures among the pioneers of this first strand. His technique is based on 'saved footage', which consists in collecting videos posted on YouTube, or on other platforms that provide online content. *Roman National*, by Grégoire Beil (Cinéma du Réel, 2018) is also an important film

to quote in this context. It is a montage of videos gathered from the live-streaming platform Périscope. In the course of its narration, the film brings together watermarked footage of the Nice attacks, including the reactions and discussions filmed directly at the moment of the catastrophe. *A self-induced hallucination* by Dan Schoenbrun (Sundance FF & IFF Rotterdam, 2017) questions the role the internet plays in our daily life by investigating one of the first myths of the web, called the "Slender man", through a series montage found on Youtube. *Il n'y aura plus de nuit*, by Eleonore Weber (2020) or *Coming out* by Denis Parrot are also films to be mentioned in this list, and they both have been recognized at an international level.

- **Machinimas** – Here is another way of appropriating contemporary images for artists, this technique remains relatively more confidential than saved footage. 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 the purchase of the rights to the video games in question, which is financially impossible within the precarious economy and traditionally low budgets of this kind of cinema as the *Grand Theft Auto* publisher copyright demands would be too high. This practice develops in a pirate-like way, with many short films that are shown in arts centres or festivals in non-commercial screenings, which gives them a sort of protection. We can mention *Swatted*, by Ismaël Joffroy Chandoutis (2018) or *Martin Pleure*, by Jonathan Vinel (2017).

## Internet & new aesthetic forms of contemporary cinema

• **Desktop Film** – In this category, the artists in question ask their viewers to dive into their computer screen. This is notable in the direct capturing of their activity on the computer screen. In this case, the computer is the camera. *Transformers*, *The Premake*, by Kevin B. Lee (Berlinale, 2014), is one of the pioneers of this form. Kevin B. Lee dissects a new business strategy at work in the Hollywood industry that orchestrates the multiplication of viral videos, filmed by fans of the film *Transformers* at the filming location. In *Forensickness*, Chloé Galibert-Lainé - cf interview - (FID Marseille, 2020) analyzes Chris Kennedy's *Watching the Detectives*. She plays a researcher, who dives into a massive archive of media produced after the Boston attacks. Her online wanderings offer a performative exploration of the history of critical thinking and the ruthless politics of truth production.



**Chloé Galibert-Lainé**

Artist & Filmmaker | France

**About *Bottled Songs* (codirected with Kevin B. Lee), recipient of the Eurimages Lab Project Award (2019).**

**“Can you explain your creative process related to ‘desktop filmmaking’?”**

It's a particular process: we are writing, shooting, editing at the same time - it's a circular process. We sent something to each other and we replied. It's an epistolary structure. We began our process by making video essays, available online. We have already directed four of them. Which makes it hard to apply for 'writing' support for instance, because we screen record and edit as part of the writing process.”



## Speakers of the roundtable on Digital, XR & Immersive media



**Chloé Jarry**

CEO & Executive Producer | Lucid Realities | France



**Siuli Ko**

K.O. Productions & Programme Digital Culture | Cinekid | Netherlands



**Camille Lopato**

Founder & Sales | Diversion Cinema | France

New questions about production are raised by this visual content, since it seems impossible to obtain the agreement of all the persons concerned by this new flux of images. Nonetheless, it is an important creative addition to the visual material of our times. There are varying approaches depending on the filmmakers. Denis Parrot, for example, has obtained the rights from the different people who film themselves in his film. That is not the case for Eleonore Weber's *Il n'y aura pas de nuit*, who argues for her right of the use of quotation, interpreted through the right to criticize the French Army. Machinimas are closer to 'guerrilla cinema' since video game publishers refuse the right to filmmakers to re-use their player point of view. It is an important question to consider for non-conventional cinema since it implies having to deal with legal issues. These new forms of creative usage of audiovisual material are in a way a sort of avant-garde to the extent that they question the norms of our current audiovisual system.

## Collaborations between digital technologies and image

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, as much as by these narrative processes. Digital technologies offer a wide range of possibilities for developing and exposing visual content. Making films only for a screening in front of a big screen had been questioned in many ways due to the evolution of our different usages. Here is a tentative typology of visual creation which deals with digital technologies: exploring how artists are using new tools to give their interpretation of reality.

• **Web-documentaries & web series** – When arthouse cinema began to look at the various possibilities of integrating digital technologies, **web-documentary** was one of the first important new 'experiences'. They are conceived for direct exposure online. Even if they were very popular at the beginning of the 2010s, the audience doesn't seem to go for this interactivity. It's a type of experiment that has not yet managed to find an audience or an

adequate way to be developed. **Web series** (a series of videos broadcast on the Internet) seems to be much more coherent right now. One of the pioneers in that area in Europe is the Belgian public broadcast company RTBF, and television channels have now dedicated funds for developing them.

• **Online content: YouTube & social networks** – Another aspect which is a bit more difficult to define is all the visual content people put directly online. We can mention YouTube: at the start it was an opportunity for some amateurs to exchange some visual content. Due to the monetization of this social media, some people became professional and invented new forms of visual creation. These new expressions also imply a certain tone, which combines a rapid flow of voice with the recurrence of humour. Some turned into professionals. Other social networks like Periscope, Twitch, Tiktok or Instagram are also new platforms that allow amateurs or artists to broadcast videos in parallel circuits.

*The 2 Lizards series* made by Meriem Bennani and Orian Barki Barki (2020) is one of those. It was put directly on Instagram before being bought by different museums around the world.



**Meriem Bennani**

Multimedia artist | Morocco, USA

**“Your recent *2 Lizards series* of videos were qualified by the New York Times as ‘Coronavirus Art Stars’, and they got acquired after you put them directly on Instagram. Can you tell us more?”**

It was indeed acquired by some institutions as a work of art, a bit like a first wave artifact. It works the same way as a work of art – you fill out a form and say how it should be shown. For us, it had to stay on Instagram, the idea is that people can

share it. We told them it could be in your collection, but we keep it on the internet. This implies special exhibition conditions for museums. When it's shown in physical spaces, we wanted it to be a particular experience, different from the experience possible online.

**Was it a problem for a museum to acquire a piece available online?**

It was the *sine qua non* condition. Its existence is defined by the fact that it circulated freely. It would have been silly for it not to understand that this was the essence of the project. (...) I think it's good because they're going to pay attention to the piece, and the acquisitions are going to finance the musicians.”

## Internet & new aesthetic forms of contemporary cinema

Public support schemes definitely need to understand and adapt themselves to this new digital audience. This is what Sten-Kristian Saluveer mentions when he talks about 'relevance' (see interview). This relevance needs to be understood through digital technologies and new visual practices today that social networks and new technologies convey.



## Sten-Kristian Saluveer

Head of Programming I  
NEXT I Marché du Film,  
Cannes I Estonia, France

"What becomes quite important is not anymore production but relevance. Let's presume that Eurimages continues its ideological agenda, which I think it should do, but in a more contemporary form, it becomes relevant. Why do European films stand out? How do we get the relevant European film to the audience? What role does the European ideology have to play there? I think Eurimages can do a lot of things to a digital native audience. If the audience is excluded from the conversation, it's basically financing something that doesn't go anywhere."

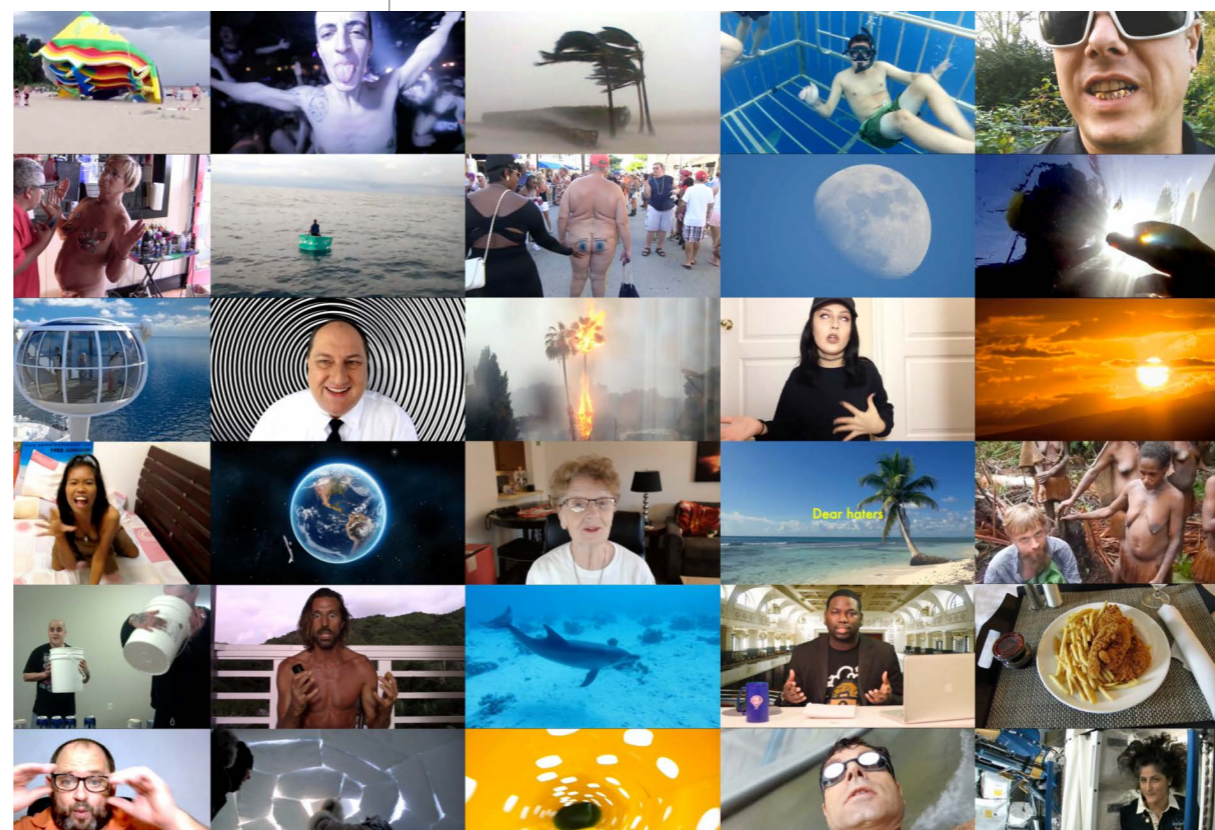
## Outside the screen: Extended Reality

There are various ways to explore new visual possibilities with new technologic tools. What is called XR implies VR (Virtual Reality), MR (Mixed Reality), or AR (Augmented Reality).

- In the **linear Virtual Reality**, users are transported in a virtual world thanks to a pair of glasses (Oculus Rift, Samsung Gear VR, or the HTC Vive). They can watch the film in 360 degrees and can't interfere with the story. In the **non-linear Virtual Reality**, it's the same, but the user can interact with the story. The film is then not totally linear.

- For **Mixed Reality**, it's the same as before but with mixed reality, which incorporates digital content (objects or virtual elements) into the real world by allowing these elements to interact with the environment. One of the most famous examples is *The Key*, by Céline Tricart, which was awarded at the Venice Biennale Cinema 2019. *The Key* is an interactive experience mixing immersive theatre and virtual reality.

- Concerning **AR (Augmented Reality)**, it superimposes digital content on the real world (virtual objects or elements, information, etc.). The most well-known AR was made by the Pokémon Company, where you can search for Pokémon in the streets. We can also mention the different aesthetic filters that Snapchat has been known for.



**Going South,**  
Dominic Gagnon (2018)

These different formats imply new schemes for helping these forms to flourish (see article “Non-conventionality in public support mechanisms”). In light of the roundtable discussion on XR, it seems the film industry could benefit from the XR current issues to think about its distribution system in a more 'holistic way'.

A crucial statement that is also connected to Extended Reality, to which participants of the roundtable predominantly concur with, is that XR shall be considered as a medium in its own right. For that reason, it seems difficult to integrate it into more traditional film funds. This reasoning convinced our study group to leave XR outside of the scope of recommendations for the new scheme of the Eurimages Lab Project Award.



## Michel Reilhac

Co-curator I  
Venice VR, Venice IFF I  
France, Italy

Excerpt of the roundtable on Digital, XR & Immersive media.

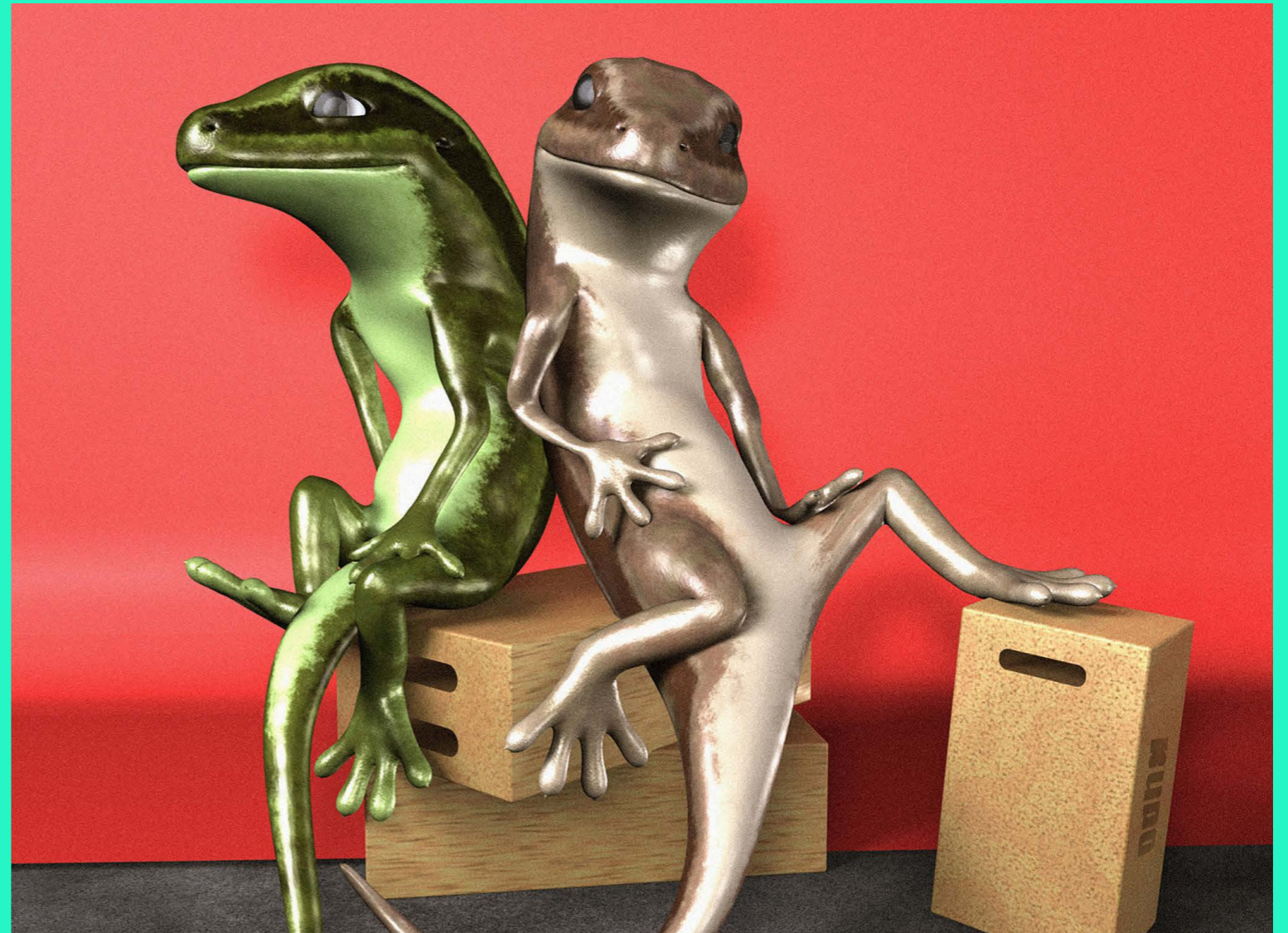
"Everything is connected between production and distribution. I would like you to think in a more holistic way and I would like you to stop compartmentalizing the different steps. It may have worked in cinema. I really think that digital media forces us to rethink the whole system which doesn't work anymore. With the crisis we are going through, we see an obsolescence of the system that is dying.

