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HORIZON

RE:VISION A THINK TANK TOWARDS INCLUSION

held on 12th February, 2019 at EFM Horizon
by the European Film Market & ifp

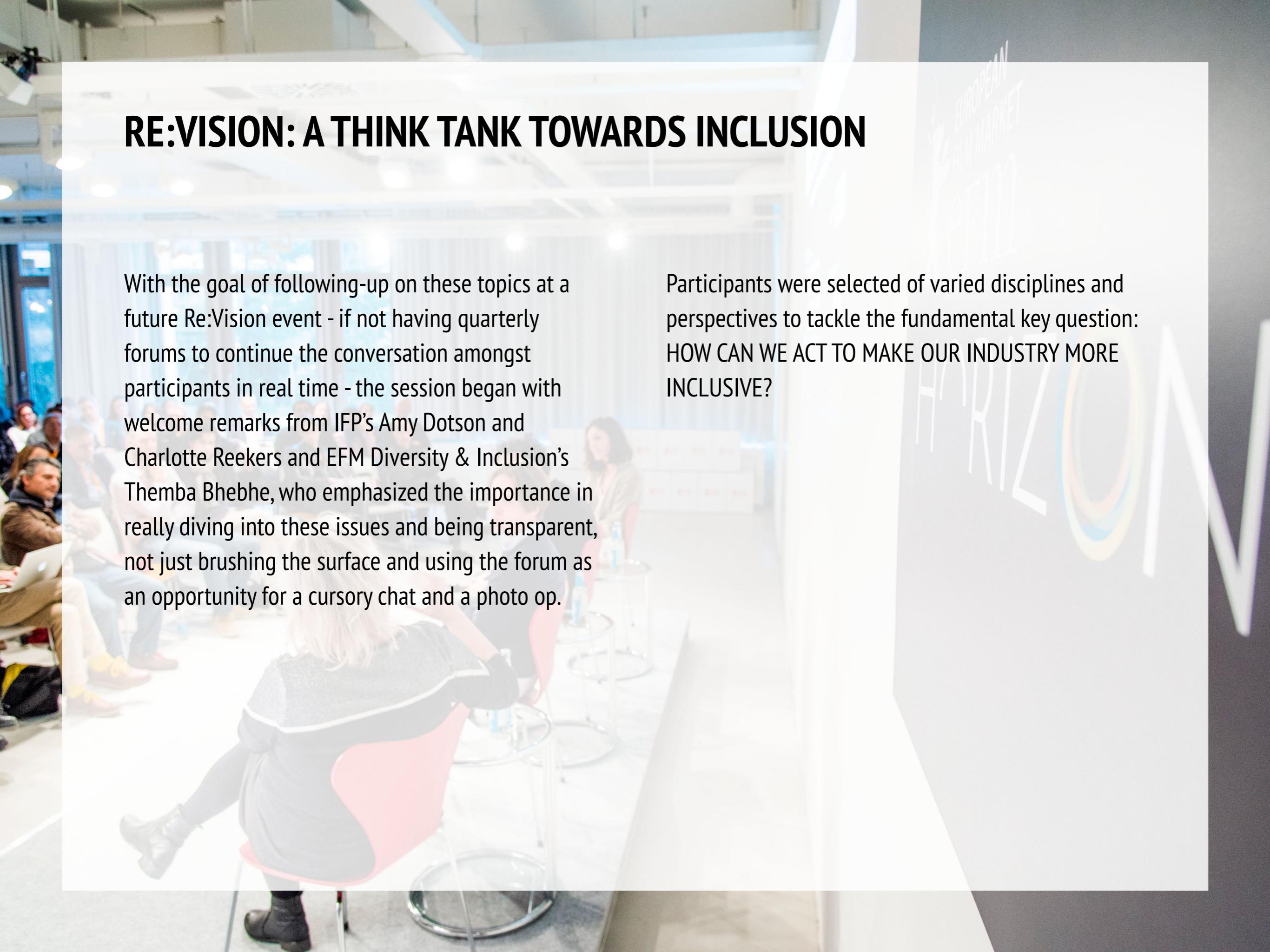


RE:VISION: A THINK TANK TOWARDS INCLUSION

Following up on the inaugural Re:Vision Forum at IFP Independent Film Week in September 2018, the second Re:Vision Think Tank at EFM aimed to expand the conversation on industry inclusivity and provide actionable, concrete solutions that can be employed immediately and/or within the very near future. Bringing together a diverse range of industry, from filmmakers to executives to festival leadership and those working to ensure transformative change in the industry today, a range of ideas and strategies were discussed, with the following guiding questions:

1. How can gatekeepers be meaningfully involved in outreach in order to make/keep the talent pipeline sustainably inclusive, and what proactive measures can they take to reach previously inaccessible or unseen diverse talent pipelines? In which spaces can such outreach operate?
2. How can decision-makers in the choice of the projects and films that they select, greenlight, fund, programme, curate and acquire firstly recognize, be cognizant of and address (unconscious) bias, their inherent and inherited privileges and potential blind spots in their perspectives to make decisions that do not unjustly exclude diverse talent.
3. How can organizations and companies devise both inward-looking and outward- looking strategies to engage with diverse audiences? How can internal changes enable organizations and companies to perceive and accurately gauge the value of these “new” audiences?

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With the goal of following-up on these topics at a future Re:Vision event - if not having quarterly forums to continue the conversation amongst participants in real time - the session began with welcome remarks from IFP's Amy Dotson and Charlotte Reekers and EFM Diversity & Inclusion's Themba Bhebhe, who emphasized the importance in really diving into these issues and being transparent, not just brushing the surface and using the forum as an opportunity for a cursory chat and a photo op.

