



**BLACK FILMMAKER FORUM PANEL DISCUSSION
11 JUNE 2016**

REPORT

by

**TINA-LOUISE SMITH | ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV
PANEL DEVELOPER AND MODERATOR**

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

A. PANEL GOALS

As an historically disadvantaged filmmaker who has struggled to produce her films for the past 18 years, it is clear to me that black filmmakers need economic support to be able to consistently produce films that contribute to a more honest and more representative national story. Through informal discussions I am aware that there are many more black filmmakers who know the same.

The South African film sector perpetuates the current status quo through established structures, ways of operating and systemic racism that continues to support white filmmakers over their historically disadvantaged counterparts. As much as government may be committed to economic redress and to creating opportunities for black filmmakers, its attempts are encumbered by structural racism and the economic reality bequeathed to South Africa by apartheid.

Black filmmakers in the Western Cape in particular are frustrated that their needs are not being understood, addressed and acknowledged. It is clear that government funding through the NFVF is also limited and other than the NFVF and the DTI, where do filmmakers go to fund their films?

This situation has remained unchanged in the Western Cape and it is a problem that has continued to bother me. I realize that we need funding beyond government for black and historically disadvantaged filmmakers in the Western Cape in particular and in South Africa in general. Because of this, I agreed to develop, co-ordinate and moderate this panel discussion at the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival this year.

The panel discussion goals were to:

1. establish the needs of black filmmakers
2. explore the kinds of support black filmmakers need in terms of funding models and support mechanisms

B. PANEL DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

The panel discussion was developed and organized by Tina-Louise Smith of Accidental Films and TV, in consultation with Darryl Els of Encounters and in conversation with the panelists.

Government agencies and departments were approached to understand their economic and funding support programmes for black filmmakers and producers in South Africa and how successful they have been. I contacted the NFVF about their documentary slate fund, the DTI about their Emerging Black Filmmaker Fund, and Wesgro about their funding interventions. I also sourced figures from the Gauteng Film Commission's annual report and from the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission's website (<http://www.kwazulunatalfilm.co.za/made-in-kwazulu-natal/projects-funded-201516/>).

The Association for Transformation in Film and TV (ATFT) was approached to both participate on the panel and to understand what their work amongst black producers and filmmakers has revealed.

The NFVF indicated that their first documentary slate was still in progress and that it is too early to gauge the outcomes of the programme.

The DTI did not respond to my queries.

Wesgro explained their approach to film as one of developing businesses, rather than investing directly in projects or providing economic support for productions.

I approached the GFC for clarity on their annual report figures to understand how much of the total R2 185 789 for local project support went into film production and development. I still await their response.

The ATFT informed me that they have done a survey with their members to determine how the various government funding initiatives assist them. The ATFT is yet to share this survey with me.

C. PANEL PRESENTATION

Around thirty people attended the presentation in Workshop 17 at the V&A Waterfront.



I introduced the discussion and the panelists (my presentation is attached):



Photographs by Shaun Swingler

Mayenzeke Baza contributed to the discussion via Skype.

PANELISTS' BRIEF

For me, the goal of this panel is to understand the timeline for black filmmakers to produce their films and how long it takes from one to the next.

Most importantly, what you think is required to make filmmaking less complicated for yourself. What will allow you, in an ideal world, to deliver a film every two years?

With these goals in mind, I have broken each panelist's presentation down as follows:

INTRODUCTION

Name, whether you consider yourself a producer, director, or producer-director, how many documentary films you have made, how many you are working on at the moment that you have to find funding for, i.e. not a straight broadcaster commission.

Also, what was the last documentary you completed and how long ago was that?

CASE STUDY

Then, looking at a case study of your own projects, choose one of your current documentary projects and explain the finance plan for this project. Which funders do you want to approach, for how much, and why these?

YOUR IDEAL

Looking at South African documentary film funding in general:

- a. do you think we have enough avenues to fund our documentary films in South Africa
- b. what would be the simplest funding model for you to help you fund and complete your films
- c. do we need funding targeted at the Western Cape, or nationally

CONCLUSION

Finally, what else do you think we lack in South Africa that could support filmmakers in an ideal way?

PRESENTATIONS

The main points coming from her presentation were:

1. Post production is the biggest cost of her production at R700 000, which means the NFVF's production grant at R350 000 would not be enough;
2. She has had to figure out where the business is in her project and how the production company could absorb the production costs;
3. Ultimately she worked out that she needs to open her own post production facility to be able to invest in her own project and to be able to afford post production on the project;
4. She also needs a grant pot to be able to unlock her access to the DTI's requirement to have 10% funding in place before applying to their Emerging Black Filmmaker Fund;
5. She needs broadcasters to be equity investors because letters of intent do not help her reach the DTI's 10%;

6. With her post production entity, she can be an equity investor in other filmmakers' projects through post production on their projects, allowing black filmmakers to "get our films made.";
7. Everyone wants to see a rough cut, but where do you get the funds to do a rough cut?

Key points emerging from Mayenzeke's presentation were:

1. Filmmakers need to access the Lotto funding because it is free funding that does not need to be paid back and filmmakers have editorial control;
2. Filmmakers need to find universal stories with legs to travel;
3. Investors want to see a return on their investment;
4. Donors often direct you to tell the story they want you to tell;
5. Documentary filmmaking as a business is dying;
6. Even feature (fiction) films are hard to finance around the world;
7. The NFVF has limited funds for all South African filmmakers.

Lungiswa's notes are attached. Her presentation included the following:

1. She produced two films for the SABC, won an award for *Isibande* with which she travelled to the Göteborg Film Festival in Sweden in 2001, directed *Bring Back Yesterday* with Controversi Films, produced a soccer related film in 2010 and then decided not to make films any longer because she was not earning enough to support her family;
2. She feels there is a lack of trust of herself as a black producer compared to her white counterparts;
3. She has too many documentary ideas and not enough funds;
4. She thinks filmmakers need to be able to build relationships outside South Africa to assist with their film funding and filmmaking;
5. She had to close her small production company.