One of the aspects we need to rethink is the heart of the system. Development, research, writing, pre-production, sales, and distribution: all of this is so entwined that we need to challenge ourselves by thinking differently. For instance, in Venice, we invite distributors before the script is totally written, because the script will be influenced by the way the distribution strategy will be designed for the user's experience. All these dimensions need to be brought together in a circular way. At the same time, it needs to be specific and different from what has been made in cinema.”

## Chapter 2.

# Mapping the field of non-conventional cinema in Europe

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*2 Lizards,*  
Orian Barki, Meriem Bennani (2020)



*La Reina*  
Manuel Abramovich (2013)

By Elena López Riera

# Filmmakers & visual artists

## Juggling creative processes & funding strategies

The corpus we have chosen for our study is composed of interviews with filmmakers & visual artists from different countries, and whose work is situated at the centre of what we define as non-conventional cinema. We did our best to embrace a geographical and aesthetic diversity in order to better understand the current status of innovative film practices in Europe. These filmmakers work on different formats ranging from expanded documentary to fiction, from video installation to more scripted cinema.

Their works are regularly hosted in international festivals and for some of them, in the contemporary art circuit, with exhibitions in places such as the Tate Modern in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, or the MoMA in New York, creating bridges between two different markets. Their achievements offer clear evidence of the importance of non-conventional cinema in the European landscape. The Locarno's Golden Leopard, the Cannes' Caméra d'Or, the Oscar Academy Award, or the Prix Marcel Duchamp, are some of the official recognitions our speakers have received.

During our interviews, we addressed specific questions about project financing, distribution networks, applications to funding bodies, as well as the specificities of their different work models. The objective was to be able to articulate the aesthetic aspects of their works with the pragmatic and economic ones. We analysed how conventional and non-conventional filmmaking coexist at different stages of the workflow and we also compared the differences between cinema and other artistic disciplines in terms of financing strategies.

The outcome of our research can be divided in two main categories: the creative processes and the funding strategies.

### Creative processes

In this paragraph are laid out considerations made by our speakers about their creative process. The definition of their work, the communication of it to national and international funds and the protection of their creative freedom have been the most recurrent subjects.

#### Documentary/fiction ; Conventional/non conventional.

It is a common idea among our speakers that the distinction between documentary and fiction is no longer useful. Such definition is an obstacle during the communication between funds and filmmakers. There has been unanimity in stating that institutions should be more open in terms of permeability of genres, formats and languages. Boris Mitic points out: "Whatever could be defined as a film should have no inner boundaries".

Regarding the "label" of non-conventional cinema, the points of view of the interviewees underline that non-conventional cinema is not a sub-genre of conventional cinema. Its unique nature should be protected by the institutions. Albert Serra insists on the responsibility of public funds towards this kind of cinema, which has not the same commercial value than the mainstream one: "The most important thing is that commissions take on the fact that a project can start and finish within a public institution, with public support only. On the contrary, for me it would be necessary to make a huge differentiation and stop financing conventional cinema".

## Filmmakers & visual artists

### Creative processes & funding strategies

#### Presenting an application: the script dilemma

Scripts are not always adapted to non-conventional cinema works. Very often, directors working in this field are obliged to “fake” a script in order to be eligible for public film fund. Evaluating commissions should be more open to different script forms.

Sara Fattahi claims that very often she fakes scripts in order to fit into public funds rules and expectations. “Writing models for applications to funds are too closed. I am writing what someone else wants me to write”, she says. Eric Baudelaire states something similar: “With a really written narrative structure you are killing the surprise of discovering what could happen. For me this kind of writing or decision about how the films starts and ends, should be taken on by the shooting and the editing processes.” Manuel Abramovich also insists on the contradiction of being obliged to write a script for the presentation of his work: “We always have to write a whole treatment or a full script that I call “hypothetical”. I always want to do the opposite; I want to go on with the flow and improvise but this is not contemplated by the fund. On one hand, it helps me to understand what I would like to do, on the other, it is a real pity because we know that the film will change, so practically we are agreeing on a lie, on both sides.”

This issue is well summarised by Fiona Tan, when she states: “Some filmmakers don’t write because of the film they really want to make, but they write in order to please the funding body.” On the other hand, for Albert Serra script is not the problem: “The problem is not in the writing of the script itself, but that commission readers are sometimes not prepared to accept new languages.” Corneliu Porumboiu goes in the same direction: “A proper script makes the process easier for the filmmaker himself. His

movie could be different from classical structure in three acts, but it has to be very well explained. Non-conventional films have to have a structure – just another kind.” László Nemes summarizes: “The emphasis on the script worries me a little bit more. I do believe in script writing, I am not saying ‘No Script’, but I think we should be careful with the sanctification of the plot. It can be misleading. The main question should be how this project wants to achieve its vision and what are the forms linked to that.”

#### Reconsidering the model development / production / post-production

It is common among our speakers to consider writing and shooting, and even editing, as an ongoing process both in terms of aesthetical research and financing. As pointed out by Manuel Abramovich: “There is no funding until now that understands films that are done and conceived during their making.” Lots of filmmakers ask for more support during the writing process. Sara Fattahi suggests creating writing grants going directly to the filmmaker and not to the producer; also Katrin Olafsdottir expresses this idea. Boris Mitic underlines the necessity of supporting films during the development stage: “I think films should be supported more in the development phase. I will recommend Eurimages to set up something like the French CNC called ‘reinforced development.’” Other filmmakers, like Eric Baudelaire, suggest that the post-production process is key: “For example, the ability for a film to apply with a not finished film, because this is not for development, or writing, or postproduction. I think non-conventional cinema needs specific grants for post-production.” Many filmmakers start shooting at their own expense and then they ask for support, like Carlos Casas and Sara Fattahi.

## Funding strategies

A general idea is that non-conventional films are less expensive than conventional ones. This is not always the case. Boris Mitic explains: “We must accept that a documentary could deserve the same budget than a fiction.” Rosa Barba also reminds us that the crew is often the same for a conventional or a non-conventional project, as the craft needed is the same. Salaries for editors, sound designers and other technicians need to be taken into account.

#### Funding sources

Non-conventional projects often combine different sources of funding: private and public funds (private investors, public grants, festivals industry awards, museums, galleries) and implement international co-production strategies as well. Most filmmakers interviewed agree on the idea that financial strategies for non-conventional projects are based on different sources of money such as institutions, international co-productions, festivals and foundations. Rosa Barba describes very clearly this experience: “My works are often commissioned by museums. I’m very free on how to handle the budget. Sometimes, it’s not enough to make the film. But then I connect with another institution, so I ask them to put the budget together.”

## Evaluating commissions

Juries and evaluating commissions and their composition within the public funding system are a recurrent concern for filmmakers. Most of the filmmakers claim that they encounter difficulties when applying with their projects to fund commissions.

László Nemes deplores that: “The current functioning of international film funds and their way of evaluating a project its actually not fostering cinematic unique visions, but on the contrary is contributing to a standardisation of cinema.” Sarah Fattahi states: “With my new project, producers told me not to include a single line where I would say: ‘this project is going to be experimental’ because they thought this will be chaos.” Corneliu Porumboiu says: “The application should combine words and visuals, and the jury should be formed of the right people who can really appreciate this kind of cinema and equally understand the potential of the project.” Eric Baudelaire adds: “I would encourage [them] to find the best (and a more economic) way to organize the panels of experts that attribute the grants (industry people, but also filmmakers), and make the criteria of evaluation more open and also to put the maximal amount of money on the grants themselves, and not into the infrastructures of the festival.”



Chaos,  
Sara Fattahi (2018)

**Filmmakers & visual artists**

Creative processes &amp; funding strategies

**Sources of funding outside cinema**

Museums are interesting partners for non-conventional cinema: they usually give more freedom to artists, as Boris Mitic remarks: “The interest of museums and art institutions in cinema is very important, because they have a large vision on new languages and they’re not interventionist.” Fiona Tan also underlines a greater freedom compared to cinema funds. On the other hand, museums or private investors don’t give such big amounts of money as public cinema funds do.

Gallery and museum shows are based on previous works of the artists: neither script, nor developed presentation are usually demanded for a specific piece. The curator/artist relationship is based on trust and this is an aspect that has been often emphasized. Private collectors (such as foundations or benefactors) are just a remote possibility, because in the contemporary art market it is still very hard to speculate with films. Nevertheless, sometimes collectors buy audio-visual pieces.

**Distribution concerns**

Distribution is not an easy moment for a non-conventional film. This is why distribution support seems to be essential. Albert Serra insists on this idea of supporting distribution: “Distribution is the most difficult part. First of all because people no longer go to the cinema and the new generations have already lost this experience.”

New VOD platforms - such as Mubi - allow this kind of films to reach larger audiences; most of the filmmakers agree with the company’s policy in terms of screening fees, that is fairer than bigger platforms such as Netflix or Amazon. The proliferation of streaming services and other form of distribution beyond the classical ones are hailed as a positive factor, as they can be important resources in spreading and protecting the diversity of non-conventional cinema.


The conclusions drawn from the interviews with the artists/filmmakers mainly focus on the ways in which projects are evaluated from public funding bodies.











Almost all of the speakers agree that the composition of the members of the commissions assessing the projects should be more open and diverse, that they should be able to decode new formats and languages. The ways of thinking, producing and distributing films have evolved in recent years, due to greater access to technology and the consolidation of the VOD platforms. Financing funds should adapt to a new context in which the conception, development, production and consumption of films have changed.

Many of the filmmakers interviewed suggest that the workflow be considered in a diversified way. Several of them write, shoot and edit in parallel, as a lively and mutating process. A reshaping of the materials requested for a standard application for a cinema fund is also considered necessary. The script, as a classic way to describe the process of a film, before shooting, does not suit all practices: the members of the commissions should also be more flexible with the writing forms.

Some filmmakers also suggest greater inclusion and synergy with other stakeholders, such as festivals, curators, programmers and museums, in order to think of new strategies for the production and distribution of non-conventional cinema. Non-conventional cinema should not be considered a sub-genre of conventional cinema, but it does need special protection in economic terms and specific support, since its forms of production and distribution are distinct. In general, many of the speakers demand protection for their work practice (that is often solitary and vulnerable); some of them ask for direct support without having to go through a producer.

Many of them have insisted that their work models are flexible, open and do not always coincide with the paths of conventional cinema. They would appreciate a fund like Eurimages to accept different ways of approaching a film project, and more generally, to protect the creative freedom at the base of their artistic practice. As Eric Baudelaire suggests: “The future of cinema will surely go through them”, since they are the ones who can bring innovative ideas adapted to the new context in which we live.


**Speakers**

	<b>Manuel Abramovich</b> Filmmaker, film director & cinematographer   Argentina		<b>Rosa Barba</b> Visual artist   Italy
	<b>Eric Baudelaire</b> Artist & filmmaker   France, USA		<b>Carlos Casas</b> Filmmaker & visual artist   Spain
	<b>Sara Fattahi</b> Artist & animator   Syria		<b>Boris Mitic</b> Documentary director, producer & lecturer   Serbia
	<b>László Nemes</b> Film director & screenwriter   Hungary		<b>Corneliu Porumboiu</b> Film director & producer   Romania
	<b>Albert Serra</b> Filmmaker & producer   Catalonia, Spain		<b>Fiona Tan</b> Artist & filmmaker   Netherlands



*Gold Is All There Is,*  
Andrea Caccia (Produced by Marco Alessi - Eurimages Lab Project Award 2017)

By Anna Gudkova

# Producers

## Empowering a vivid & collaborative community

Producers have been a key category for the understanding of how to implement the future of the Eurimages Lab Project Award. Their contribution has been paramount for measuring the **scope of how the production practices around Europe differ**. All our speakers have an impressive festival track-record (Berlinale, Cannes, or Locarno among others), and some have interacted in prominent art contexts. We chose to focus on two categories of producers: those who are fully pledged to non-conventional films; and those who are experienced with classical arthouse works, as well as being engaged in more cutting-edge films.

### Initiating a collaboration with a filmmaker/artist

The consulted producers are used to selecting projects to work with at a very early stage of development with or without a script. The importance of the previous works of a director and their approach were often listed among the primary aspects to be taken in account. Producers need to understand the way of working and the vision of their filmmaker and artists. Therefore, they pay a great attention to their body of work when starting on a new project.

