

REPORT *HERstory*

9, 10 July 2018 Basel

Academy of Art and Design Basel



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INTRODUCTION

Why, where

Carla Delfos, founder of ELIA and Art Futures (the Netherlands), launched the initiative and approached Mercedes Giovinazzo, Director Interarts (Spain) and Chrissie Tiller, Creative Consultant (UK). Together they decided it was time for female leaders in the cultural sector in Europe to come together, take stock and plan for the future. Kirsten Langkilde, Rector FNHW, Academy of Art and Design Basel (Switzerland) immediately offered to host the first event.

What

The main aim of the initiative is to address urgent and timely perspectives of women working in leadership positions in the cultural sector in Europe. Through *HERstory* we would like to create a network in which women will reflect, share experiences, exchange competences and foster new collaborations and connections.

A red thread running through this are ways in which we, as more 'established' female leaders, can inform the debate, create connectedness and develop the tools for an effective mentoring and 'handover' programme for the younger generation of women in the sector.

The programme of the event in Basel was dynamic, informal and interactive. Sessions started with brief inputs, followed by focused discussions in small groups.

The informed discussions were inspired by the understanding that 'the personal is the political' and worked towards identifying a common agenda for the future.

Delegates

The organising group composed a list of invitees in leadership positions in the cultural sector (cultural institutions, European networks, higher arts education institutions and universities) in Europe.

Informed by the desire to have an equal balance of professional backgrounds and cultures.

40 delegates from 14 countries registered (see annex 2).

It was decided to have a limited number of delegates in order to have meaningful discussions and to take note of all ideas.

Delegates discussed at round table with 7 persons, table setting were prepared beforehand and therefore all delegates got the opportunity to meet and discuss.

As preparation and inspiration we asked delegates to read '*We should all be feminists*' from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and '*Women and Power*' from Mary Beard.

The programme (see annex 4) started with a lunch, followed by a welcome and introduction (see annex 1). The focus of the three sessions were:

Personal stories - Professional – Political

Professional life – Political – Personal. The first day ended with a reception followed by a specially for the event designed HER dinner.

Political engagement – Personal – Professional. The event ended with a lunch.

THE SESSIONS

Personal Stories - Professional - Political

Organiser Chrissie Tiller, focus: awareness

The session was interactive and started with exploring the visible and how delegates identify themselves in their work, then the session moved on towards concrete questions such as:

- Being a woman has been central to my career choices/decisions
- There is still a glass ceiling in culture in Europe
- Are you a feminist

Stories and narratives were shared and discussions in small groups followed.

Professional Life – Political – Personal

Organiser Mercedes Giovinazzo and Christina Da Milano, focus: opportunities and challenges

The *SheCulture* project and its conclusions (she-culture.com/en/) were presented and taken as starting point for the discussions.

Delegates discussed in small regional groups and worked on 3 themes, all from a gender (-biased) perspective: a) access to training (higher education, life-long learning processes, etc.); b) access to professional life and professional development (this includes elements such as: access to health/other services, salaries, etc.); c) professional development in the public / private sectors (identify common aspects and differences, hurdles, etc.)

At the end of the session the groups reported back.

Political Engagement – Personal - Professional

Organiser Carla Delfos, focus: What needs to be done

Discussion on the following questions/themes took place in small groups

Solidarity; how can we develop and structure a platform to share, discuss and implement actions?

Visibility; should we develop a statement or manifesto?

Empower; how can we empower the next generation women leaders?

Conclusions and recommendations were generated in this session.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The FHNW, Academy of Art and Design hosted the event and covered all technical needs and staff cost. Additionally the Academy organised and contributed the high profile HER dinner. The dinner was a salute from young female master students to the experienced women taking part in the symposium. Their scenographic work was developed and financed by the Academy. Kirsten Langkilde initiated and coordinated the cooperation with young female /feminist graphic designers who developed the visual identity of the event. The FHNW Academy of Art and Design covered most costs.

All delegates paid a contribution of €125 to cover the costs of the catering (2 lunches, a dinner and coffee/tea and reception).

Steering group costs were covered by Foundation Art Futures and the individual group members.



WHAT'S NEXT

Feedback after the event was positive and the organisers feel encouraged to organise the next step. This will happen in **Barcelona 18 and 19 February 2019** at the invitation of La Bonne Centre de Cultura de Dones Francesca Bonnemaïson.

RECOMMENDATIONS for the agenda in Barcelona, focus on the following four themes:

1. Identify a structure for the platform
 - who we are
 - profile of members
 - raison d'être
 - name
 - how we can organise ourselves
 - sustainability
 - activities
 - financial matters
 - code of ethics

2. Develop a communication plan
 - website
 - newsletter
 - sharing information (TedX talks, books, news, job announcements)
 - research; mapping, building knowledge
 - capture stories
 - build connections with other networks

3. Advocacy
 - issues and spearheads
 - platform of influence
 - for whom
 - profile and purpose of a manifesto, political action

4. Handover to next generation
 - training/mentoring plan
 - summer school
 - staff exchange
 - identifying role models
 - creating a pool of experts
 - webinars

Possible themes to include in Barcelona, emerging from *HERstory* in Basel:

- Redefining power, identify the territory of influence
- Redefining leadership, explore new approaches
- Redefining personal strength
- Thinking about how we educate our 'daughters'