Nadine Cloete's notes are attached. Nadine's points were:

1. Once we start telling our own stories, our audiences start to watch;
2. Black filmmakers need to do other work to sustain themselves;
3. As filmmaker Ekwa Msangi says, she makes choices that put her livelihood in jeopardy on a daily basis;
4. She was forced to produce *Action Kommandant* because she could not find a producer who understood the project, but she considers herself a director;
5. Her film, *Action Kommandant* has achieved incredible audience success at Encounters (and Durban post the panel), but she only has festival rights for most of the archive, which means she needs to now raise further funding for broadcast rights;
6. She can do a school rollout, but she won't make any money off of that;
7. Our victories are downplayed as black filmmakers – when she was 18 years old she won first prize at the Youth for Human Rights International Film Festival, Los Angeles in 2005 for her fiction film *Miseducation*, but there was no media fuss about this;
8. Her ideal would be to be able to find one source of funding to cover everything she needs to do for a project.

D. DISCUSSION

The following points were made by audience members in response to issues raised by panelists:

ARCHIVE

- Archive should be free to filmmakers, especially archive from broadcasters.
- Associated Press should not charge South African filmmakers in US\$.
- When filmmakers enter into deals, the cost of film archive should be included in all future deals.
- Filmmakers should include in their broadcast deals that the broadcasters pay to cover archive costs for their broadcast.

PRE-SALES

- We need strong advocacy and lobbying around pre-sales because the current model has nothing to do with the realities of South Africa. If the DTI continues with this model, many films will not be made. Domestically, with the exception of M-Net that does a form of pre-sales there isn't an outlet for pre-sales. Internationally things have shifted everywhere and pre-sales are quite rare. Letters of intent are no longer sufficient and the DTI wants pre-sales, but black and / or emerging filmmakers are not able to capture this always. Pre-sales is based on formulae developed for buyers and these formulae include looking at who is in the film and how much it costs. If x number of bankable elements are present, then the project is bankable. So for independent black and / or emerging filmmakers, who don't have these elements, they won't get pre-sales. Pre-sales is based on an assumption and exercises with folks in other markets that don't apply here.
- Good marketing plans in terms of sales and licensing should be the criteria, not bankable elements like celebrities and budgets. Most people here will not have most of those elements – Video Vision can get that, but who else? Sales agents ring fence the films they're interested in. The model for distribution of independent films has collapsed completely around the world because of economic problems and new platforms that have been introduced by developments in technology. So to focus on something that doesn't work, is ridiculous for us in South Africa. We have to try to identify opportunities for funding and distribution of films.
- Pre-sales could include door-to-door support and sales within the community where the story is from. This provides a ready audience that is invested in the story before it is made. Our experience has been that if you have a story that resonates with a given community, that they become the principle driver for sales and marketing of that film. We assembled street teams to distribute the films. If musicians could take control of their marketing and distribution and focus on direct-to-face engagement, then as filmmakers we need to do something similar, so we need to work on finding folk to work on street teams to build awareness and build desire for the film. It's something that any filmmaker should be doing in any event. Distributors won't have the opportunity to go straight to the fans and the constituency, which is your most powerful marketing tool and the best way to identify who is interested in your film. We need to de-emphasise the standards established in international markets – they're not that interested in us anyway. That doesn't mean our films can't travel, but Commissioning Editors start with what did you do in your country and what was the reception/performance – we need a new regime of

training for filmmakers that tells them they need to drive marketing and distribution themselves.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND PLANNING

- Perhaps we need to focus on audience development and how we sell our films, i.e. do we sell it as a commodity or as something of value?
- There is money, but there is also a lot of corruption, which means the chosen production companies get funded.
- We have a lot of social capital, but the nature of the sector does not allow for a long term strategy; so we need to find collective capacity to explore the possibilities around ways to support us, e.g. a pension fund and a way to measure the policies targeting film sector development.

F. NOTES

1. The support for Nadine's statement, "Once we start telling our own stories, our audiences start to watch," comes from her seven sold out screenings for *Action Kommandant* at Encounters, at the Durban International Film Festival and more localized screenings with full houses in neighbourhoods around Cape Town. Now Nadine is faced with the challenge of distributing *Action Kommandant*. As a director, who was forced into producing her film, Nadine's experience is unfortunately not uncommon. There is a scarcity of producers in South Africa, including producers who can take someone else's idea on board. Many South African directors are forced into producing, which impacts their work as directors negatively.
We have a shortage of producers in South Africa, who are willing and able to work with directors who initiate projects.
2. Development and post-production support are required. Development support would include the kind of support that enables filmmakers to explore their marketing and distribution strategies before they begin production. This will help prevent the situation Nadine finds herself in with *Action Kommandant*.
3. Post-production is often the biggest cost in the production budget, but there are no local funds geared towards post-production support.
4. Government funding from the NFVF, GFC and KZNFC is limited. In the Western Cape filmmakers do not have the support of provincial government in the form of cash injections into their projects, like their peers in the two other major provinces. While the Western Cape attracts international productions like *Homelands*, *Safe House* and *Black Sails*, none of this investment is channeled into local film development.