This doesn't imply that a project is not

carefully evaluated, only that the filmography of a director often functions as a guarantee of a fruitful collaboration. These dynamics are well summarised by Marco Alessi, producer of three films that received the Eurimages Lab Award, when he says: "Collaboration with a filmmaker is a matter of trust. The whole package is much more important than the script only. Words do not work for some projects." French producer Olivier Marboeuf, who is not only a producer within Spectre Production but also a curator and storyteller, agrees: "I always choose people. If I cannot believe in a person I don't take the project. You can fail making even the best film, but if you keep walking at the end, you will find something really precious."

Regarding elements that are considered before starting a collaboration, the producers often ask for:

- **A written description of the project** that might and might not include a script. By description we mean the main argument or story, the characters involved, the motivation;
- **Visual description and material:** it could be a mood board, a portfolio, rushes, references which are valuable to understand the direction of the project;
- **Previous works by the director** which are relevant for the upcoming project and representative of their way of creating.

**Producers**

Empowering a vivid &amp; collaborative community

**Advocating for ‘free scholarships’ & new talents**

When asked about the effectiveness of an award given **in late production or post-production**, there is a general consensus in stating that **such an award may be useful**. Not only to cover the costs of the post-production facilities, but also to pay back debts accumulated during the production. This is echoed as well by some of the directors who emphasised that the post-production is a very delicate phase with fixed costs and one that cannot be improvised. However, it was pointed out by a great majority of our speakers that **support in post-production doesn't have a vocation to foster and stimulate new projects**. Several speakers are very vocal about this, such as Serbian producer Stefan Ivančić, who is also a filmmaker and a programmer for Locarno: “There are a lot of post-production awards, but people need money at other stages – to reach the post-production. I really don't think it makes sense to give Eurimages awards at such a late stage. It could be used for development or production where the money is needed most.”

**Filmmakers and artists often miss protection & support at the beginning of the creative process**. The lack of support in the initial phase of a project can heavily influence its own outcome. In order to ease the hardships linked to the development of a project and therefore its future production, a financial support at this stage would be the most welcome. This would be more effective for both directors and producers and would facilitate the film's life. The producers with experience in art circuits have suggested as **best practice a “free-to-spend scholarship” for artists** provided at the development phase. “If there could be sums that are given in complete freedom, and aren't project-based, small grants maybe, but to more people, they would be much more effective for developing both the field and the individual artist/filmmaker”, says Marie Logie, a Belgian producer and co-founder of the Ghent-based Courtisane festival.

Berlin-based producer Michel Balagué also goes in this direction: “The fundraising strategy to fund non-conventional films is often to disguise and to ‘stamp’ them as ‘conventional films’ since there's so little funding for experimental films. Financial support by art institutions is very precious: it's small, but free – with absolutely no attempt at creative control.”

Portuguese producer Rodrigo Areias also mentions the added value of having a foundation attached, mentioning the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation: “This fund cannot necessarily change the financial reality of the project in any considerate way, but can help identify the project as gallery material.” Areias is also more positive about his experiences of presenting non-conventional projects to film funds: “One does not need to pretend or to lie about it, not at all. One needs to find the way of how to communicate the intention behind the project in the prescribed format. In the end, **it's about showing the ability and readiness to make such a project, but also respect towards the whole system**. Nobody will go after you if the film changes during the production, even if radically. The system is supporting the freedom and understands that everything can change.”

These mechanisms are often quoted, but at the same time, there is also the need to find **a way to help first-time filmmakers**, for which the assessment is more complicated. It's hard for young directors to find a producer, not to mention financial or institutional support. There should be a structure helping young artists to be considered and accepted in this competitive field, also in consideration of the substantial differences that the cinema funds have around Europe.

Croatian producer Siniša Juričić emphasises this point: “There should be support for young non-conventional filmmakers. Nobody will give any funding in Eastern Europe to someone who isn't a market brand yet – but who could become one in 10 years. I think there should be a support system for such talents.” Stefan Ivančić agrees wholeheartedly: “It could be interesting also I think to have specific focus on first time directors.”

**Addressing distribution & audience outreach creatively**

One of the most important thoughts **that many producers share, is that the way a film is distributed, defines how it is made**. Where the film will be shown **influences how it is developed**. This assumption also requires active thinking about the moment the Eurimages Lab Project Award should be granted.

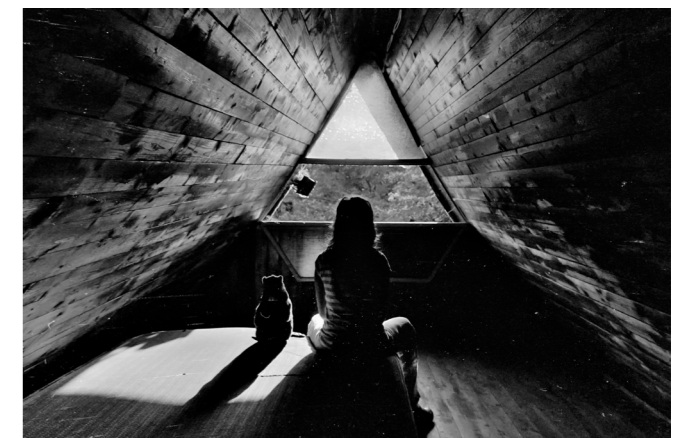
An essential aspect of the support of non-conventional cinema is **how to help to reach out to the audience**. Many producers are certain that the audience is considerably bigger than the expectation. ARTE channel commissioning editor Rasha Salti is clear on that point: “I think people in charge of programming of TV channels are lot more conservative than the audience. **Support should also be provided to maximise the visibility of those films**. Not only should we encourage distributors, but we also need to incite film critics and bloggers to write about them and make small festivals and museums interested in them. Right now they only exist in this microcosm, either composed of people that are passionate about this kind of cinema or professionals. Circulation should become much easier.” Chiara Marañón, in charge of programming & distribution for MUBI, details the strategy of the streaming platform in favor of non-conventional cinema: “We are very conscious that we need to gain the trust of the audience showing them films that they have already heard about. It's thanks to these films that we are trusted so we can bring our audience to other kinds of films. That balance is always going to be important for us.”

Until now the fate of non-conventional films was mostly defined by two professional categories: distributors/sales agents and festival curators/programmers. Once the film was selected in the main strands of a renowned festival it could be labelled arthouse, thus prompting wider interest by the industry and the audience alike. This raises the **issue of the context** in which a project of non-conventional cinema should be presented.

Distributors tend to ignore films that are only presented in non-conventional circuits because they either don't consider them attractive or don't know how to work with them. In order to avoid the ‘ghetto effect’ and at the same time to **ensure a benevolent market environment**, the events in which those films are presented should be carefully chosen taking in consideration their marketing benefit and the presence of a dedicated industry.

Producers also underlined the importance of working with distributors and sales agents in order to promote the awareness of this kind of cinema. The traditional distribution system is in constant mutation and even more so because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Producers consider it a perfect opportunity to re-think the organisation of marketing and promotion.

**Museums, art galleries, and other public cultural spaces may offer opportunities** and ways to attract a wider and more diverse audience. Art gallerist Chantal Crousel rightfully says that: “Often the public of exhibitions and art lovers are aware of what is happening in cinemas. On the other hand, it is still not explicit enough for cinema goers that it is possible to find great cinema also in museums - both as art works or as films featured in an art space. A greater awareness of normal cinema goers towards the presence of films in museums should be built. As often artist films are able to astonish cinephiles and widen their idea of cinema.”



*Moonless summer,*  
Stefan Ivancic (2014)

**Producers**

Empowering a vivid &amp; collaborative community

**Building a community for non-conventional cinema**

Our speakers addressed the importance of creating a nurturing environment for non-conventional projects. The Eurimages awards should be part of the supporting structure for non-conventional cinema. Besides the obvious importance of a financial support, it has been widely recognised that this alone it is not enough.

It has been expressed that there is a **need for a system consisting of training, platforms and residences** for filmmakers and artists. Those spaces would considerably help discussions and foster exchanges among participants. The idea is **to create moments of gathering** to think about common issues and to work with experts on the specificity of each project: places that can be compared to **think tanks** in which creativity meets pragmatic knowledge. The networking potentials of those spaces will help to raise awareness of non-conventional cinema in the industry environment and to build a strong community.

It should be noted that many countries lack support as well as training schemes for non-conventional producers/directors (i.e., ex-Soviet, Balkans, and other countries with limited production capacities).

Marie Logie describes the best practices of the Flemish Film Fund, that not only provides financial support, but also guides the producers during the whole process, and serves as an “open house” for creative people. Olivier Marboeuf feels the same need: “I would suggest organising something more like a workshop than a pitch to decide on an award. If you spend a day with producers, filmmakers, and experts talking about the project, allowing them to see you, to understand you - then I’m sure that even if participants don’t receive the prize, they will be happy to participate. Because they will take away

feedback, knowledge, and connections. Most of the time, artists are pitching instead of really sharing what they have got in them”. Erwin M. Schmidt, managing director of the German Film Producers Association, warns about the **limitations of once-in-a-year events**, such as the ones organized by festivals, for a sustainable community: “The filmmaking community doesn’t work like that. A community needs to be organized and managed throughout the year, and the festival cannot do that. »

**Conclusion**

The Eurimages Lab Project Award is seen by producers as extremely important for the development of non-conventional cinema in Europe. The point that remained central was **the positioning of the awards and its capacity to empower a community of filmmakers that still lacks recognition** in the mainstream circuit. In terms of policies, the speakers recognised the potential of the award in inspiring other funds and thus having a deeper impact on the development of innovative practices on a European level. Due to the prestige of Eurimages, the symbolic value of the award is considered critical as it can attract the interest of the market.

The way in which non-conventional projects are presented is strongly influencing their destiny with their prospective public. Thus, the need for producers to see their community not as a ‘ghetto’ for the happy few, but rather as a **reservoir of high-quality works** that are ready to be presented to the market.

The words of French/Danish producer Marianne Slot aptly summarise the stakes recognised by the producers during our research: “A space in Eurimages for non-conventional cinema, for new languages, is most important. It shows that the fund remains open to daring projects; its financing has a strong symbolic value and opens other doors.”

**Speakers****Rodrigo Arcias**

Producer |  
Bando à Parte  
& Board, APCA |  
Portugal

**Olivier Marboeuf**

Producer | Spectre  
Production | France

**Michel Balagué**

Producer |  
Volte Slagen |  
Germany

**Chiara Marañón**

Programming  
& Distribution |  
MUBI | UK

**Chantal Crousel**

Gallerist |  
Galerie Chantal  
Crousel | France

**Rasha Salti**

Commissioning editor  
for La Lucarne |  
ArteFrance | France

**Stefan Ivančić**

Producer |  
Non-Aligned Films |  
Serbia

**Erwin Schmidt**

Managing director  
of the German  
Film Producers  
Association |  
Germany

**Marie Logie**

Producer |  
Auguste Orts |  
Belgium



*White on White,*  
Théo Court (2019)

By Esra Demirkiran

# Incubators & Exhibitors

## Championing radical cinema

While mapping the field of non-conventional cinema, giving space to incubators and exhibitors is crucial. These platforms are the places where non-conventional films get showcased, where filmmakers and artists come together with other people in the film industry to exchange on projects that are innovative, courageous and looking for a new cinematic language. For this study, we have interviewed representatives of about twenty different incubators/exhibitors that are active in Europe.

This article aims to collate different case studies that champion radical cinema. In the first part, we will introduce how film festivals today think about the issue of audience, and what can be their strategies to engage with their audiences. In the second part, we will present the museums' and art centres' best practices of supporting non-conventional cinema. In the third part, we will discuss the different parameters of labs, residencies, and schools working with non-conventional filmmakers.

### Film Festivals

We exchanged with a dozen film festival directors and/or curators from B3 Biennale of the Moving Image, Berlinale Forum, Geneva IFF, Ji.hlava IDFF, Locarno FF, IFF Rotterdam, San Sebastian Film Festival, Toronto IFF's Wavelengths, and Visions du Réel – either in one-to-one interviews or during a round table discussion. It was important to include these festivals into this study since they are the pioneer spots that curate and programme non-conventional moving image.

As festivals are the main platforms for films to meet their audience, it is necessary to understand their logic: what are the trends? How do they establish a relationship with the audience in terms of programming and promoting non-conventional films? How do they support non-conventional cinema? While talking about the current situation of film festivals, Giona A. Nazzaro, artistic director of Locarno FF, mentions **the responsibility of festivals in supporting non-conventional cinema**: “The festivals and decision makers have the biggest responsibility in supporting innovative filmmakers. We should ask ourselves: what are we doing or what have we done in order to protect individuality, freedom of expression and freedom of thinking otherwise?”

## Incubators & Exhibitors

### Championing radical cinema

A discussion about the responsibility of a festival reveals the discussion about the audience, which is always a precarious topic. But it should also be mentioned that the interviews done for the study indicated that communication with the audience is discussed by the industry more than in the past, since the spectator experience is rapidly changing in today's world particularly with the online platforms. Giona A. Nazzaro considers **audience to be a fabricated concept** that comes from a certain ideological and financial project: "The same way it is fabricated, it can be de-fabricated. Besides the fact that audience is the sum of people I am trying to reach, this is pretty much an imaginary bunch."

Andréa Picard, programmer of Toronto IFF's Wavelengths, thinks that **curators and programmers always underestimate their audience**. Drawing on her experience, she concludes: "Toronto is a very big and absolutely commercial type of event. And there always has been an audience for edgy projects. We should not create a ghetto for them." This raises questions about how the film festivals

showcasing non-conventional films engage with the audience, especially, when it comes to **methods of testing the limits of the 'secured' crowd as well as of reaching a new one**.

The festivals discuss how to extend the audience and bring their programme together with a larger community. Anaïs Emery, head of Geneva IFF, prefers a **combination of both structured designs and defined formats together with undefined experimental spaces** in which the audiences could be taken out of their usual consuming patterns and be surprised by the experience. Berlinale Forum's Head, Cristina Nord, shared her experience with an initiative run in cooperation with several programmers that allowed Berlinale Forum to reach a bigger audience. Andrea Picard mentions that being part of a big festival like Toronto gives them an opportunity to introduce more challenging pieces to a wider range of audiences, since big Hollywood galas and short experimental films are all part of the same festival. If there is an audience interested in discovering something new, they could easily find their way.

