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Headline: Monty Python's Terry Gilliam outraged by climate change, Hollywood PC culture

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British film director Terry Gilliam speaks with reporters during an interview on the sidelines of the 41st edition of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) at a hotel in the center of the Egyptian capital Cairo on November 22, 2019. Image: Khaled DESOUKI/AFP

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Fresh from winning an award from the Cairo International Film Festival, outspoken British-American director Terry Gilliam on Friday lambasted Donald Trump, urged more action on climate change and denounced political correctness in Hollywood.

Speaking in the Egyptian capital on his 79th birthday, the prolific filmmaker, known for cult classics including "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas", took a shot at the US president.

Gilliam praised former top White House Russia expert Fiona Hill's testimony in Thursday's impeachment hearings against Trump.

"If anyone takes down Trump, it will be Fiona Hill," he said in a briefing with reporters overlooking the Nile on the sidelines of the festival.

The director who was part of the culture-shaping comedy troupe Monty Python received a lifetime achievement award from the festival this week.

Addressing the dire impact of climate change, Gilliam insisted that the 2016 Paris climate accord had not gone far enough to combat environmental degradation.

"You got this planet and there's no question that it is in big trouble. We already have passed the danger mark," he said.

"We keep on spending billions to try to get to Mars and by that time this planet will look like Mars," he added.

No stranger to controversy, Gilliam derided attempts to make films more socially inclusive, particularly with regards to gender and race.

"In Hollywood, there's a lot of pressure if you're going to have a transgender character, then you have to have a transgender actor — it's ridiculous," he told AFP.

"If you're going to have a serial killer then you've got to have a serial killer actor who has killed many people? It's illogical," Gilliam added.

He referred to actress Zoe Saldana who was criticized for portraying legendary soul singer Nina Simone, saying she was “pilloried” for darkening her skin for the role.

“If I’m going to play an Italian on film I’ll darken my skin, I’ll try to look Mediterranean,” Gilliam said.

“This is such superficial nonsense”.

He went to say the #Metoo movement had not made him rethink his casting decisions.

Last year, Gilliam sparked a firestorm by saying ambitious actresses willingly “paid the price” of having sex with disgraced film executive Harvey Weinstein.

He has since walked back from those comments, describing Weinstein on Friday as a “complete monster”, but said similar behavior in the film industry was likely inevitable.

“Hollywood has always been and will probably continue to be about power, and power is always abused,” he told AFP.

The Cairo festival, which runs until November 29, was the first Arab film festival to sign the “5050x2020” Gender Parity Pledge launched last year at the Cannes Film Festival.

The pledge aims to promote gender equality in film-making after the Weinstein scandal.

Gilliam’s latest film, “The Man who killed Don Quixote”, stars heartthrob Adam Driver and took 17 years to complete. NVG

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