

TIME FOR SOLIDARITY



The film industry is undergoing rapid changes affecting the cinematic image, its content and aesthetics. One of the most significant changes is the growing recognition of female cinematographers and directors. This evolution is crucial, as it rectifies the obvious injustice present in societal development. However, it also raises a question: can the pursuit of change exclude what is good? Can we sacrifice works and artists with outstanding artistic achievements solely to make room for mediocre film productions?

EnergaCAMERIMAGE, as a festival promoting the art of cinematography, has always defended under-appreciated and excluded creators – both male and female cinematographers. However, in the face of these societal changes, we must consider whether rushing to correct past wrongs threatens the artistic evaluation of film as an artform. Should we reject what is esteemed and valuable just to “make space” for the necessity of social change?

Maintaining high standards of artistic evaluation is of immense importance and must not be marginalised or overlooked. After all, the essence of cinema is not just the literary message, content or the context of a film’s production conditions, which are often overemphasised by critics, but primarily the aesthetics and emotional-expressive power of the moving image, conveying to the viewer what words cannot – sensory emotions.

Historically, the film industry was dominated by men, especially in technical roles like cinematography. Today more women have entered cinematography as a career path, bringing new ways of seeing, feeling and expressing the world on-screen. More and more women are achieving significant success in our industry, proving how unfair the long-standing gender inequality in film professions has been.

Cinematographers like Ellen Kuras ASC, Mandy Walker ACS ASC and Rachel Morrison ASC – the first woman nominated for an Oscar for Best Cinematography – are leaders representing these positive changes. Even before their successes, the EnergaCAMERIMAGE festival, set this important trend, promoting and recognising the works of female cinematographers.

In 2011, Jola Dylewska received the prestigious Golden Frog for her work on *In Darkness*, long before any female cinematographer received such recognition from the broader film industry. Dorota Kędzierszawska’s film *Jestem* was awarded at Camerimage in 2005. Since the beginning

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of the festival, we have invited women not only to present their films but also to serve on various competition juries. Agnieszka Holland chaired the main Camerimage jury in 1997, as did Mandy Walker ACS ASC in 2023.

Further efforts to include more female cinematographers and directors in the festival presentations are indisputable, but they must not come at the expense of what is truly important to the festival: evaluating artistic merit and selecting valuable films for competition.

While EnergaCAMERIMAGE strives to acknowledge the contributions of women in cinematography, it also aims to maintain artistic integrity. Change? Yes, but let’s remain decent and honest. It’s about rapid evolution, not a fanatical revolution that destroys the cathedrals of art and throws out its sculptures and paintings.

Camerimage was founded to celebrate artists behind the camera, often wrongly-dismissed as mere technicians. Like the creators of Gothic cathedrals, these artists collaborate to create moving images that transcend simple film recordings. The festival has never aimed to glorify some at the exclusion of others, nor to recognise works lacking artistic value.

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The film selection process at EnergaCAMERIMAGE is guided by a principle of harmony between meaningful content and the aesthetics of the moving image. This principle has remained unchanged since the festival’s inception. Every year, we watch thousands of films, seeking those that best embody this balance, regardless of current political or ideological trends. Whilst festivals like Cannes, Berlin, or Venice are

criticised for their selections due to succumbing to or promoting such trends, Camerimage remains committed to artistic values as the foremost criterion for qualifying and promoting film art.

Despite efforts to promote diversity, support creators, and create an incubator for young filmmakers and ideas, EnergaCAMERIMAGE faces significant challenges. One of the most serious issues is the lack of spaces for professional film screenings, workshops, and masterclasses. Currently, we have only one screen for professional film projection and no space for workshops or film exercises. Festival guests know that for 30 years we have been advocating for the creation of such a film centre, which does not yet exist in Poland. This is crucial to ensure the festival’s survival and enable it to continue growing for the benefit of all cinematographers!

Unfortunately, as the construction of the new centre progresses, threats to its full realisation have emerged. There are reports questioning the value of this investment for Poland, the city and the region. The public is being misled about the alleged unfeasibility of the investment costs. This is not true. Our documentation and the arguments of professional firms responsible for the project are being ignored. We fear political decisions rather than substantive ones. We need the support of all film communities and artists for whom EnergaCAMERIMAGE matters.

Please write letters of support to the Ministry of Culture, the City, and the Marshal, and send them to the following addresses: prezydent@um.torun.pl, esp@kultura.gov.pl, mw.sekretariat@kujawsko-pomorskie.pl and to us as well.

By remaining true to its mission and values, the festival can continue to serve as a leading platform for artistic dialogue and innovation. It is crucial that we create solidarity, an environment in which artistic excellence is not only recognised but celebrated too, and is not sacrificed for commercialism or a merchant mentality. We must ensure future generations of filmmakers have a place and platform for international exchange of ideas and artistic development.

Marek Żydowicz
Founder & Festival Director
EnergaCAMERIMAGE