### Speakers



**Anaïs Emery**

Executive director  
& artistic director I  
Geneva IFF I  
Switzerland



**Andréa Picard**

Senior Film Curator I  
Toronto International  
Film Festival I Canada



**Cristina Nord**

Head of Berlinale  
Forum I Berlinale I  
Germany



**Giona A. Nazzaro**

Artistic Director I  
Locarno Film Festival I  
Switzerland

Integration of new technologies in festivals is also part of the discussion in the festival circuits. The crossroads of technology and cinema creates new narratives, but also raises questions in regard to its accessibility and distribution. Anaïs Emery points out that it is not easy for every festival to screen films with special technical requirements. Anna Katharina Gerson from B3 Biennial of Moving Image also points out the difficulty of including video games in a festival resulting from the nature of the gaming industry.

There are various **examples of projects and initiatives aiming to promote non-conventional filmmakers** and visual artists. While some are still running, others were forced to end due to various complications. Wavelengths (Toronto IFF) initiated a project that was run in **cooperation with galleries** that included 10 exhibitions per year with the participation of works by contemporary artists and filmmakers. Although the project existed as a satellite of the program, they had to end it because of production costs. Emilie Bujès pointed out a partnership of Visions du Réel with **On & For**, a cooperative project conceived to advance and strengthen the field of artists' moving image. B3 Biennale of Moving Image, as a cross-media moving image festival, equally accommodates films, video games, or VR projects. Moreover, they bestow an **annual BEN Award** in 6 categories (Most Important Artist, Most Influential Artist, Best Film, Best Moving Image Artwork, Best Upcoming Moving Image Artwork, Best VR). One of the pioneering projects was **Art:Film initiative** of IFF Rotterdam. It aimed to support non-conventional cinema, films by visual artists as well as edgy and innovative moving image (see the special section). The initiative by Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, **Emerging Producers**, that accompanies and promotes each year a cohort of producers who are developing hybrid film projects, can also be mentioned.

### Speakers



**Émilie Bujès**

Artistic Director I  
Visions du Réel I  
Switzerland



**Katharina Gerson**

Head of  
Programming  
& Cooperation I  
B3 Biennial  
of the Moving  
Image I Germany



**Marek Hovorka**

Festival Director I  
Jihlava International  
Documentary  
Film Festival I  
Czech Republic

## Incubators & Exhibitors

### Championing radical cinema

### Museums and Art Centres

Museums and Art Centres present a relevant force in dissemination and promotion of non-conventional filmmaking since they act as either exhibitors of the film work by visual artists, or film curators for their museums. There are also some unique examples of museums financing moving image work by artists.

The museums and art centres we interviewed for the study work with both filmmakers and visual artists, who create non-conventional moving image: the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Haus der Kunst in Munich, Tabakalera in San Sebastian, or the EYE Filmmuseum in Amsterdam. In Eastern Europe, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow also provide relevant best practices.

There are two main aspects that museums and arts centres are discussing while working with non-conventional filmmakers and artists: first is the screening or **exhibition of the work**, then the **financing of non-conventional films**.

The screening of video artwork and films have a different set of requirements. How do the museums and art centres distinguish between the screening room and the exhibition? A visual artwork, whether it is a single or a multi-channel video, is mostly screened in the art space. The expectations of the artist for the light, sound and the space are different than for a film screened

in a cinema.

For a filmmaker screening a film in a dark room, on a relatively big screen, a specific quality of the image and sound is a necessity. Moreover, **inclusion in an exhibition allows a dialogue with other works at the art space**, which isn't the case for a film exhibited in a cinema.



**Charlène Dinhut**

Curator |  
Centre Pompidou | France

Some museums or art spaces have their own cinemas. They may exhibit video work by an artist in the art space and screen the film of that specific artist in the cinema. Charlène Dinhut, curator in the Centre Pompidou in Paris, mentions the difference with a special focus on the sound setting: "For films, it is necessary to create an area isolated from the external sound that is hard to create in co-presence with other rooms. It seems to me that many artists think of their practice more for the exhibition space or the internet than for the room."

To what extent could art museums finance non-conventional cinema? What could be done by the art centres to fund or financially support the films of video artists? There are two good examples of funding for artist films. Both are in form of an award.

The EYE Filmmuseum confers a yearly **Eye Art & Film Prize** to highlight and to stimulate filmmakers and artists working in cinema. Established in 2005, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw used to give in the early 2010s the **Film Award** in collaboration with The Polish Film Institute and the Wajda Film School. In 2018, the museum for instance gave a Film fellowship and residency to Syrian filmmaker Reem Al-Ghazzi. The Eye Art & Film Prize is worth 25 000 Euros and the Film Award in the museum in Warsaw was 500 000 PLN - around 110 000 Euros. While EYE Filmmuseum awards the artist, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw co-produced the awarded projects and included them in their collection.

These prizes are small when we consider the funds for films. Both Sandra den Hamer, the Head of the EYE Filmmuseum, and Andrea Lissoni, the artistic director of Haus der Kunst, point out that most visual artists work alone and can do a lot with that amount of money. Andrea Lissoni also considers establishing a fund to produce artists' films at Haus der Kunst. At this point, the **role of private investment in supporting non-conventional cinema is rising**. Andrea Lissoni voiced that due to their high relevancy, the private players should be involved in the supporting scheme. Another mean of support of the visual artists' film works discussed is a direct acquisition of the films by an art centre or a gallery.

### Labs, residencies, and schools

Labs and residencies are somehow the locomotive of creating non-conventional cinema, especially in Europe. They are the platforms of the first unveiling of the projects to the institutions and encounters with industry professionals, while looking for support. Schools and workshops are also places that provide the students a deeper insight on the kind of cinema they would like to make.

### Speakers



**Sandra den Hammer**

Director |  
EYE Filmmuseum |  
Netherlands



**Andrea Lissoni**

Artistic director |  
Haus der Kunst |  
Germany, Italy

## Incubators & Exhibitors

Championing radical cinema

For this study, among many institutions, we interviewed representatives of **Groupe Ouest's Less is More** (France & European partners), **The Animation Workshop** and VIA University

College (Denmark), **FidLab** (France), **Bergman Foundation & Bergman Estate Residency** (Sweden), **Future Expanded** (Italy), **Le Fresnoy** (France) and **Casa de Velázquez** (Spain/France).



### Speakers



**Fabienne Aguado**  
Director of Artistic Studies I  
Casa de Velazquez I Spain, France



**Tim Leborgne**  
Leader, Talent & Skills Development  
& Director of Open Workshop I VIA University College I Denmark



**Leonardo Bigazzi**  
Curator I Lo Schermo Dell'arte I Italy



**Fabienne Moris**  
FIDLab Director I FIDMarseille I France



**Jan Holmberg**  
CEO I The Bergman Foundation I Sweden



**Natalia Trebik**  
Head of distribution & festivals,  
Le Fresnoy I Studio National des Arts Contemporains I France



**Antoine Le Bos**  
Co-director & Artistic Director I Le Groupe Ouest/Less Is More I France

How do these institutions support non-conventional filmmakers? How do they make the selection? What do they think about the 'script problem' that non-conventional filmmakers have? What are their suggestions to resolve filmmakers' problems when applying to different juries and selection committees? At what stage could non-conventional filmmakers be supported?

Labs, residencies, and schools are among the first places where filmmakers and visual artists develop their projects and collect feedback. Every year, these institutions receive many applications and make their selection following different sets of criteria, whilst always looking at the quality of the project. Their experience with selecting and working with filmmakers and artists from different backgrounds is crucial.

Due to the nature of their specific project, non-conventional filmmakers often don't have a proper script to submit to a platform or a fund. Nevertheless, they often either write a script just "to access opportunities that they would otherwise not be able to access" as Leonardo Bigazzi from Future Expanded remarks, or their project risks being rejected.

**A reconsideration of the submission materials and evaluation criteria**, especially the traditional understanding of the script might provide an easier access for the non-conventional projects. For Antoine Le Bos, artistic director of the Less is More Training programme, even if there is no script, there should always be a road map of the project. He also suggests submitting 5-minute video instead of written materials: "A script is closer to a novel, a filmmaker explaining the project in a video is closer to a film."

Fabienne Moris, Head of FIDLab, thinks that establishing different criteria for evaluation are

necessary for the existence of non-conventional films. She thinks that although platforms and markets are free to host the type of cinema they want, if they base their selection solely on the script, they cut themselves off from non-conventional cinema.

Fabienne Aguado, Head of artistic studies at the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid, mentions that their residency is one of the few places where filmmakers and artists can send projects without a script and still convince the jury.

Tim Leborgne, Head of the Residency Programme at Animation Workshop, VIA University College, works only with animation artists for which the creative process does not start with a script, but with images.

Jan Holmberg, CEO of the Bergman Foundation and member of the selection committee of the Bergman Estate, confirms that the visual artists and filmmakers staying at the residency are selected on the basis of project notes, and not a script.

The issue of the timing of the support is a separate discussion. While some industry professionals argue that it is more difficult to explain non-conventional projects in early stages and the support should be allocated in a later stage (late production or post-production), the majority sees the early stages as the most suitable. Antoine Le Bos thinks that in order not to throw money out of the window, non-conventional filmmakers should be supported in the development phase. According to Leonardo Bigazzi, these projects should be supported at the beginning, when they need the basic funding on which they can build everything else. Moreover, he laments about lack of "a radical project that is willing to support research and vision, regardless of the outcome of the market."

## Incubators & Exhibitors

Championing radical cinema

Leonardo Bigazzi's suggestion brings us to the question of the composition of selection committees. The common practice is that the members of the juries don't come from a background related to non-conventional, edgy, or non-narrative cinema. Although there are funds focusing on innovative, experimental films, in most cases, the composition of the juries stays disputable. Fabienne Moris thinks that in the commissions, there should be **people**

**from anthropology, philosophy, sociology as well as writers, artists and producers.** Fabienne Aguado says that there is no need to ask a non-conventional filmmaker to send her/his project to a commission, where the members will not be able to read or understand it. Antoine Le Bos concludes that the problem is not the categories of people; it's about their **ability to feel and to anticipate what a film will be when they are just confronted with potentialities.**



### Speaker | Tabakalera



**Maialen Beloki**

Deputy Director |  
Tabakalera | Spain

Based in San Sebastian in Spain, Tabakalera is an **international centre for contemporary culture**. It has an interesting and rich structure, where a festival, an exhibition centre, a residency and a film school are put together in the same building. The different institutions are **San Sebastian FF, Elías Querejeta Film School, Etxepare Basque Institute, the Basque Film Archive, the Kutxa Foundation, LABe and Zineuskadi**. We wanted to understand how this unique example functions and how it champions non-conventional cinema.

Maialen Beloki, Deputy Director of San Sebastian FF and Head of 'Festival of the Whole Year' at Tabakalera, talks about the three main objectives that all the institutions have:

- **Training** and the transmission of film knowledge.
- **Development** of new talent.
- **Research.**

"Each institution makes its own decisions, have its own budget but at the same time, they work together on different projects. For example, members of the board of the film school are from Basque Film Archive, San Sebastian FF and Tabakalera. Another example: the residency programme is organized by Tabakalera, San Sebastian FF and the film school.

'Festival of the Whole Year' and the Residency Programme are two interesting projects that Tabakalera organizes. 'Festival of the Whole Year' is like a festival that includes screenings, talks by filmmakers and research programmes which runs all year long. The residency programme invites five projects for each term. There is one Basque project, one Spanish project, one international project, one project of an alumni of NEST Film Students Meeting of San Sebastian FF and one project of a student at the film school.

When it comes to non-conventional cinema, Maialen Beloki says that: "In the residency, different types of cinema and cinematic experiences are promoted. In the exhibition centre, they work with visual artists and non-conventional filmmakers. They have exhibitions about expanded or hybrid cinema, and a summer school for visual artists."



## Speakers | IFF Rotterdam - the Art:Film Initiative & CineMart.



**Tobias Pausinger**

Head of Development  
and Acquisitions |  
The Match Factory |  
Germany



**Jacobine van der Vloed**

Director  
& Head of Studies |  
ACE Producers |  
Netherlands



**Marit van den Elshout**

Head of IFFR Pro |  
International Film  
Festival Rotterdam |  
Netherlands

The International Film Festival Rotterdam, as a large festival welcoming many different cinema voices under one hub, has experience with different actions supporting non-conventional cinema. One is **Art:Film initiative**, and the other one is the IFFR Pro, the industry section of IFF Rotterdam which includes **CineMart** and Hubert Bals Fund.

Art:Film started under the umbrella of CineMart, and it was a pioneering initiative at the time. It was established in 2011 by Jacobine van der Vloed, currently Head of ACE Producers, and Tobias Pausinger, currently Head of Acquisitions and Development at Match Factory, it ceased to exist in 2017. Art:Film was a platform connecting visual art and cinema. Each year artist films were selected and conferences & panel discussions organized. Already before establishing the initiative, both had kept note of artists applying to co-production markets with feature projects. Those were the days when visual artists (e.g., Steve McQueen or Apichatpong Weerasethakul) started to have huge success at film festivals.

Tobias Pausinger and Jacobine van der Vloed say: "Back then, we saw the trend of visual artists who had huge success in the art world and who potentially could finance a film because of their name. **The idea was to bring people from art world and film industry together and to understand the functioning of each industry to find new toolsets** for development, financing, producing, and distribution models." As the art world is very different from the film world especially in financing and in distribution, Tobias Pausinger mentions that they also discussed merging classical film distribution chains like television and cinemas, etc. with the art world. The initiative had collaborations with art fairs, co-production markets, film festivals, collectors and gallerists.

Many of the projects selected for Art:Film were completed. Despite the big success, the project ended after six years. Marit van der Elshout, Head of IFFR Pro, says: "With Art:Film we saw in those years that there was a great difference in how the art world finances and functions. And we saw that this was difficult to put it together with the way cinema industry works".

The CineMart of IFF Rotterdam presents a space where non-conventional films could find a place for themselves. Marit van der Elshout details CineMart's **intent to open up to different kinds of formats, and to directors & talent that will come with just a really good idea**: "We want to be able to offer them support to work on that idea."



Cemetery,  
Carlos Casas (2019)

## Chapter 3.

# Innovating public policy making

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Gritt,  
Itonje Søimer Guttormsen (2021 - Eurimages Lab Project Award 2018)

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, which often also corresponds to the most fragile one.

