

WOMEN IN CINEMATOGRAPHY

Women in Cinematography echo the sentiments that have been made by Cinematography societies the world over since the release of Marek Żydowicz's article in *Cinematography World* magazine on Nov. 8, 2024 and wish to provide greater context to this discussion.

Camerimage's historical exclusion of all but a few women is the very reason that Women in Cinematography - a collective of filmmakers from across the globe - was formed earlier this year.

Even a recap of the most recent history can demonstrate how female cinematographers have been sidelined by the festival. *MUDBOUND*, for which Rachel Morrison ASC became the first woman to be nominated for a cinematography Oscar in 2018, was not included in competition and instead relegated to a special screening. In 2021, cinematographer Ari Wegner ACS ASC was nominated for an Academy Award for *THE POWER OF THE DOG*, but this film was also excluded from the main competition and shown as a special screening. Ellen Kuras ASC's cinematography work has never been nominated in competition. *PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE*, for which Claire Mathon AFC won the César award for cinematography in 2020, was excluded from the festival. Can Camerimage claim to be first and foremost about artistic merit when it overlooks these brilliant and lauded achievements?

Is the inclusion of only two women as chair on the Main Jury (Agnieszka Holland in 1997 and Mandy Walker ACS ASC in 2023) evidence that the festival 'has always defended under-appreciated and excluded creators'? Only 3.1% of films selected for the main competition have been photographed by women.

There have been repeated failed attempts by several organisations to persuade Camerimage to implement broader inclusion initiatives beyond the occasional diversity panel. As a result of the dismaying lack of representation in the 2021 edition of the festival, the IMAGO D&I committee, in conjunction with the Digital Orchard Foundation, submitted a comprehensive list of proposals to Camerimage that could broaden the selection process that repeatedly sees female and minority cinematographers sidelined. None of these initiatives were implemented by Camerimage.

In May this year, the festival reached out to Women Behind the Camera in the UK to help them with a one-off event to celebrate 'The Year of Brave Women'. They resisted WBTC's suggestion to curate a number of events across the week featuring female filmmakers and despite WBTC sending over 30 proposals to the festival in early June, they received no response or commitment.

Women in Cinematography's [petition on change.org](https://www.change.org/p/women-in-cinematography) was delivered to the Camerimage administration in September with over 2500 signatures and public pledges of support from leading cinematography societies and manufacturers and directly led to WIC's inclusion in this year's festival programme.

We reject this campaign being used by Mr Żydowicz as a demonstration of the festival's commitment to diversity or to shield Camerimage Festival from rightful criticism, as was attempted in his 9th November response to the BSC's open letter. These events only came about as a result of our activism and public and international pressure. In outlining its defence, the festival published a new Diversity and Inclusion policy which was in fact drafted by WIC and delivered to the festival on 28th September. It remained unpublished until the recent backlash against the *Cinematography World* article, and was posted without acknowledgement of its origins or credit for the women who wrote it.

Mr Żydowicz may believe that he doesn't have a blind spot when it comes to minority representation but please take a moment to reflect on the events of the last few days. As a major player on the international stage, Mr Zydownicz's words wield great influence and Camerimage has a responsibility to celebrate filmmakers from all walks of life and those who historically have not received the support needed to amplify their talents and achievements. Diversity and inclusion are essential to innovation and progress in any sector, and the art of cinema is no exception.

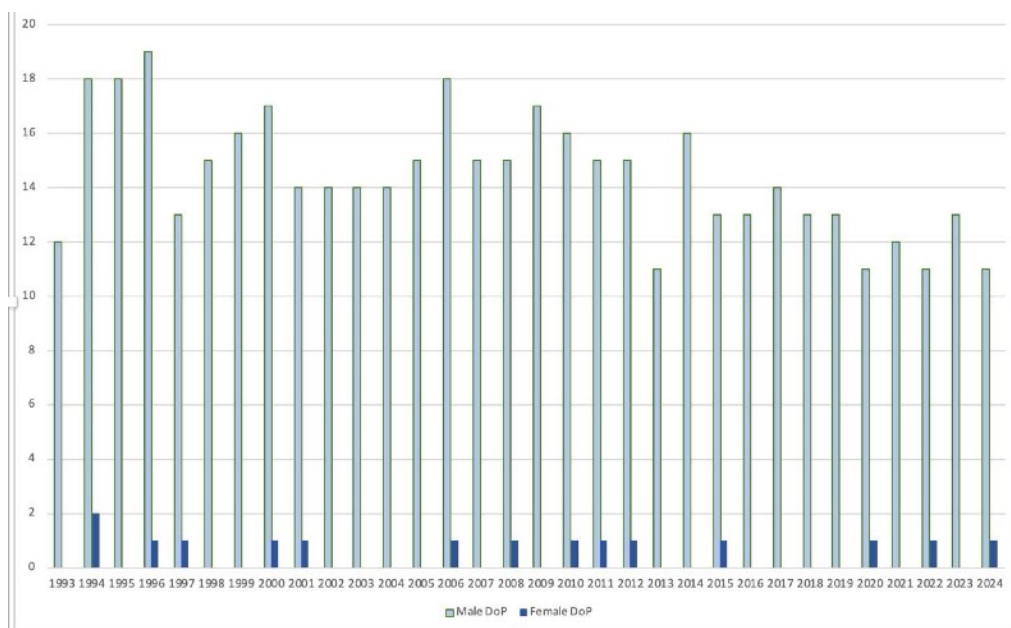
WIC were happy finally to read yesterday of Mr Żydowicz's commitment to progress. We hold great fondness in our hearts for the festival and want it to thrive. Given the outcry from the community over the weekend, we urge the festival's apology for the offence caused and a genuine pledge of concrete commitments going forward. This will go a long way to restoring the faith in the festival and its leadership's integrity.

This is a brief list of where positive change must happen:

- Full transparency of the selection committees; publish names and photographs.
- Creation of a meaningful selection policy to ensure fair representation in competitions.
- Creation of an advisory board to oversee and implement the original D&I policy
- Extensive cooperation with organisations representing minorities in the film business.
- Training management teams, selection committees and juries about unconscious bias and how to use inclusive language and behaviours
- Revise your competition categories to diversify those eligible to submit. For instance, introduce a mid-range feature competition so that it is not a choice between debut feature or big budget, where minority groups have historically been excluded. We also suggest opening the TV competition to include later episodes and not restrict submissions to the pilot.
- engage scouts to actively seek excellent work from underrepresented groups

Camerimage has always been, and continues to be, a unique and invaluable festival for all of us; shaping, supporting, and educating cinematographers in countless ways. That's why we deeply care about its evolution to reflect the highest standards of the film industry, including inclusivity and social responsibility.

We hope that this year's initiatives will lay the groundwork for meaningful and lasting progress, and have faith that Camerimage will commit to these principles.



Camerimage Golden Frog Main Competition nominations 1993 - 2024