



Women in Film,
Television & Media
Italia

Italian Women in the Media, Activism and a More Fluid Dialogue between the Industry and Academia

by Domizia De Rosa

Buongiorno and good morning.

I am honored to be here today with you and I wish to thank Doctor Laviosa and Doctor Ramsey-Portolano, who made possible for this intruder from the industry to come here and moreover to talk in this plenary session.

I am a media executive specialized in TV rights distribution. I worked 25 years within the Warner Bros. group here in Rome and I saw the market change, change and change again.

I was familiar with the word 'resilience' way before the pandemic (unluckily for me) and with advertising breaks before OTT platforms re-discovered them.

As a salesperson and a woman, I learned codes and canons which already were or would become obsolete and still persist. It took me more than the simple good sense to fully understand the culture around and inside me.

Today I am here as a professional and as an activist.

Women in Film, Television & Media Italia is the Italian association which supports, promotes and advocates for gender equality in the audiovisual sector in Italy.

As the name already declares, this is a multi and interdisciplinary space, which welcomes professionals from any area of the industry - men included, in case you are wondering. Inequality affects all, it is not the exclusivity of one gender.

We believe that putting in contact different experiences and skills will provide the terrain for enrichment, inspiration and opportunities.

And this is what is happening.

We are part of an international network which some of you may have already met and which was born in 1973 in Los Angeles for the same reasons we came to life 45 - yes 45 years later - in 2018.

Right in time for the #MeToo storm, not a coincidence but not the only cause for our decision to take action instead of complaining. And ordering a second mojito.

Those dates already tell us something more. For example that the privileged like their privileges and that they will not give them away unless the culture and the rules change.



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As in the history of voting rights, for an appropriate comparison.

By addressing you in English, I will spare you the unnecessary Anglicisms which my commercial upbringing favors. More seriously, I want to highlight the need to weave the international and the local threads together. Today even more than before.

As Women in Film, Television & Media Italia we believe firmly in the power of dialogue and in the strength of the networks. Building bridges, opening doors, letting new currents in. This is what we need as a creative industry and that is our mission.

As this conference itself affirms and proves, there is no growth in absence of communication and sharing. When it comes to human and civil rights, the more we are, the better.

Since 2017, when the association was still an idea, to now, so much has happened to our personal lives first of all, to our careers, to the industry and to the world. So I will not give here an abridged version of 'OMG, everything is changing!' because you were there too.

On the bright side, we can appreciate that gender equality, diversity and inclusion are no more aliens in the boardrooms.

Or in the writers' rooms.

On the shadowy if not shady side, they constantly risk hostile suspicion or pure exploitation as in the case of pink-washing, rainbow-washing, green-washing and the whole washing machine family.

When we look at numbers on set, above and below the line, we know that improvements have not been substantial so far.

When we look at the top positions in the industry, yes, we can see improvements, but it has to be proved that this is the real shift and not a trending topic.

For this reason, it is important that associations as ours exist and work with all the relevant stakeholders for what we know is a common benefit. Institutions, broadcasters, platforms, producers, distributors, authors, creators, performers - and academia of course.

Together with positive actions, sowing and spreading awareness is key to building more equal working places, work conditions, career opportunities, retributions, representations.

Rome was not built in a day and 'gender' is a word with many enemies, especially within those who prefer misinterpreting to learning. Which is not the case here, I am sure.

Talking of gender (as we heard from Professor Buonanno) is talking of the way we think, operate, create, watch, analyze and empathize. Gender is not just an extra in the background, as many still prefer to assume.



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We believe that your work is key to a better understanding of which stories are told, and how and especially why.

Moreover, your work helps identify which stories are left out - partially or totally - for lack of knowledge or will.

Understanding what Italian-ness means today and how we can advance the representation of present and past realities and the imagination of the future, as in the goals of this conference, is today so relevant and so much needed.

As it is the sharing of your research with a wider audience.

Also, we know that your students will play a part in the future of the screen industries. Not all of them, clearly and maybe luckily. As long as it is their decision to become food bloggers rather than directors of photography. As long access is available and obstacles don't come with exclusionary strings attached.

I want to take this opportunity to invite you to think of the wider effect that some of your works may have, when put them on varied tables.

As stereotypes and biases are included from birth in our heritage, we say the earlier, the better.

With getting rid of them.

Through education and content creation.

We need a toolbox which is up to date.

And by sharing knowledge we can accomplish that more easily and more timely.

Thank you.

ABSTRACT

As a topic and an objective, gender equality in the audiovisual sector has found a new focus in the past decade also in Italy. Researches show the lack of a constant growth in roles considered as apical, be it as a top manager in an organization or as a director on a set. Activism in the form of women's networks may be one of the keys to a sustainable evolution together with an interdisciplinary approach.