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 also wanted to compile in one place the repeating challenges occurring in or around these mechanisms and possibly pair them with existing solutions. One of the tasks of the research was to single out exemplary measures and practices, as well as to provide an idea about the ways the national and/or regional structures could best use the external stimulation such as the remodelled Eurimages Lab Project Award.

After just the first few interviews, it became clear that the experience and feedback gathered from the interviewees would be even more heterogeneous than assumed. The fact is that no unified cinema exists, however there are many different filmmaking practices, i.e., many ways of thinking about and making films. Differences in the institutional support mechanisms for the new and unsystematic film practices provide an exemplary proof of that.

On the one hand, the complexity of the subject derives from the differences of financial capacities of the individual funds, and their various levels of integration into support structures. They reflect different market sizes, histories, and the general stability of the regional and/or state supports for arts and culture. On the other hand, the indeterminate nature of

the subject is also indicative of more abstract factors, the most obvious of which is the personal comprehension of binary oppositions such as new vs traditional, convention vs disruption, mainstream vs experiment, by the managers, commissioners and other decision-taking groups administering the mechanisms. Semantic aspects of the studied subject is not to be neglected!

The following summary draws upon the interviews held with thirteen managers of the funding bodies from ten countries conducted in the course of six weeks at the turn of the year 2020/2021. The selection of the interviewees was done on the basis of recommendations by Eurimages, and on the additional assessment of the relevance of decision-makers and/or the particular models. Choosing the interviewees, we were conscious of geographical diversity, diversity of the size of the territories, their historical backgrounds, their dependency on their respective political structures, their financial capacity as well as on gender and age of the representatives.

Regardless of these diversifications, the results obtained from the interviews can only provide relative and to some degree specific conclusions. Moreover, while the goal of the majority of the interviews was to understand the national model (such as in case of Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, and Sweden), some interviews investigated specific regional situations (e.g. regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy, Ile-de-France in France, the Berlin/ Brandenburg metropolitan region and the joint regional unit Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein in Germany) and are therefore insufficient for speculations about national realities.

## Non-conventionality in public support mechanisms

Defining the elusive, organizing the unsystematic

### Structures, Strategies & Criteria

In order to better understand the heterogeneity of the landscape, we can look at different aspects of the support mechanisms and recognize in them different backgrounds (static factors) and different strategies (dynamic factors):

a) Mechanisms of support are managed by **differently structured agencies**, such as in the following cases:

- **An autonomous funding body** that manages the support mechanism for innovative film practices (examples: Film Department of the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport, Austria);

- An **autonomous department** operating under the main funding body (examples: The digital creation fund at the CNC in France, New Media Fund at the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg);

- A **special scheme** operating under the main funding body that either **encourages artistic and experimental expression** or **supports debutants**, or both - partly or exclusively (examples: New Danish Screen, Moving Sweden, New Screen and De verbeelding fund in the Netherlands, Incubator Programme at the National Film Institute in Hungary);

In Serbia, Slovenia and Portugal there is **no specialized fund or autonomous scheme** to cater for the specific needs of non-conventional films. 'Different' projects are handled on a **case-to-case basis** there. Their success depends largely on the applicants' ability to translate the contents into the existing criteria and according to the general expectations of the fund.

National film traditions and legacies play a significant role here. They can function as an invisible barrier: different-than-standard proposals can automatically be perceived as

'bad', or can cause the filmmakers to look for apertures in the system to get their contents through, for example, to package them as documentaries.

b) Support is allocated to the projects through **different funding models**. Some examples:

- **Moving Sweden, Sweden:** The scheme supports the development and production of films by first and second-time filmmakers. This scheme is coordinated in collaboration with the national broadcaster (SVT), which also provides selected projects with a distribution platform. Freedom to experiment with the format is encouraged at the beginning of the creative process onwards. Considerable focus is placed on development, which is reflected in the amount of support allocated to selected projects - up to 100 000 Euros. The development support enables the filmmakers to prepare their projects substantially, and present their proposals with written as well as visual material when they apply for funding for production. The mechanism is based on seven guidelines, of which the encouragement to mix genres contributes the most effectively to the increase in non-conventionality and experimentation.



**Helen Ahlsson**

Film Commissioner –  
Moving Sweden  
| Swedish Film  
Institute | Sweden

- **Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, Germany:** by dividing the integral budget into **three sub-funds according to the budget range** ('High End', 'Director's Cut', and 'Short + Innovative'), and by appointing different juries/selection committees for each of these funds, the management recently reformed the structure, and opened it up to a wider variety



**Helge Albers**

CEO | Filmförderung  
Hamburg Schleswig-  
Holstein | Germany

of projects. They also introduced new measures which contribute to a larger diversity of content, most noticeably, with the co-called anti-stereotyping checklist - an instructive (but non-restrictive) control measure which aims to assist filmmakers to avoid using stereotypes, in their script as well as in their production. The fund is focused on films with the potential for theatrical distribution.

- **Incubator Programme, National Film Institute, Hungary:** the fund is open for directors, scriptwriters and producers, who have not yet had a film distributed in the cinema. The incubator selects projects in their **early phase of development and helps with their development**. Projects that get selected at early development phase are developed with the support of selected script doctors that are associated with the programme, before the final decision about support is taken. The scheme does not specifically support filmmaking beyond the mainstream.

c) Funding is allocated to the projects through different assessment processes and by **different decision-making bodies**:

- A decision is taken by a **sole appointed decision-maker** (e.g. commissioners in Denmark and Sweden, Intendant in Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg);

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

- **Two different gate-keeping bodies** assess the projects during the development process before a **final jury/selection committee** takes the decision about production support (Incubator Program, National Film Institute, Hungary).

The most glaring point arising from these different decision-making models is the question of objectivity about the qualities of films that

are harder to measure and categorize. The potential of the 'edginess' of non-conventional proposal might shine out clearer if recognized by one individual rather than being objectified by impersonal measures and reason. Silje Riise Næss, feature film commissioner at the Danish Film Institute, comments: "When supporting edgy and innovative projects, why do we need all the consensus and the reasoning behind the choice? Why not establish a more long-term commitment to the project by the decision-maker; why not have someone who can commit to its development better and can lead the creators through the process - without having any personal stakes in the project but simply wanting the best for it?"

d) The above-listed differences in models and operations result in **significant differences concerning the application requirements**.

Comparing the application requirements at the Slovenian, Serbian, Hungarian or Portuguese national funds, with, for example, the recently adopted rule by the Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, which requires all the applications to send no more than one A4 page text per supporting document, shows the immense difference between the funds in this aspect.

Moreover, in all the above-mentioned cases, a **written application** and **its measurability** still present the main grounds for the evaluation process to be possible at all. This differs largely from a more case-to-case evaluation principle as propagated by, for example, Moving Sweden, where it has happened that a project was granted support on the basis of a treatment and the supporting visual material.

Applying for support in Portugal and Sweden with the same application package is thus virtually impossible, which hints at how the packaging of projects - not only communicating the idea to different readers but also adopting the content to suit the expectations of the fund - still presents an enormous factor, if not all together a decisive hindrance in making the international collaboration for idiosyncratic projects more feasible. This hindrance is arguably more pronounced and more decisive in projects that don't build on traditional structures than it is with mainstream arthouse cinema.

## Non-conventionality in public support mechanisms

Defining the elusive, organizing the unsystematic

### New Technologies: Managing the Unknown

During the 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.**

These mechanisms are implemented in the support system on three different levels and in three different countries. The first example is the support mechanism for new media, which operates within the regional fund of Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg. Then, the French fund Création Numérique/Digital Creation operates as an independent fund within the French National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image - CNC, and represents its youngest systematically managed field of audio-visual creation. The third example is a micro initiative Pixel, Bytes + Films, which has been introduced by the Austrian Film Department of the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport to promote innovative projects with a digital focus.

These mechanisms represent trailblazers in the attempt to accommodate creativity that combines filmmaking practices with new technologies or exceeds them by proposing new forms of art - most significantly, gaming formats, XR and other audio-visual experimentation through innovative technology-based outlets. It is not necessarily films that are in the focus of these mechanisms, but instead **new kinds of audio-visual experiences** that converge with classical filmmaking practices through their **storytelling** core.

#### 1) New Media Funding, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg

The New Media Fund division of Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg - one of several German regional funds with special strand for new media - provides a calibrated funding mechanism that focuses mostly on the local/regional effect. The mechanism exists since 2006, which is when it started systematically supporting gaming developers. Open to innovation within audio-visual media in a broader sense, several new formats of content eventually found their way in too. Today, the mechanism consists of support for development and production of a variety of different innovative audiovisual projects: games, multiplatform content, virtual and augmented reality experiences and different non-tv serial formats.

The fund operates with five deadlines per year. The decision about support is taken through the so called 'Intendanz-Prinzip', by which the final verdict, after each submitted project is discussed by the panel of experts, is taken by the head of the fund (Intendant). Projects are mostly backed by loans and in 2020, the fund invested approximately 3 million Euros into the support of innovative content. The mechanism also established an ongoing collaboration with film schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region through the initiative Digital Program. Esther Rothstegge, funding advisor, explains: "We offer young filmmakers to try something new without them needing to play according to the hard rules of the market." Young filmmakers regularly respond to the call and bring in different kinds of story-driven content reaching out for interactions: from game to 360-degree films and apps.



**Esther Rothstegge**

New Media Funding  
Executive | Medienboard  
Berlin-Brandenburg  
GmbH | Germany

#### 2) Digital Creation (Création Numérique), National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image - CNC, France

The fund operates autonomously within the complex architecture of the CNC **as the third pillar next to the funds for cinema and the one for series and television formats.** The fund covers different creative areas that all embrace, in a particular manner, digital technologies. These schemes are handled separately from each other.



**Olivier Fontenay**

Head of Unit Digital  
Creation | CNC | France

The first stream is about content **creation through gaming** that CNC has been systematically supporting for more than 20 years. Each year 15% of the projects that receive support through this funding scheme can be considered interactive movies. The second stream covers the multi-faceted field of **digital experience creation.** Created in 2016, this mechanism covers different forms of combined real and virtual environments and man-machine interactions, and other interactive narratives. Previously, the XR projects received funding through other schemes. About 120 projects are supported each year, a significant number of projects is submitted by filmmakers. The third stream, **DICRéAM** (*Dispositif pour la création artistique multimédia et numérique*), represents a 'wild card', and combines all undefined (and undefinable) reservoir of creativity. According to Olivier Fontenay, the idea of this scheme is to support projects that could not be supported elsewhere: "Everything that is new, creative and original out there come to our desks, and be hopefully supported by this fund." A fourth stream, *Fonds d'Aide aux créateurs video sur Internet*, established in 2017, aims to **support projects that are released for free on the**

**Internet** and/or 'digital channels' on Internet platforms such as YouTube, Dailymotion, Facebook, Instagram, Twitch, etc. The Digital Creation support mechanism has embraced new technology in a systematic way, and looks at each of the identified groups of practices as an autonomous field of creation and distribution. Fontenay explains: "Previously, my department was operating under the umbrella of the cinema fund, and after that, under the audio-visual fund - we were still part of the general cinema-based legislation. Digital is now **autonomous as the third « pillar »**. We are satisfied as we don't need to seek ways of squeezing our projects into their regulations and standards. Especially for **XR that is far from the movie industry, and far from anything else:** it's a completely autonomous field of expression, not an extension of anything, and perhaps not even a fully defined industry yet. It might one day become such, and it might incite its own market, or become something else."

The separation of the support mechanisms permits the guidelines and regulations to approximate the volatile nature of creation and innovation, which stand at the heart of these practices, and to the true needs of the practitioners. This flexibility keeps the fund in touch with the actual field of creation, and open for the new. As a result, the fund has the credibility of a relevant partner in the eyes of creators, and can effectively participate in regulating the landscape, not with limitations but by fine-tuning the cultural balance with enhancing diversity. A good example is the fund policy for gaming: "We don't need to only help projects that can stand alone on the market. We support games done by women creators and minorities, projects that might otherwise not be able to exist: creative and innovative projects, whoever creates them." Expression through new technologies seems specifically prone to various levels of under-representation. Interventions by progressive funds such as 'Digital Creation' hold the potential of being hugely important in balancing new, developing fields of creative industries and their economies.

### Non-conventionality in public support mechanisms

Defining the elusive, organizing the unsystematic

#### 3) Pixel, Bytes + Films, Film Department of the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport, Austria

The idea of the programme Pixels, Bytes + Film, which has been running since 2010, is to support experimental cinematic examination of new media in various forms and shapes such as: serial narration of fictional material, serial and non-serial documentary formats, crowd-sourcing projects and user-generated film contents, cross- and trans-media artwork, webisodes and new TV-formats. Target groups of the programme are both young emerging filmmakers and artists as well as established artists, who wish to develop additional skills and/or artistic methods connected to/in connection with new technologies. Individual project funding can amount to up to 25 000 Euros per artist/collective.

Each edition of the annual project is accompanied by a comprehensive support programme which consists of workshops on new media law, new ways of distribution & film sales, practical development and entrepreneurship courses and networking events with start-ups from XR-related creative industry.

One of the main partners of the programme is the Austrian broadcaster ORF III, which

provides editing support and the opportunity to present the finished works on TV and on the broadcaster's digital platform. The programme continuously extends its pool of cooperating partners, which fosters its agility and credibility among professionals. For the 2021 edition, more than 100 projects were submitted, 11 projects were selected by an international selection committee composed of media artists and industry professionals.



A Film About *The Desire To Make It Work*,  
Franziska Kabisch & Laura Nitsch (2018)

Pixels, Bytes + Film represents a micro initiative that bridges the traditional audio-visual practices with opportunities offered by the new media. A singular, boutique-sized initiative helps the filmmakers embrace potentials of new technologies as possible tools to support and enhance their expressions both creatively and formally. Furthermore, it encourages them to rethink their distribution models, and encourages their autonomous agency in creating outreach strategies. The initiative exemplifies a lean and applicable measure that could be especially inspiring for smaller national or regional ecosystems, where the formation of new funds or mechanisms to support innovative audio-visual practices might not be foreseeable.

### Feedback & Expectations

The discussions with representatives of the national and regional funds hinted at a few drawbacks of the Eurimages Lab Project initiative as it was put in place in its first five years of existence. None of the critiques however, addressed the legitimacy of the awards: the purpose was never questioned. On the contrary, the interviewees expressed their appreciation of the initiative, and the hope for its continuation.