Local industry players are increasingly participating in the global film and multimedia sphere where they are servicing major Hollywood studios and bringing valuable foreign exchange into the economy. Additionally, television production companies are showing interest in locating to Cape Town which has been identified as the African hub for the international film industry.¹

¹ pp. 35-36, Invest in Western Cape: A Perspective on Investment Opportunities in the Western Cape 2015/2016

5. In the Western Cape energy is focused on foreign productions with local production companies servicing those productions. The Western Cape is identified as the “African hub for the international film industry” but unfortunately, not for the South African film industry.
6. Audiences do not expect to pay for films. Nadine mentioned that despite her seven sold out screenings, she now has many people who would like to screen the film for free. With my own film, *Mr Table Tennis*, at Encounters this year I was surprised by how many people wanted to see the film – thereby expressing interest in the subject matter – , but at the same time I was surprised that they expected to get complimentary tickets. In an article I wrote for the Cape Town Partnership in April 2016, the idea of artists (including filmmakers) working for free is briefly explored:
<http://www.creativecapetown.com/artist-or-entrepreneur/>
7. Filmmakers do not only need funding for their projects, but because of the precarious nature of filmmaking, filmmakers, like many other creatives are not able to plan for their futures in terms of pension funds and the like. There is further economic support required for filmmakers beyond their films.

G. WAY FORWARD

The panel discussion at Encounters was the first step towards exploring and developing a mechanism of support for South African black documentary filmmakers. The next step is for the panelists and the moderator to take on board points and perspectives that emerged during the discussion and work out what is most relevant for making films in Cape Town and in South Africa. Based on this we will determine the way forward in terms of:

1. the kind of support we need to develop for black filmmakers;
2. who to approach as partners and funders of this support;
3. whether this support is confined to the Western Cape only, or if it will be national;
4. whether we could attach whatever we decide to do to any existing support initiatives;
5. whether the support will follow traditional models of support for filmmakers, or whether we need to create something new and relevant for South African filmmakers.

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

PANELISTS' PRESENTATIONS

Tina-Louise Smith

Lungiswa Sithole

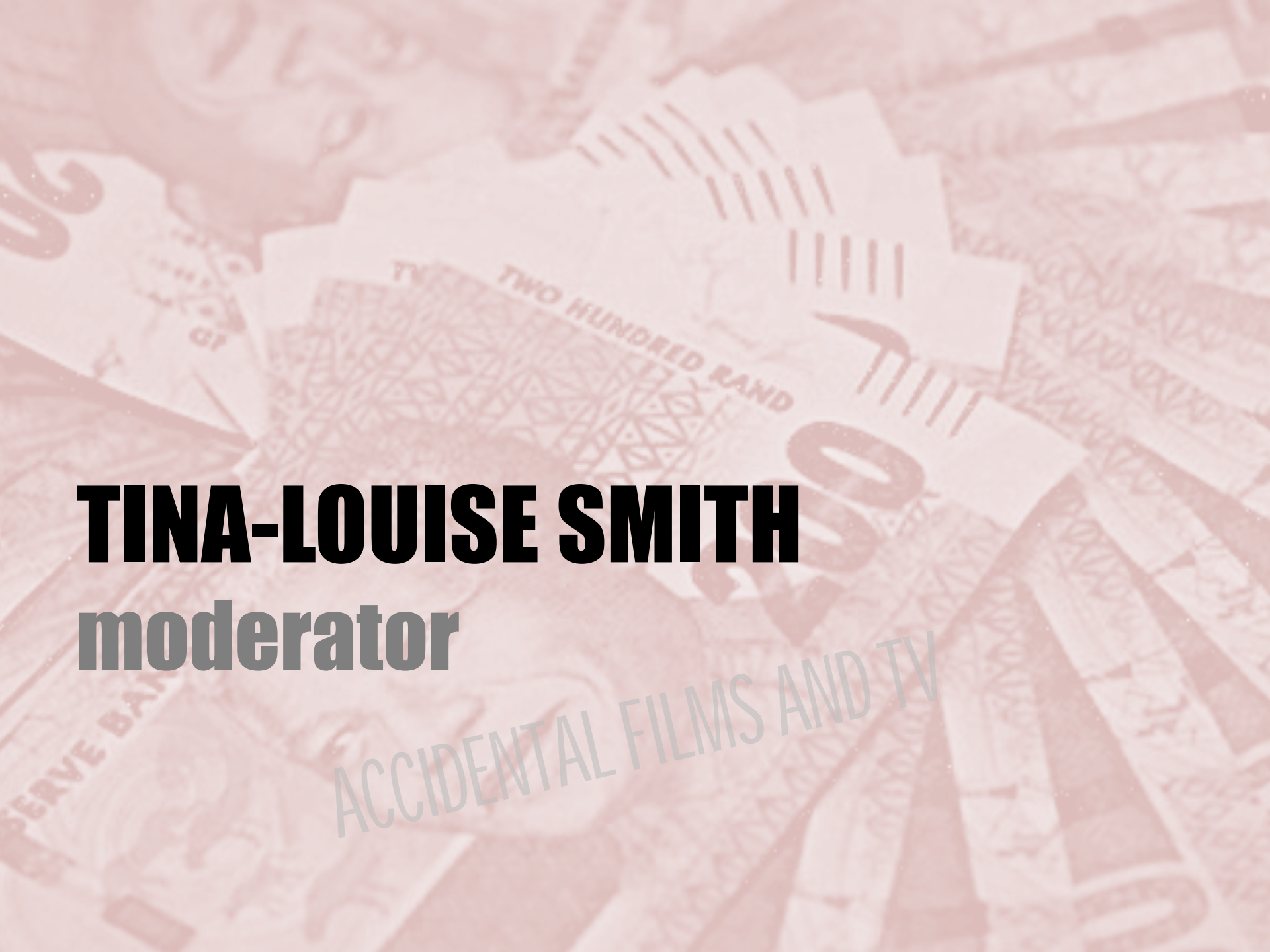
Nadine Cloete

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV



SHOW ME THE MONEY

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

The background of the image is a collage of South African 200 Rand banknotes, rendered in a light red or pinkish tint. The notes are overlapping and slightly out of focus, creating a textured, layered effect. The text "TINA-LOUISE SMITH" is prominently displayed in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below it, the word "moderator" is written in a smaller, bold, dark grey sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text "ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV" is written in a light grey, italicized sans-serif font, slanted upwards from left to right.