Participants were selected of varied disciplines and perspectives to tackle the fundamental key question:
HOW CAN WE ACT TO MAKE OUR INDUSTRY MORE INCLUSIVE?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

In today's modern era where big data and data tracking are the norm and the most common and simple ways to measure trends and gain insights, it was emphasized that pooling and sharing data across all levels of the industry is key to holding gatekeepers accountable and encouraging more inclusivity.

Examples like McKinsey's 2018 Diversity Matters report were shared, in which it was shown that diversity across teams in various business sectors (including media and entertainment) had proven financial profitability and therefore demonstrated success.

NALIP (National Association of Latino Independent Producers, based in Los Angeles) and imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival (based in Toronto) also recently produced insightful reports and statistics on Latinx and Indigenous audiences, respectively, helping to provide transparency and encourage change.

But it was suggested that these orgs can only go so far to provide data for their own audiences, and larger "umbrella" organization(s) could be established to oversee annual diversity and inclusion reporting, otherwise "people will forget" about the significance of the topic, as one participant observed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

As inclusion isn't widely seen as a business issue but rather "an issue of the heart", it's often challenging to convince executives to make decisions that they don't readily see as economic ones, making data reporting even more significant. But beyond encouraging gatekeepers to be more inclusive in their hiring and greenlighting, gatekeepers need to become more diverse themselves.

It was agreed that industry riders and other concrete tools like the 5050 by 2020 commitment proposed to industry leaders will be crucial in seeing out global transformative change over the next few years.

Ongoing change has been assisted by practices like bias training and blind evaluation processes on the "gatekeeping" side, asking decision makers to question their inherent biases in hiring and curating, and removing biases by asking them to consider candidates and projects without knowledge of things like race, age, and gender.

An emphasis on mentorship was also discussed, and its importance in helping bring up filmmakers and industry from different backgrounds who may require the helping hand of more experienced and established industry to further their careers. Industry needs to be more risk-taking but this sometimes requires incentivizing risks and more inclusive decision-making.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Incentivizing rather than forcing more inclusivity can be a more proactive strategy to seeing more rapid and organic results. But groups need to be treated uniquely and individually, with guiding practices of intersectionality at the forefront.

The example of Brazil was given where issues facing the black population are very different than issues facing the queer population, though there can be overlap.

Given this example, diverse groups cannot be treated all together as one, nor should they be always tasked with brainstorming and providing solutions to inclusivity, especially as it is not an issue of their making. Everyone must come to the table to enforce change.

To this end, the group discussed the idea of establishing a Global Diversity Network for high level decision-makers. A sort of diversity committee, the goal would be to encourage gatekeepers to continually improve their practices and maintain the conversation year-round, not just when the time is convenient or the topic is en vogue.

QUESTIONS AT A GLANCE:

How can gatekeepers be meaningfully involved in outreach in order to make/keep the talent pipeline sustainably inclusive, and what proactive measures can they take to reach previously inaccessible or unseen diverse talent pipelines? In which spaces can such outreach operate?

Decision-makers must address and change the language of inclusivity and diversity and refrain from using marginalized groups as a “marketing tool” only. For example, the word “emerging” was put forward as an unfair and nondescript way that has long and often been used to describe marginalized filmmakers and talent.

Implementing guild level and industry-wide mandates and requirements should also take place to help to ensure fair practices and diverse outreach.

This includes exploring business models that support cultivating more diverse audiences, which in turn requires building audience/consumer trust. Again, this can be assisted by better pooling data across the industry at every level, and by creating incentives in good faith that provide actionable outcomes.

QUESTIONS AT A GLANCE:

How can decision-makers in the choice of the projects and films that they select, greenlight, fund, programme, curate and acquire firstly recognize, be cognizant of and address (unconscious) bias, their inherent and inherited privileges and potential blind spots in their perspectives to make decisions that do not unjustly exclude diverse talent.

The inherently elitist culture of cinema must be confronted head-on in order to address questions of inclusivity in the industry. Curators in positions of privilege must help realize change in the culture and help encourage diversity to wider industry. The audience is there but to begin with, curators and decision-makers must help make the space.

Diversifying decision-makers is also key, through inclusion riders and diversity requirements but also through aforementioned tools like blind evaluation processes, more transparency (with data as a tool), and employing more bias and cultural sensitivity trainings across teams and companies.

Risk-taking can be incentivized to assist this, including sharing info amongst decision-makers to manage bias-based perceptions of said “risks.” The value of mentorship (and incentivizing mentorship) should also not be understated, as well as hiring people in more collaborative roles to help pull them up.

QUESTIONS AT A GLANCE:

How can organizations and companies devise both inward-looking and outward-looking strategies to engage with diverse audiences? How can internal changes enable organizations and companies to perceive and accurately gauge the value of these “new” audiences?

More social and networking events should be implemented -- and on an ongoing basis -- to encourage conversation and collaboration across sectors, diverse populations, and different experience levels.

Again, the significance of data and reporting cannot be understated in addressing inclusivity, as well as employing anti-bias and anti-oppression training amongst teams and companies.

Outsourcing (in hiring practices, research, and beyond) can also be important, especially in seeking diverse solutions to issues where the team or commissioning body may be uniform in makeup, racially or other.



Re:Vision:
A Think Tank Towards Inclusion



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