Re-evaluation and the subsequent restructuring of the initiative was repeatedly recognized as an opportunity to embrace new distribution and exhibition potentials to reach beyond traditional cinema spaces and include different audiences. Especially in light of the new reality brought upon us by the global sanitary crisis, several interviewees pointed to the **need to structurally support an accelerated digital dimension of production and exhibition**. Concretely, the interviewees pointed to the importance of: actively rejecting the over-repetition of traditional narrative conventions; helping artists get acquainted with the new sets of digital tools and technologies, and providing them better support to develop new international networks.

In order for such convergences to emerge, the traditional cinema value chain would need to **open up to elements that support other creative disciplines**, and to the experts and decision-makers from different fields. These would include contemporary art curators and other influential individuals and institutions from the art world, but also private-company executives, who actively shape the private market of digital experience.

The experience shared by Dorien van de Pas, long-time head of New Screen at the Netherland Film Fund, part of which was De verbeelding ('Imagination') scheme, which brings together artists and filmmakers, speaks in favour of such progression: "Collaboration between different disciplines can result in interesting new angles. These are not measurable but extremely valuable, and eventually impact the entire landscape. When we started with the scheme back in 2007, such pairing was relatively new.

But we were right in detecting the necessity of such approach. It was also because of this pioneering scheme that several other new mechanisms were set up within our fund that partly copied our principle of experimentation and the mixing of formats and disciplines."

The **closedness and the rigidity of the current distribution landscape**, which previously supported Lab Projects were born into, was recognized as the **weakest point of the current model**, which has kept its activities too closely bound to the dominant dynamics of the old film value chain.



**Alessandro Gropplero**

Head of WEWM  
& Head of International  
Relations I Friuli Venezia  
Giulia Audiovisual  
Fund I Italy

Alessandro Gropplero, Head of International Relations of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Audiovisual Fund and the director of the When East Meets West networking event pointed out that "If the scheme is to be useful for, and supportive of the makers (of the non-conventional films), we would need to bring in a whole new group of players that are relevant for their practices. Because these practices are tied to different industries, and we don't necessarily know them well – they run on a different value chain. In my opinion, that was exactly what the Lab Projects scheme was lacking. The Lab Projects were eventually confronted with the same decision-makers – people that also handle the 'conventional' author-driven cinema. The system referred these projects to the same old value chain. Maybe films that are supported under the umbrella of that 'special' module should automatically be allowed to be screened in museums and galleries, be supported to exist across different distribution channels and be designed to reach different types of audiences. If these 'special' projects continue to be positioned in the main arena and their makers forced to 'hunt' for the same people as every other project does, then these projects will automatically be seen as the weakest. The big elephant in the room is the distribution."



**Barbara Fränzen**

Head of Department I  
Division Arts and Culture I  
Film Department  
of Federal Ministral  
Ministry for Arts, the Civil  
Service and Sport I Austria

## Non-conventionality in public support mechanisms

Defining the elusive, organizing the unsystematic

In some way, the remark expressed by Barbara Fränzen addressed a similar issue. Fränzen was able, because of her previous experience with supporting the artists eligible for the Project Lab Award, to be even more concrete: “Artists that were going to the Project Lab pitches didn’t know what they could expect from these events: if they would meet anyone who could elevate their project’s value, and not even their expenses were covered.” “Nevertheless,” she continues, “it is great that this is happening! There were problems and it’s important that the fund is being re-considered and will be restarted. (...) It would be very good to facilitate more international exchanges, and get people build their own networks. This should definitely be done on the level of the Eurimages, too – enhancing international exchanges is very important!”

Fränzen’s comments further pointed to the importance of the **attentive and diligent attitude** in handling the non-conventional projects – not everything that worked in the past can be applied to these projects, and cannot therefore be taken as self-evident. The old frameworks, networks, dynamics and even the habits of thinking about creativity and relevance might not be fully applicable for the segment that is being created on the edge of the traditional system today.

The benefit of a bespoke and holistic approach in supporting the non-conventional is seen in the Scandinavian commissioner’s model, where support is decided by one sole expert. With the help of general guidelines, this expert acts as a curator, development-expert and advisor. The ability of taking case-based decisions, and to avoid timely approvals of juries and boards seems to be more in line with the inner dynamic of non-conventionality. The individual choices and decisions can support an increased general level of responsibility as well as propagate trust

between different agents in the ecosystem.

Apart from having in place a financially generous model, the attitude of the Moving Sweden’s commissioner Helen Ahlsson regarding the shared responsibility in shaping the new, is noteworthy: “I think what we need to do as a fund – although I don’t say this to the applicants – is to exert ‘tough love’ on our projects. We need to constantly ask them: are you curious enough, are you stepping further than expected, are you asking questions rather than just answering them, are you making me fall in love with your antagonists, etc.? We need to be able to recognize that the people that apply are extremely interesting, but tell them, if we think that is the case, that their proposals are boring, or too easy. We, too, need to take responsibility for the unconventionality: we need to be able to reject the applicants, but ask them to come back to us after they’ve found something sharper.”

A similar conviction about the **responsibility that lies in the hands of those with the power** was expressed by Silje Riise Næss: “It’s a political issue. We need to break out of the narrow circuits that we established and built fences around. It starts with whom do we recruit to film schools, what kind of stories do we find interesting. In this changing world, we need to ask ourselves these questions more and more. At the Danish Film Institute, we started talking about the cultural importance of the content. We now even try to measure it: Are Danish films culturally important? Do they make people think? Do they reflect Danish society? Do they contribute to something more than just to the programme in a cinema, to the product behind a commercial campaign? There has been a deficit of relevance in European film! We need to start making other kinds of films, find stories and voices that really mean something to our time. There is no better place to start than with the Lab projects.”

Recognizing good practices and adapting elements from individual national systems to design the second Lab Projects Programme generation is the main aim of this study, but the learning process will certainly go the other way around too. Several representatives openly confessed that they could **use inspiration and suggestions to rethink and modernize their support structures**. Limitations in seeing the bigger picture, and the lack of resources to come up with alternative solutions to fit the steadily changing landscape, was expressed by several speakers.

Moreover, the Eurimages’ Lab Project Programme was also recognized as a **potential argument**, that could assist managers of funds in **redesigning their national systems** when needing to explain the changes to the politicians and/or professionals within the national environments, and use it to **fight the potential resistance and prejudices** towards the new and

unknown. This could be especially beneficial to younger, smaller and/or more fragile national film landscapes. When asked how could a pan-European fund for non-conventional projects be compatible with a national support, given the fact that there exists no special support for non-conventional cinema in the country, Nataša Bučar, the head of the Slovenian Film Centre answered: “Every initiative, trend or guideline that comes from ‘above’ changes things on the national level. Just think of Eurimages’ focus on gender equality and their advocacy in favour of female filmmakers. We launched an entire research study on the topic because of their engagement, and are now being careful about this dimension of our systematic support. So, while the technical details might not necessarily be fully compatible with the support regulations on the national level, a trend propagated by such an important international institution would definitely be something we would follow and try to integrate into our national model.”

### Speakers



**Nataša Bučar**

Managing Director  
of Slovenian Film  
Centre | Slovenia



**Colin Maunoury**

Post Production  
Grants | Région  
Ile-de-France | France



**Myriam Gast**

The Cinema  
& Audiovisual Grant  
Fund | Région  
Ile-de-France | France



**Silje Riise Næss**

Film Commissioner |  
Danish Film Institute |  
Denmark



**Gordan Matić**

Director of Film  
Center Serbia | Serbia



**Dorien van de Pas**

Head of New Screen  
NL | Netherlands Film  
Fund | Netherlands



Fotbal Infinit,  
Corneliu Porumboiu (2018)

By Matthieu Darras

## A new scheme

# The Design, Audience, and Carte Blanche Lab Awards

The new scheme proposed that would constitute the new generation of the Eurimages Lab Projects Support Programme is composed of 3 complementary streams entitled:

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

The article intends to detail the specificities of each stream. 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.

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

- the Design Lab & the Audience Lab Awards, decided upon together by a 5-member selection committee, shall be announced **each year in April** in a different Eurimages member state, during an event made in association with a **partner organization** known for its activities & expertise in non-conventional cinema.

- the Carte Blanche Lab Award is to be decided upon by a 3-member jury. The **Carte Blanche Award shall be announced during a partner festival** set in a Eurimages member state, known for its activities and expertise in non-conventional cinema, with a different festival hosting the Award each year.

We would recommend, for the selection committee (deciding upon the Design & the Audience Awards) **to be nominated for a non-renewable period of 3 years**, in order **to meet the demands of responsibility & continuity** that were addressed by many speakers - especially funders, and for their series of decisions **to define a much-needed editorial policy** guided by the priorities set in the strategy/guidelines. This will eventually ensure a better **readability and visibility** of the new programme. The Carte Blanche Lab Award will be decided upon by a 3-member jury composed by the **partner festival**, and thus changing at each festival.

We are looking forward **engaging in conversation** with Eurimages' representatives, in order to consider amendments, variations, and suggestions to the proposed scheme, which would enhance the feasibility and the pertinence of the Programme. We would simply like to **emphasize the relevance of the scheme** as a whole. In our opinion, if each Award is stand-alone, they are all intrinsically linked. Not bundled and implemented together, their impact would be reduced.

We would like to stress the fact that the descriptions of these streams should be read together with the next article detailing 'Guidelines'.

**A new scheme**

The Design, Audience,  
and Carte Blanche Lab Awards

## The Design Lab Awards

The Design Lab Awards aim to support new film & audiovisual talent on their **creative path from an initial idea to a comprehensive proof of concept**. Concretely, these awards will support promising talent, whilst also promote them thanks to the visibility brought by the Eurimages' mark of distinction.

The Design Lab Awards aim to answer the strong need, identified by many of the stakeholders interviewed, to **encourage true experimentation and research** when it comes to the conception & development of film projects, to support trials and allow for the possibility of failure. 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. Priority will be given to new talent.

**A scheme involving partner organizations**

An **innovative feature in terms of policy** making consists of the fact that the scheme will rely on the **scouting work of up to 12 partner organizations** based and active in Europe, identified for their expertise in the field, and collectively representing the diversity and large scope of practices of non-conventional filmmaking.

Each partner organization will nominate 1 filmmaker annually. These organizations will typically be **incubators & exhibitors of non-conventional cinema**, such as some of those interviewed for the study (festivals, museums/ art centres, Labs & residencies, etc.).

These organizations will be chosen by Eurimages before the scheme starts following a **call for expressions of interest**. For the scheme to be successful, a wide range of organizations need to take part. Therefore, we have been exploring

what would trigger these organizations to be involved. We consider that their motivation to participate will largely be based on having **their work highlighted by Eurimages** and being given a **concrete opportunity to extend their mission** of supporting filmmaking talent.

During our interviews, we systematically asked the interviewees if their organization would be interested in being associated one way or another with a new Eurimages scheme, and their **reactions were essentially positive**. Far from being merely diplomatic answers, we felt there is a really strong desire – even an urge – to take an active part in a policy initiated by Eurimages, to advocate for the recognition and the support of non-conventional filmmakers, and thus to have their work acknowledged internationally.

The advantage of this structuring is that:

- it **involves initiatives & organizations across Europe** that are known for their expertise in the field of non-conventional filmmaking, and emulates their work;
- it **enlarges the base of talent to be considered**, and is likely to increase the **overall quality of profiles** nominated;
- it **minimizes the administrative burden** compared to what an open call would generate for Eurimages, especially for such a profile of support, which does not include so many restrictive criteria, and therefore could easily lead to hundreds of applications.

The threat that we have considered is the one of a **conflict of interest**. In an earlier version of our proposal, we were envisioning for the nominating organizations to decide themselves about the Design Lab Awards, guided by the fact that their representatives could best advocate for the potential of the filmmakers they have nominated. We eventually decided not to go further with this recommendation and to **dissociate the scouting/nomination process from the decision-making process**. In fact, it is not the organizations who will decide on the awards, but an independent selection committee.

**Promoting the diversity of new talents**

Besides the issue of conflict of interest, **the number of filmmakers nominated versus the**

**number of awards given** has been thoughtfully and thoroughly considered so that:

- the selection committee has a large choice of concepts to choose amongst, but they are not being overwhelmed by the number of entries, and importantly that by having 5 awards to give out it could help the committee to express and showcase the diversity of non-conventional filmmaking practices;
- the filmmakers are given **strong encouragement to propose a concept**, considering they have a fair chance to eventually get supported – more than 40%;

The Design Lab Awards sub-scheme is the only one of the 3 Awards composing the overall new scheme that **targets new talent**. We consider it important to clearly articulate the priority of new talent of the strategy into the scheme and to especially position it specifically. This allows **a clear differentiation of the 3 categories of awards**, with the Audience Lab Awards more specifically targeting ambitious projects by established filmmakers and the Carte Blanche Lab Awards being decided upon on the basis of an existing work, and thus most likely to highlight a rather established filmmaker as well.

However, the **question of what a new talent is remains a daunting one**, especially how long one continues to be a new talent (both in terms of experience and age), and the answer to it differs largely, not only between the different countries of Europe, but also according to the cultural context. As not only the Design Lab Awards, but also the overall new Eurimages Lab Support Programme, is meant to embrace a large scope of non-conventional filmmaking practices, thus not limiting the support to feature films only, the common practice of designating new talent to filmmakers working on their 1st or 2nd features might not be valid here.

One possible option could be to establish an age criterion. We are perfectly aware that such a choice could be open to harsh criticism, as a matter of fact we didn't reach a consensus within our research team to recommend this criterion. However, considering the perception that Eurimages has of mainly being associated with experienced filmmakers (despite the increase

of first features being supported in recent years), precise targeting of **new generations of filmmakers** would generally be a welcomed move.

The question of where to set the age limit would have been a crucial one as well. To set the limit at 30 years would firmly differentiate the support, yet the challenges that the partner organizations may come across in nominating a sufficient number of promising talents shall not be underestimated. Therefore we estimate that the core target group for the Design Lab Awards should be **filmmakers and visual artists under 35 years of age**.