TINA-LOUISE SMITH

moderator

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

The background of the image is a collage of South African 200 Rand banknotes, rendered in a light red or pinkish tint. The notes are overlapping and slightly blurred, creating a textured, layered effect. The text "TWO HUNDRED RAND" and "RESERVE BANK OF SOUTH AFRICA" are visible on the notes.

LUNGISWA SITHOLE

panelist

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

The background of the image is a collage of South African 200 Rand banknotes, rendered in a light red or pinkish tint. The notes are overlapping and slightly blurred, creating a textured, financial-themed backdrop. The text "TWO HUNDRED RAND" and "RESERVE BANK OF SOUTH AFRICA" are visible on the notes.

MARIZA MATSHAYA

panelist

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

MAYENZEKE BAZA

panelist via Skype



ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

The background of the image is a collage of South African 200 Rand banknotes, rendered in a light red or pinkish tint. The notes are overlapping and slightly blurred, creating a textured, layered effect. The text "TWO HUNDRED RAND" and the number "200" are visible on the notes.

NADINE CLOETE

panelist

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

OUR STARTING POINT



The starting point for us today is that we all accept that black filmmakers start off at an economic disadvantage compared to our white filmmaker counterparts.

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

EQUALITY vs EQUITY



The playing fields are not yet level.

We are not here to debate whether black filmmakers start off economically challenged, but to explore how this challenge affects our output + how we can address this. Because this economic imbalance undeniably affects which stories are told and which voices are heard.

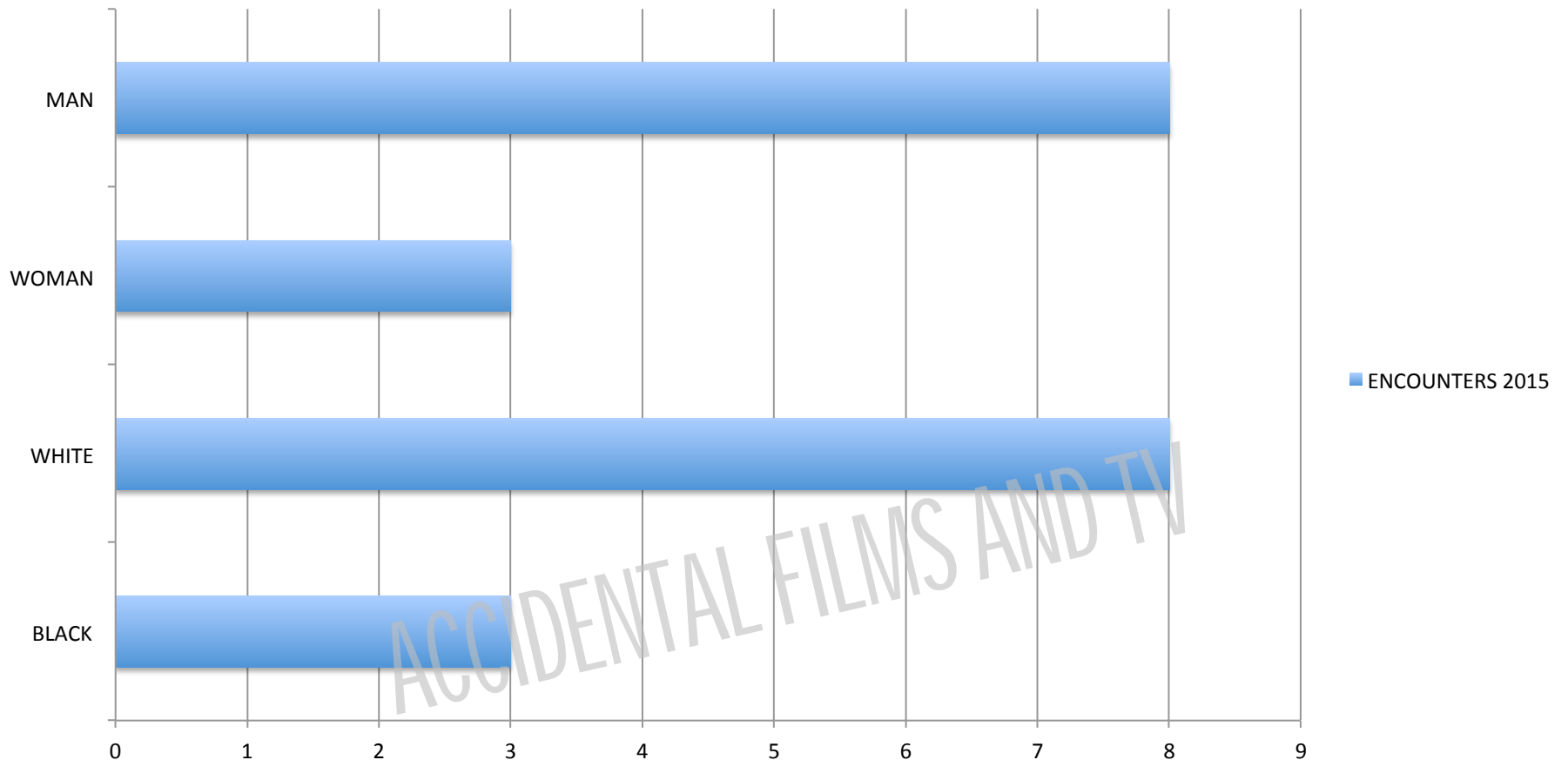
The background of the image is a collage of various Euro banknotes, including 20, 10, 5, and 1 Euro notes, arranged in a fan-like pattern. The text is overlaid on this background.