Putting aside the age criterion and being aware that the 1st/2nd feature criterion is ill-suited to the realities of non-conventional filmmaking, possibly the best option would be **to engage conversations with the partner organizations**, so that they nominate filmmakers and visual artists, whose profiles fit the priorities set by Eurimages for these Awards, with the notions of **new & emerging talents**.

The criteria defined by **Telefilm Canada for its 'Talent to Watch' programme**, which is mentioned in the Ernst & Young evaluation, could be inspiring. They state that the program is open to: "Emerging content creators who are recent alumni of a partner educational institution, active members of partner cooperatives or recent participants of partner film festival incubator initiative, or who have directed a short film that was selected at a recognized film festival".

**Encouraging experimentation & research**

The Design Lab Awards will truly encourage experimentation and research. Besides the characteristics already mentioned, several features of the scheme would facilitate this goal:

- 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**; projects that are already in development by the filmmakers will be considered ineligible.

**A new scheme**

The Design, Audience, and Carte Blanche Lab Awards

The Design Lab Awards would be implemented as follows:

Once each partner organization has nominated one filmmaker (1 February), the latter will have **45 days to create & to submit a concept note** to Eurimages (15 March).

At this stage, this is important for the **format of the concept note (written & audiovisual elements) to be as free as possible**. Filmmakers will be given complete freedom to convey the concept of their audiovisual project as they want. The only obligation will be an **explanatory note on the research/experimentation** they intend to carry out thanks to the Design Lab Award.

The selection committee will assess all the 12 proposals (if all filmmakers nominated submit one), and will select the 5 Design Awards (15 April). Immediately after the announcement & promotion of the Awards, the filmmakers will receive **a scholarship agreement** to complete, and will receive the first instalment (1st May).

The filmmakers will then have up to **8 months** (till 31 December) to implement their research/experimentation in order to come up with **a proof of concept**, which will be used **to demonstrate the feasibility and artistic potential of their film project**. This proof of concept will be submitted to Eurimages in order to trigger the payment of the balance of the scholarship. As with similar public schemes that already exist in Europe, and is introduced in the previous chapter of our study, the awarded filmmakers will not have to justify their expenses, but will have **the obligation to deliver new materials** to justify the award.

### Design Lab Awards

#### Beneficiaries

Individual filmmakers & visual artists.  
Priority to new talents.

#### Eligibility, call & selection process

Each year, **12 filmmakers are invited** to submit a film concept for the Design Lab Awards.  
Each filmmaker is nominated by one partner organization.  
The concept submitted shall be absolutely new.  
Awards decided by a 5-member selection committee.

#### Financial Support

##### **5 scholarships**

of 15 000 Euros each

##### **70% in pre-financing payment**

##### **30% in balance payment**

after submission of proof of concept

### Key Figures

#### Materials to submit & deliver

- **Submission:** A concept note (exact format up to the filmmaker).
- **Report:** A detailed proof of concept within 8 months.

#### Timeframe

**1 February:** Individuals nominated by partner organizations.

**15 March:** Deadline for filmmakers to submit concepts.

**15 April:** Selection committee meeting & announcement of the 5 Design Lab Awards.

**1 May:** Scholarships agreements finalized & pre-financing payment allocated.

**31 December:** Deadline to submit proof of concept & payment of the balance.

## The Audience Lab Awards

The Audience Lab Awards aim at supporting ambitious non-conventional film projects, possibly crossing over to other art forms, on their **endeavours of reaching out to audiences**, wherever these audience are. These awards will support films that are at the stage of development and/or production, and that demonstrate a high level of cooperation between different Eurimages member states.

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

#### Addressing the paradigm shift of viewing practices

The Audience Lab Awards are meant to address the **enormous paradigm shift of viewing practices** currently in motion identified by many of the stakeholders interviewed, and the necessity **to break down the barriers between the stages of development, production, and distribution**, and **to insert the question of the audience much earlier in the creative & production processes**, possibly as early as when the film is conceptualized and developed, and definitely when its production starts.

The Audience Lab Awards differentiate themselves quite radically from classical distribution support schemes, in the sense that they position the support **when the films are being conceived and made**, and not once they are made. Indeed, as many stakeholders (from various backgrounds and with diverse practices) clearly expressed, the question on where, when, and how the film will be shown, directly impacts on the conception of the film.

During the process of the study, the question of the audience gradually gained a central place, being at the core of the interrogation of almost all the stakeholders, a situation most certainly exacerbated by the closure of cinema theatres due to the Covid19 pandemic. From early on, our intent has been **to translate this strong perception into the policy-making recommendations** for the new Eurimages Lab Awards Programme.

#### A grant 100% dedicated to support audience outreach costs

In a first draft of our recommendations, we were planning to create Awards that would equally support production costs and audience outreach costs. However, we have realized that this scattering of support not only would not help for the visibility of the scheme, but also would be constraining for the awards recipients.

Indeed, one recurring feedback we received from the Eurimages Lab recipients of the programme 2016-2020 was related to the administrative obligations – notably having to justify the overall production costs of the film when the support was limited to the post-production costs. The justifications requested were viewed as excessive, since they were as demanding as the ones for much larger production grants (several hundred thousands of Euros), even though the award was limited to 50 000 Euros. An Award mixing production & audience outreach support would maintain this situation, while even reducing the level of support for production considering that the overall framework of the Eurimages Lab Awards Programme is not to be substantially increased.

Dedicating the **entire support to audience outreach costs** would help to solely focus the selection criteria to the audience engagement, distribution, and promotion strategies of the films. At the same time, we recommend that Eurimages requests only for the proof of audience outreach-related expenses, and not the overall production costs, to the Awards recipients. Ultimately, it should significantly lower the administrative burden for both Eurimages and the Awards recipients.

### A new scheme

The Design, Audience, and Carte Blanche Lab Awards

The audience outreach costs could include but are not limited to:

- Costs of Audience Strategy, Marketing & Social Media Manager(s);
- Costs of online audience engagement campaigns, including multi-platform communication;
- Costs of event-based audience engagement campaigns;
- Costs of creativity related to audio-visual content for digital/event-based activities;
- Costs of production of the materials to be used for digital/event-based activities.
- Costs of publication.

### Preventing the upholding of a ghetto for non-conventional films

Eventually, such a recommendation means that none of the sub-schemes of the new Eurimages Lab Awards programme would directly support the actual production costs of the films, but either their phases of conception (Design Lab Awards & Carte Blanche Lab Awards) or audience outreach (Audience Lab Awards). At first glance, it could appear as a negative evolution of the programme, and be seen as the shelving of one of the rare international schemes supporting the production/post-production costs of risk-taking and daring films.

However, a much looked-after induced effect of this decision, besides having a clearly identified and differentiated programme, is **not to uphold a strong border between 'non-conventional films' on one hand and the 'conventional films' on the other hand**. Indeed, a danger raised by many interviewees regarding such support programmes targeting atypical films is to create ghettos de facto.

As expressed earlier in the study, we have witnessed a **growing porosity of the borders between non-conventional and conventional cinema**. In recent years, the Eurimages

co-production fund was characterized by funding decisions that were integrating non-conventional filmmaking practices more and more, a statement demonstrated by an analysis of the funding decisions and corroborated by the Eurimages' Secretariat staff members during interviews.

The idea is for the **Eurimages Lab Projects not to be considered ineligible for the main scheme of the Eurimages co-production support**, and in return for the Eurimages-funded projects to be potentially eligible for the Eurimages Lab Awards. Indeed, the Audience Lab Awards and the Eurimages co-production Fund would not support the same costs.

### Supporting innovative promotion & audience engagement campaigns

The Audience Lab Awards would be implemented as follows:

Annually, on 1 February, Eurimages will launch a call for proposals with **strict eligibility criteria and a demanding set of materials for submission**. This should naturally limit the number of applications to an **estimated range comprised between 15 and 20 projects** per call.

The projects submitted should **comply with some of the criteria of the Eurimages Co-Production Fund scheme**, notably they must:

- be co-productions between at least two independent producers, established in different member states of the Fund, of which at least one is a member state of the Council of Europe.
- display artistic and/or technical co-operation between at least two co-producers established in different member states of the Fund, of which at least one is a member state of the Council of Europe;

Besides these criteria, and the fact that innovative & daring projects crossing to other art forms would be explicitly encouraged to apply to the call, the projects would have to demonstrate an **innovative audience outreach strategy**, supported by:

- a film package (synopsis, intention notes, production companies' profiles, previous works);
- a detailed plan for the audience engagement, promotion & distribution campaigns, including timeline of audience outreach activities;
- a detailed budget of the audience outreach-related costs.

The application should be submitted by March, 15th. The selection committee will assess all the proposals, and will select the 3 Audience Awards by April, 15. After the announcement of the Awards as part of a **promotional event** organized by one of the partner organizations hosting the selection committee, the majority production company will receive a **grant agreement** to complete, and will receive the first instalment by May, 1.

The production company will have to provide a **detailed report within 36 months** after the first instalment payment, in order to receive the payment of the balance of the grant.

## Audience Lab Awards

### Beneficiaries

Production companies and/or distribution companies, if they co-produce the films.

### Eligibility, call & selection process

Each year, an **open call** with strict criteria & submission requirements.

Eligibility of applications checked by the Eurimages' Secretariat.

Projects assessed & awards decided by a 5-member selection committee.

### Financial Support

#### 3 grants

(non-refundable subsidies) of 40 000 Euros each

#### 70% in pre-financing payment

#### 30% in balance payment

## Key Figures

### Materials to submit & deliver

- **Submission:** A package, including a detailed plan for the audience engagement, promotion & distribution campaigns;
- **Report:** A detailed report on the audience outreach activities implemented.

### Timeframe

**1 February:** Publication of the call for projects.

**15 March:** Deadline for production companies to submit applications.

**15 April:** Selection committee meeting & announcement of the 3 Audience Lab Awards.

**1 May:** Grant agreements finalized & Pre-financing payment allocated.

**Within 36 months:** Deadline to submit report & Payment of the balance.

**A new scheme**

The Design, Audience,  
and Carte Blanche Lab Awards

## 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**, reflecting the values and priorities that Eurimages intends to associate with the Eurimages Lab Project Award Programme. Not only the Carte Blanche Lab Awards intend to give the awarded filmmakers & visual artists **greater visibility**, but it also intends **to concretely support their ongoing career**.

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 Awards will be decided upon by a 3-member jury composed by the **partner festival**. The Awards shall be given to a film amongst a programme curated by the partner festival, and pre-approved by Eurimages.



**Enrico Vannucci**

Deputy Executive Director |  
Eurimages | France

### Promoting non-conventional filmmaking

The Carte Blanche Lab Awards are meant to celebrate and promote non-conventional filmmakers, by highlighting exceptional figures in the field. They are also meant to answer suggestions given by many of our speakers, expressing that more **focus should be put on the filmmakers' previous works** in the decision-making process, and generally that artists should be given **more freedom** with their next projects.

The practices prevalent in the art world, where museums/curators give 'carte blanche' to the artists for their exhibitions were often mentioned, and served as a reference. However, the Carte Blanche Lab Awards were designed having in mind the **best practices of various stakeholders** from both art & cinema fields:

- **film museums**, such as the EYE Filmmuseum (Netherlands) and its **Eye Art & Film Prize**, with its 25 000 Pounds prize to fund the making of new work by the artist, or the Centre Pompidou-supported **Marcel Duchamp Prize** (France), where the winner receives 35 000 Euros personally and up to 30 000 Euros in order to produce an exhibition of their work in the Modern Art museum;
- **film festivals**, such as the Off Camera International Festival of Independent Cinema of Krakow (Poland), with its once 100 000 US dollars (25 000 dollars in 2021) **Cracow Film Award** allocated to the director of the Best Film decided by the jury, to produce the director's next film, or the Stockholm Film Festival (Sweden), with its 1 million SEK **Stockholm Impact Award** 'to acknowledge international visionaries' and that should be used as support for further work and development of new film projects;

- **film funds**, such as the **Flanders Audiovisual Funds's Wildcard**, a 40 000 Euros prize awarded to recent graduate filmmakers, the **Swedish Film Institute's Wild Card development funding** for feature films for school graduates (about 40 000 Euros), or **Telefilm Canada's automatic support** for second feature financing of filmmakers who produced internationally-recognized first features.

### The Audentia Award model

The Carte Blanche Lab Awards are largely designed under the model of the already existing **Eurimages' Audentia Award**. In order to make sure that this recommendation would make sense, we did have an exchange with Iris Zappe-Heller, deputy director of the Austrian Film Institute and Chair of the Gender Equality Group at Eurimages responsible for the Audentia Award, and Enrico Vannucci, deputy executive director of Eurimages. Their reactions were positive, assuming that **the positioning of the two awards would be clearly defined** to be complimentary and not to create confusion.

Similarly to the Audentia Award and similarly to the first generation of the Eurimages Lab Projects Award Programme, **film festivals** will be the partner organizations concretely implementing the action. As we have highlighted in the evaluation of the past programme, it will be most crucial **to scout and to select the film festivals, whose actions and editorial policy would fit best** with the priorities of the Lab Programme. Even if this study does not allow itself to specifically name possible partners, we want to stress that most of the festivals that we engaged with were welcoming very positively – similarly to incubators organizations – the idea to be associated with Eurimages for an action supporting non-conventional cinema.

The most notable nuance to retain is the fact that some of the festivals most active in non-conventional filmmaking, such as Arsenal's

Berlinale Forum, are **opposed to the idea of a competition** to distinguish amongst filmmakers and their films. However, this position is in minority, as it appeared in our individual interviews and in the round table we organized with festival directors.



**Iris Zappe-Heller**

Head of the Eurimages  
Gender Equality Working  
Group | Eurimages | France

Practically, the process shall be to launch a **call for festivals**, and to designate the first 3 festivals, where the Carte Blanche Lab Awards will be given over the period 2022-2024.

## The Carte Blanche Lab Awards

### Beneficiaries

Individual filmmakers & visual artists.  
Priority to established talents.

### Eligibility, call & selection process

A **programme of films** curated by a partner festival.  
Eligibility of films pre-selected by the festival checked by the Eurimages' Secretariat.  
Award decided by a 3-member jury committee.

## Key Figures

### Materials to submit & deliver

No material to submit.

### Timeframe

Dates depending on the partner festival.

### Financial Support

**1 cash prize**  
of 30 000 Euros.



Garage People,  
Natalija Yefimkina (Audentia Award 2020)

By Rebecca De Pas

# Guidelines

This article proposes a **set of guidelines** highlighting the most **relevant priorities** revealed by our study. Their objectives are to maximise the **capacity of Eurimages to support innovative languages** and to **identify the right stakeholders** – to build solid partnerships for the actuation of the upcoming Lab Project Award.

At the centre of our reasoning has been the need to create the pre-conditions to reach out the largest number of pertinent projects and to guarantee the consistency of the awarding system. The core idea of those requirements is **to ensure diversity**, both in terms of languages and accessibility. The guidelines will allow Eurimages to **rely on prestigious structures & experts** for the process of identification and assessment of the projects. It is capital to underline the essentialness of this aspect in order to navigate the vast sea of non-conventional practices in European cinema.

Once these criteria are satisfied, the implementation of the scheme should have as a premise that, in order to encourage research and innovation, authors shall express the essence of their projects **without having to adapt it to fit in a 'box'**. Thus, the necessity to go beyond existing categorizations: for instance, the difference between documentary and

fiction and the **necessity to extend the support to short forms**. The scheme should embrace innovation and create a system that allows 'the right to fail'. This means creating a support that is not only able to accommodate structured projects, but that also nurtures daring ideas and visions. Another important priority is to imagine a scheme adaptable to production models that steps out of the classical formats.

Once the general scheme of the new Eurimages Lab Project Award Programme will be approved and validated by the Board of Management, the Fund shall launch during the 2nd semester of 2021 a **series of calls for expressions of interest** targeting **partner organizations** and **experts**. It shall also prepare during the same period the **guidelines for project-based applications** – at least for the Design Lab Awards & the Audience Lab Awards.

With these calls for expressions of interest and these guidelines for projects carried out, the Programme could be launched by the end of 2021 in order to be implemented from 2022 for a first cycle of 3 years. The vade mecum below has been designed to bridge the needs of Eurimages with the needs of the targeted creative industry. It is inspired from already existing practices and from the experience of the stakeholders.

## Guidelines

### Guidelines to ensure the right partnerships

#### The importance of choosing the partner structures according to their proven impact in the field.

Despite the clear engagement by the previous Eurimages Lab Project Award partner festivals, and their real commitment and established prestige, as Ernst & Young has already pointed out, there was an inadequacy of those structures to carry out such award. The main reasons were the scarcity of non-conventional films in their programme, a limited capacity to scout projects, and the low level of interest for these projects by their industry attendees.

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

- The general mission of the structure – **with 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 and exhibition spaces** with programmes dedicated to cinema;
- **Scientific or research/educational structures** promoting **cooperation between sciences and arts**.

### Guidelines to identify experts

It is not redundant to remember that a gender-balanced and diverse pool of experts is the primary condition to foster innovative and truly contemporary works.

By Rebecca De Pas

**Diverse points of view in assessing projects should be a *condition sine qua non* while forming an evaluating commission.** External experts should be scouted according to their **proven experience in the field**.

In order to accurately evaluate a project, Eurimages should consider experts from the following categories and with the following characteristics:

- **Filmmakers and artists**
  - Filmmakers and artists with a practice in between film and other artistic disciplines with at least 5 years of an internationally recognised career, with an ongoing practice and with a knowledge of the cinema landscape in Europe;
  - Capacity to evaluate issues and stakes in the production field and an active engagement in promoting another artists' career.
- **Producers**
  - Producers with experience in working in between artistic disciplines and cinema with a proven experience in co-production, with at least 5 years of an internationally recognised career and knowledge of the cinema landscape in Europe;
  - Experience in working with funds coming from schemes outside the cinema world and a proven capacity of dealing with stakeholders from other sectors of the cultural industry.
- **Exhibitors and Incubators**
  - Industry players who are active in the field of development, support, and promotion of non-conventional cinema, such as distributors, festival curators, VOD providers, residencies, art foundations, multidisciplinary & research centres;
  - 5 years of experience in international industry environment, knowledge of the basic European policy regarding international co-production. Proven experience in working for the promotion of artist films and/or other types of non-conventionally produced cinema, a strong knowledge of new technologies and new frontiers of distribution;
  - The capacity to evaluate an application in detail also in regards to the financial plan and budget.

The blending of those professionals is fundamental to ensure the correct evaluation of projects that borrow/use forms and practices from other creative fields.



*In Praise of Nothing,*  
Boris Mitić (2017)

### Guidelines for a project-based application

We detail here an application model that can be adapted for different productions. This model is conceived to give applicants the possibility to fully express the potentialities of their project, without adapting the content, or the format to the requirement of the call.

#### A balance between Eurimages requirements and flexibility

One of the main issues addressed by the stakeholders interviewed were the strict requirements of the fund regarding the conditions the projects have to meet in order to be granted. 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

It is a common practice for filmmakers and artists to work without a production company on board. This also because until a certain budget, it is possible for artists and filmmakers to gather money from institutions and private investors to kick off their work. It would be valuable if Eurimages would consider filmmakers working without a producer as eligible for the Design

Lab Award. This would **facilitate inclusion and a wider pool of contenders** for the grant, ensuring a fair and effective granting process and will not necessarily preclude tracking their expenses.

#### Imagining another path for production

Another aspect noticed during our research is that the model based on script/ development/ production/ postproduction is often overcome in favour of a more circular model in which the films are literally conceived during their making. The future grant will have to consider this workflow model in order to be really impactful.

#### Overcoming the script as first evaluation tool

As pointed out by most speakers, the main hiatus between a fund's ambition to support innovative works and its actual capacity to do so is the persistence of the script as the main tool to evaluate a project. The absence of a script does not imply the absence of narration and without questioning its general importance in filmmaking, a script should not be considered as compulsory to participate in a call for projects of non-conventional cinema. In this sense, the project shall be allowed to participate in the selection also without structured written elements. The tools to evaluate the project shall rely more on a **global package** that includes elements that would cover the entire creative process.

## Guidelines

### Alternatives and complementary elements to a scripted film project

#### Director's statement

The importance of the director's statement for works that are conceived in a non-conventional context goes beyond the personal motivation. The statement is a basic tool in terms of understanding the director's approach to the project and should give a clear overview of the content and style of the film to come.

#### Treatment and research

- In non-scripted cinema, the treatment shall be considered in the same way a script usually is. The treatment demonstrates the original idea, and structural development and creates connections with the director's statement.
- For artists making films and other non-conventional cinema projects, the research phase is often of great importance and shall be considered on the same level of the other artistic elements.

#### Visual elements

- These could include: references to other works, scouting material, research material, mood boards, edited shots, soundscape examples.

#### Budgeting and financing

- The budget should be carefully detailed and complemented with a reliable financing plan that could include private sources such as foundations, universities, research centres, museum and private exhibition spaces. Those players shall be considered equal to the co-producers.
- A detailed distribution strategy, including letters of interest by exhibitors. This should prove that the applicant is capable of navigating unconventional screening spaces in a sustainable way.

#### Director's previous work

The artistic universe of a director is a pillar for the understanding of their motivation to start a new project. A filmography as representative as possible of the project to come shall be compulsory, not only to fully understand the creative engine beyond the project, but also to objectively assess the achievements of the directors (selection, exhibitions, award, etc.). The director's previous work shall be considered, taking into consideration their chosen cinematic language.

Here, it is important to re-evaluate the dynamic of the A-list festival. An A-list festival selection, often considered by the industry as an achievement in the career of a director, shall not be mandatory. If a selection is indeed a positive and outstanding achievement, it cannot be considered the only criteria to evaluate a non-conventional work. The correct evaluation of the director's previous achievements shall be based on the knowledge of the expert and on their capacity to evaluate the circulation of the director's work.

#### Biography and Filmography of the team

As banal as it may seem, the biography and filmography of the main crew should be considered with attention and include also the experience in other artistic domains, such as exhibition, performance or research.

#### Open to different distribution models

A point of strength for the past Lab Project Award was not to consider a theatrical release as a hard factor to access the award. If a cinema release can be considered a plus, it must not be compulsory, as this would be in contradiction with the aim of the award. On another hand, the applicant should have a clear vision on how and where to reach out to a potential audience.



Un film dramatique,  
Eric Baudelaire (2019)

By Rebecca De Pas

## Conclusion

### 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.

# List of people interviewed

**Manuel Abramovich**, Filmmaker, Argentina  
**Fabienne Aguado**, Director of Artistic Studies, Casa de Velázquez, Spain/France  
**Helen Ahlsson**, Film Commissioner – Moving Sweden, Swedish Film Institute, Sweden  
**Helge Albers**, CEO, Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, Germany  
**Marco Alessi**, Producer, Dugong Films, Italy  
**Rodrigo Areias**, Producer, Bando à Parte, Portugal  
**Michel Balagué**, Producer, Volte Slagen, Germany  
**Erika Balsom**, Researcher & Senior Lecturer in Film Studies, King's College London, UK  
**Rosa Barba**, Artist, Italy  
**Eric Baudelaire**, Artist & filmmaker, France/USA  
**Maialen Beloki**, Deputy Director, Tabakalera, Spain  
**Meriem Bennani**, Multimedia artist, Morocco/USA  
**Leonardo Bigazzi**, Curator, Lo Schermo Dell'arte, Italy  
**Frédéric Boyer**, Artistic Director, Les Arcs Film Festival, France  
**Nataša Bučar**, Managing Director, Slovenian Film Centre, Slovenia  
**Émilie Bujès**, Artistic Director, Visions du Réel, Switzerland  
**Carlos Casas**, Filmmaker & visual artist, Spain  
**Anna Ciennik**, Industry Village Manager, Les Arcs Film Festival, France  
**Chantal Crousel**, Gallerist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, France  
**Sandra den Hammer**, Director, EYE Filmmuseum, Netherlands  
**Inge de Leeuw**, Programmer, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Netherlands

**Dániel Deák**, Coordinator of the Incubator Programme, National Film Institute, Hungary  
**Charlène Dinhut**, Curator, Centre Pompidou, France  
**Anaïs Emery**, Executive & Artistic Director, Geneva International Film Festival, Switzerland  
**Sara Fattahi**, Artist, filmmaker & animator, Syria/Austria  
**Olivier Fontenay**, Head of Unit Digital Creation, CNC, France  
**Barbara Fränzen**, Head of Department, Division Arts and Culture, Film Department of Federal Ministry for Arts, the Civil Service and Sport, Austria  
**Chloé Galibert-Lainé**, Researcher & filmmaker, France  
**Sergio Garcia de Leaniz**, Project Manager, Eurimages, France  
**Myriam Gast**, The Cinema & Audiovisual Grant Fund, Région Ile-de-France, France  
**Katharina Gerson**, Head of Programming and Cooperation, B3 Biennial of the Moving Image, Germany  
**Alessandro Gropplero**, Head of When East Meets West & Head of International Relations, Friuli Venezia Giulia Audiovisual Fund, Italy  
**Jan Holmberg**, CEO, The Bergman Foundation, Sweden  
**Marek Hovorka**, Festival Director, Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, Czech Republic  
**Thierry Hugot**, Financial Analyst, Eurimages, France  
**Stefan Ivančić**, Producer, Non-Aligned Films, Serbia  
**Chloé Jarry**, CEO & Executive Producer, Lucid Realities, France  
**Siniša Juričić**, Producer, Nukleus Film, Croatia

**Siuli Ko**, K.O. Productions & Programme Digital Culture, Cinekid, Netherlands  
**Antoine Le Bos**, Co-director, Le Groupe Ouest & Artistic Director, Less Is More, France  
**Tim Leborgne**, Director of Open Workshop, VIA University College, Denmark  
**Andrea Lissoni**, Artistic Director, Haus der Kunst, Germany/Italy  
**Marie Logie**, Producer, Auguste Orts, Belgium  
**Camille Lopato**, Founder & Sales, Diversion Cinema, France  
**Chiara Marañon**, Programming & distribution, MUBI, UK  
**Olivier Marboeuf**, Producer, Spectre Production, France  
**Gordan Matić**, Director, Film Center Serbia, Serbia  
**Colin Maunoury**, Post-production Grants, Région Ile-de-France, France  
**Boris Mitić**, Documentary director, producer & lecturer, Serbia  
**Nathalie Monteillet**, Public relations and promotion, Eurimages, France  
**Fabienne Moris**, FIDLab Director & Program Coordinator, FIDMarseille, France  
**Gyda Velvin Myklebust**, Programme Director, New Nordic Films, Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund, Norway  
**Giona A. Nazzaro**, Artistic Director, Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland  
**László Nemes**, Film director & screenwriter, Hungary  
**Susan Newman-Baudais**, Head of Programme - Co-production/First Features, Eurimages, France  
**Cristina Nord**, Head of Berlinale Forum, Berlinale, Germany  
**Roberto Olla**, Executive Director, Eurimages, France  
**Katrín Ólafsdóttir**, Filmmaker & producer, Iceland  
**Tobias Pausinger**, Head of Development and Acquisitions, The Match Factory, Germany  
**Andréa Picard**, Senior Film Curator, Wavelengths, Toronto International Film Festival, Canada

**Corneliu Porumboiu**, Film director & producer, Romania  
**Michel Reilhac**, Co-curator, Venice VR, Venice International Film Festival, France/Italy  
**Silje Riise Næss**, Film Commissioner, Danish Film Institute, Denmark  
**Hugo Rosák**, Head of Film Industry, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, Czech Republic  
**Esther Rothstegge**, New Media Funding Executive, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg GmbH, Germany  
**Rasha Salti**, Commissioning editor, La Lucarne, Arte France, France  
**Sten-Kristian Saluveer**, Head of programming, Cannes Next, Marché du Film, Estonia/France  
**Yianna Sarri**, Head of Agora – Consultant for Innovative Programs, Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Greece  
**Albert Serra**, Filmmaker & producer, Catalonia, Spain  
**Erwin M. Schmidt**, Managing director of the German Film Producers Association, Germany  
**Marianne Slot**, Producer, Slot Machine, France  
**Fiona Tan**, Artist & filmmaker, Netherlands  
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**Director of publication:** Matthieu Darras  
**Heads of Study:** Matthieu Darras and Rebecca De Pas  
**Research Associates:** Esra Demirkiran, Anna Gudkova, Marina Gumzi, Elena López Riera, and Natacha Seweryn  
**Coordinator:** Kristína Aschenbrennerová  
**Graphic design / Layout:** Cornélia Paris  
**Proofreading:** Suzy Gillett

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