FESTIVAL DEMOGRAPHICS

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

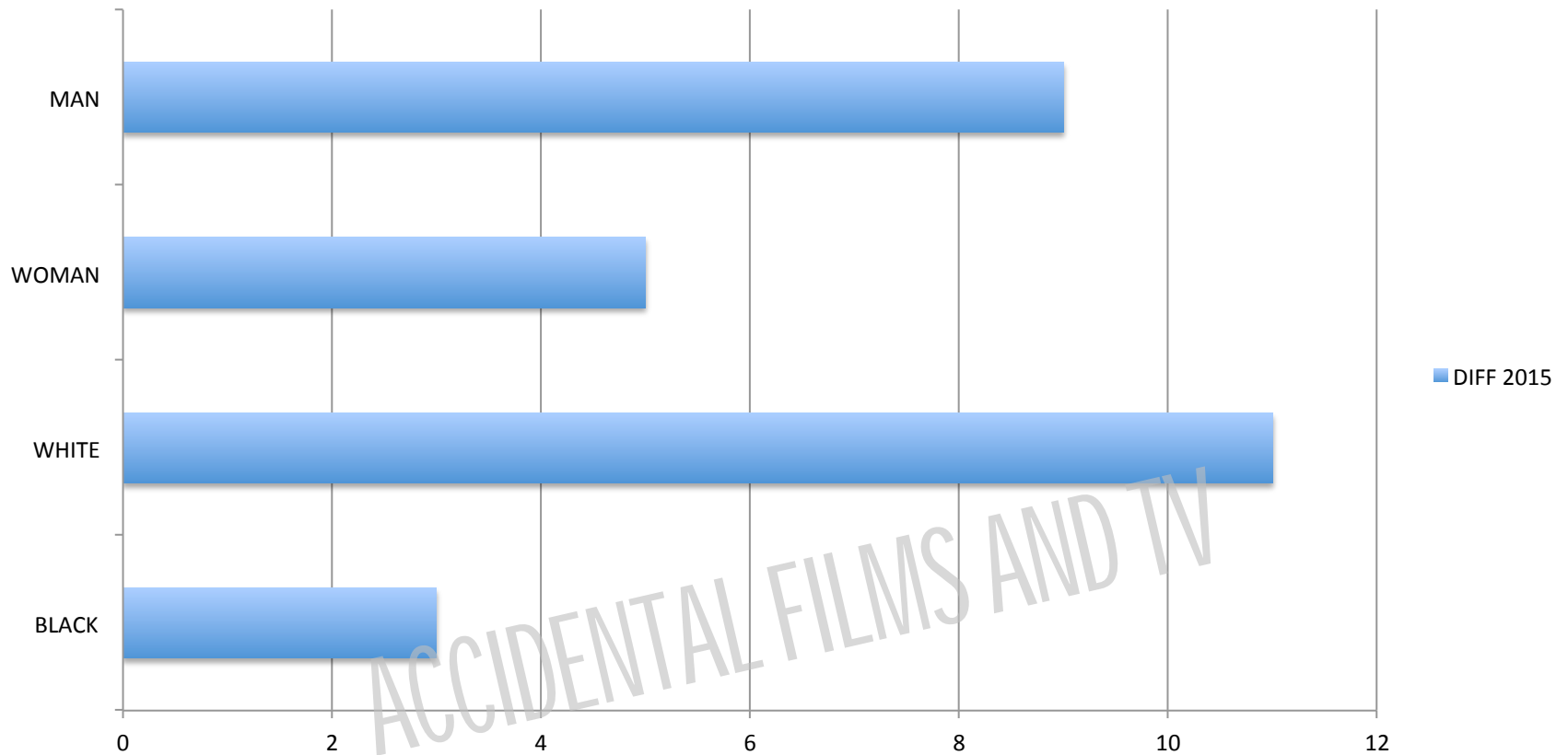
ENCOUNTERS 2015

ENCOUNTERS 2015



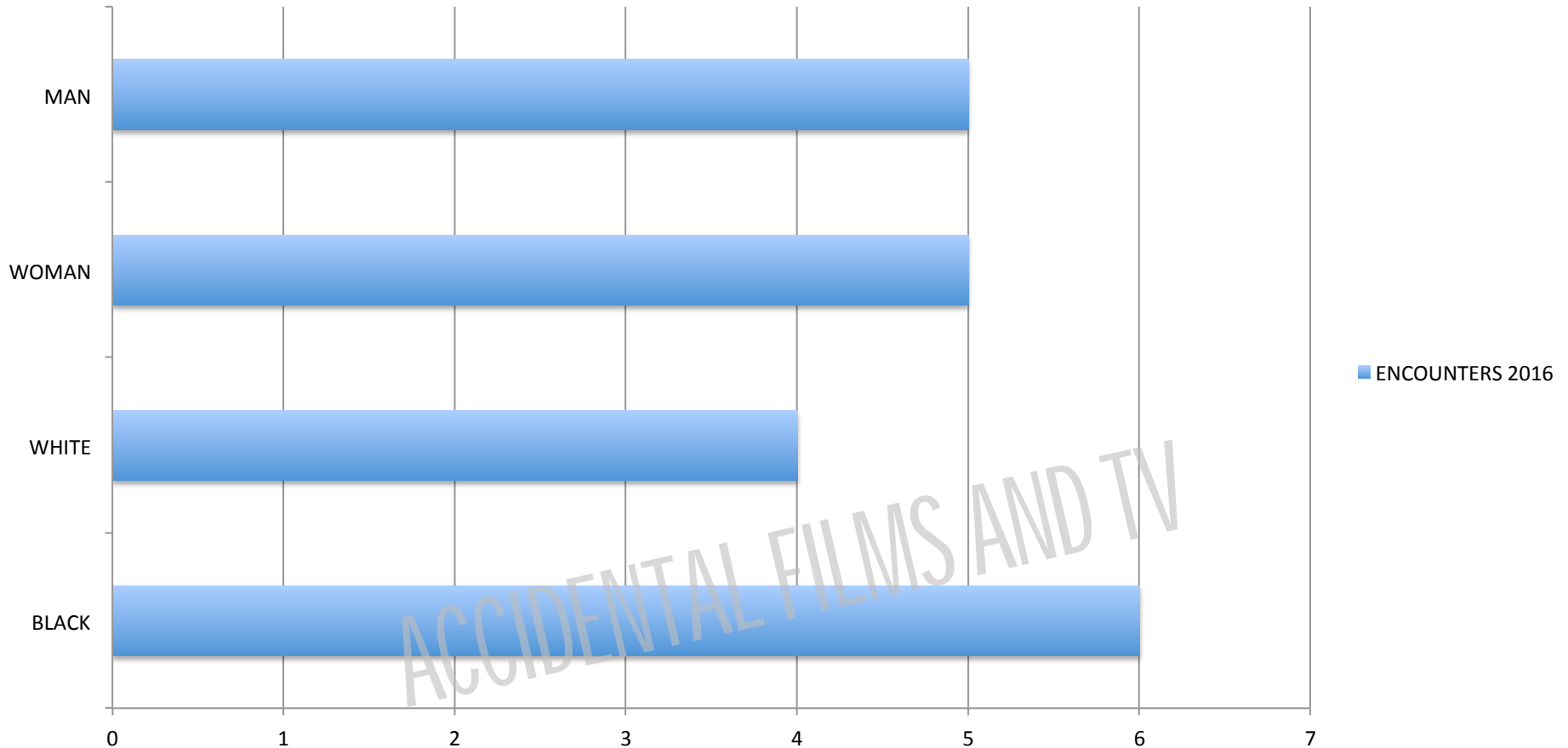
DURBAN 2015

DIFF 2015



ENCOUNTERS 2016

ENCOUNTERS 2016



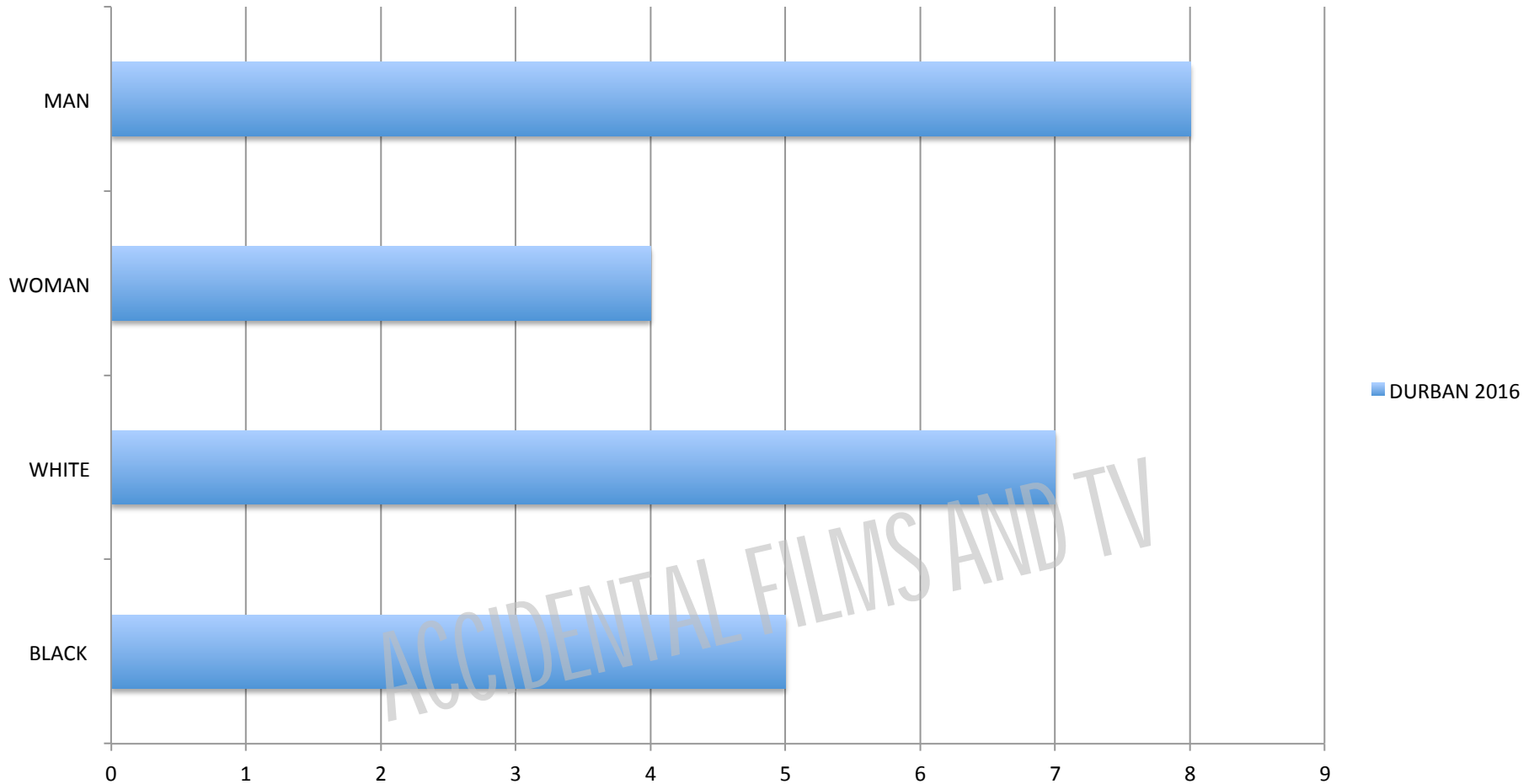
I spoke with Darryl Els, the Encounters festival director about how he managed to find films from more black filmmakers than white and it became clear that it is because of the effort they put into finding black filmmakers. So, if you work really hard, you can find black filmmakers, but they aren't necessarily part of our awareness if they operate in a different way and a different space to the mainstream.

The fact that Encounters was able, through focused and determined effort, to balance the filmmaker demographics, also damningly suggests that the film sector has not transformed because we simply have not put in the effort to transform the sector.

Also, what will be interesting to see, according to Darryl, is how many filmmakers are able to produce their next film in two to three years, if at all.

DURBAN 2016

DURBAN 2016



The background of the image is a collage of various Euro banknotes, including 20, 50, and 100 Euro notes, arranged in a fan-like pattern. The text is overlaid on this background.

FUNDING YOUR FILM

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

NATIONAL FILM FINANCING

- National Film and Video Foundation
- NFVF's documentary slate fund
- Department of Trade and Industry's Emerging Black Filmmakers' Incentive
- Broadcasters

NFVF

- Their first slate fund is still in progress
- They are currently unable to report on the success or failure thereof as the first doc slate is still in progress

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

DTI

- I received an email from the DTI saying they have other engagements and are unable to attend today
- They did not address my queries about the Emerging Black Filmmakers Fund Incentive

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

REGIONAL FILM FUNDING

- KZN Film Commission
- Gauteng Film Commission

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

KWAZULU-NATAL 2015/16

The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission funded development and production of films by local filmmakers to the tune of ...



ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

R11 800 000



GAUTENG 2015/16

The Gauteng Film
Commission supported local
filmmakers' projects to the
tune of ...



R2 185 789



(GFC Annual Report 2015, p. 98)

I did try to get clarity with regards to how much of this pot of gold went directly into film development and production, but I am still waiting to hear from Desmond Mthembu.

Some of this money would have gone towards training and distribution as explained by Siyabonga at the GFC.

WESTERN CAPE 2015/16

R000,00



ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

In the Western Cape, direct funding in terms of film project development and production looks very very different.

As Monica Rorvik explained to me, in the Western Cape the focus is on developing businesses with the goal of creating employment opportunities, rather than funding individual filmmakers and our projects.

With this in mind, they have enterprise development opportunities that filmmakers can participate in.

The background of the slide is a collage of South African 200 Rand banknotes, rendered in a light red or pinkish tint. The notes are overlapping and slightly blurred, creating a textured, financial-themed backdrop. The text "THE FILMMAKER'S IDEAL" is prominently displayed in the center in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

THE FILMMAKER'S IDEAL

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

Our primary impulse as filmmakers is to communicate with people, rather than to make money, or to run a business.

We generally want to make the world a better place and we believe we know how. So, we make films, to convince other people of what we think and we want to be able to share our messages as frequently and infrequently, and as easily as possible.

What is frequent? I don't know.

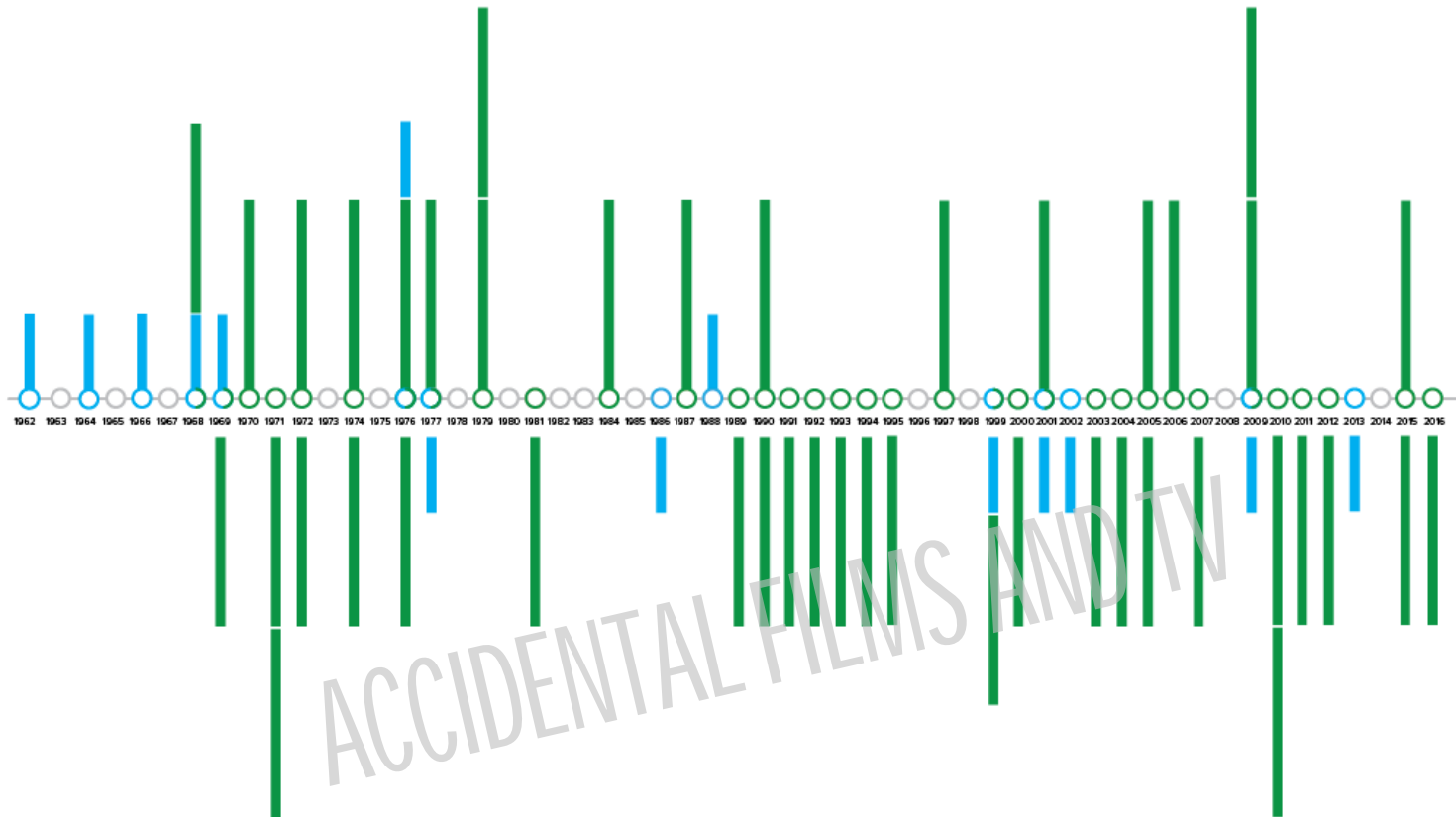
... but Werner Herzog is often held up as a filmmaker to emulate and this is what his prolific output looks like.

In 1976 he produced 3 films, two fiction and one documentary, and in 2009 he did the same.

WERNER HERZOG's OUTPUT

FICTION

● SHORT FILM
● FEATURE FILM



DOCUMENTARY

58 films over 54 years



ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV



THE VALUE OF FILM IN SOCIETY

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

WHAT VALMONT SAID



ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

How do we value film in South Africa?

I love the analogy that Valmont Layne from Artierial Network used when he spoke with me about how we value film and art in general.

He used the tripod analogy, which is appropriate for us working in film and also simple to understand because if any of the tripod legs goes missing, the tripod will fall over.

So, what did Valmont say?

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV



ACCIDENTAL FILM AND TV

He said that the value film brings to society is social, economic and aesthetic.

What I am saying is that in South Africa we value the economic contribution of film above the social and aesthetic contributions, which explains the constant focus on entrepreneurship, but the lack of funding towards project development and production. And while all South African filmmakers are engaged in an uphill struggle to get their films financed and made, black filmmakers face a longer and steeper uphill struggle.

So, let's hand over to our panelists to hear how they finance their films and what their ideal film funding scenarios would be.

Thank you!

TINA-LOUISE SMITH

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

My name is Lungiswa Sithole. I am a professional actor, radio producer (Bush Radio), Director and documentary producer. I have produced 3 documentaries for SABC 2 *Issues of Faith* and for SABC 1. My films have been shown in different film festivals. *Isibande* screened at the Göteborg Film Festival in Sweden 2001 and at the Encounters Film Festival. *Bring Back Yesterday* was screened at the Berlinale Film Festival Germany 2004.

I have worked as a producer /director for non-broadcast documentaries for many years, producing educational documentaries for NGOs, but since I needed to survive as a single mother I also work on other people's projects in various capacities. I am the co-founder of Molweni Township Film Festival as well as being active in the transformation industry in the Western Cape for the past few years.

I am currently working on a project which is now called *Where did she go?* Please check my trailer on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWSAggST7g0> The funding I am currently looking for is R300 000.00 although I have friends that have access to equipment so sometimes I do not need to wait for complete funding. I work on projects and personally distribute the finished programs by selling to churches or to some foreign shops where they do distribution.

In South Africa, I think film in general does not have enough funding because even if you approach a department about this they will end up directing you to the NFVF. With the NFVF then being the only opportunity for funding everyone there is not enough to go around and only the lucky are assisted. Yes I do understand that you can also fundraise outside the country but you need resources to do that which we don't currently have. Even those that sometimes go on trade missions do not come back with funding as you need to build the relationship in order to get the trust and commitment before funding is available.

LUNGISWA SITHOLE
SHOW ME THE MONEY PRESENTATION

ACCIDENTAL FILMS AND TV

NADINE CLOETE

Black Filmmakers Forum

Ekwa Msangi compares African filmmakers to freedom fighters:

You might say and its true many of us are not running away from gunfire in the same way. But being an artist in a capitalist world means making choices that puts my livelihood in jeopardy on a daily basis.

Personal background:

- Producer / Director
- Directed two series' for SABC 2
- Co-produced 2 short documentaries which I also directed. These were in co-production with STEPS and Encounters/My Hood respectively.
- Action Kommandant is my first independent feature length documentary. It was completed in 2016.
- I teach Afrikaans part time and rely on this as a stable source of income

Action Kommandant as Case Study:

- AK now needs to go into distribution phase and continue its film festival run
- There are copyright restrictions on the film because of archive material
- I could only afford festival and education rights
- I am now looking at how to acquire the rest of these rights (NFVF; DVD presales; broadcaster?)
- I also need marketing funds and a school roll out plan
- Also many organisations want to screen the film for free. The question is how to manage this?

Next project:

- My next project will be a fiction film.
- It will be a continuation of themes explored in Miseducation films
- I hope to secure an international co-production partner and see how funding works in this regard.

Thoughts on Ideal funding situation:

- There don't seem to be many national sources of funding, or perhaps we are not aware of them.
- Crowd funding seems to be effective though
- It would be helpful if one source of funding could assist a project through all stages of production
- Province targeted funding is a great help to filmmakers. Evident in KZN and Gauteng.
- Government / DTI need to assist already existing structures such as DFA, WGSa and ATFT to reach out to, train, assist and develop filmmakers.
- Our board members are filmmakers and so are very much in touch with what is needed to develop the sector
- Going forward we should investigate what is needed to assist grass roots filmmakers