



STEPIN 2021:

Envisioning a healthier workplace in the film industry

On Thursday August 5th, an international group of 30+ prominent executives chosen among various profiles for their experience in different branches of the film industry, assembled for the Locarno Festival' ninth edition of StepIn.

The event took place from 11.00 AM to 6 PM and was divided in 3 parts.

The following is a report of what's been discussed.



THE TOPIC

You can't return to normal when normal was the problem to begin with.

Last year, during the global lockdown, we turned our program in 3 online sessions in partnership with Variety to address the extraordinary situation we were facing and figure out what was going to happen in 3 different fields: theatrical distribution, production, film festivals & markets.

Now that the different sectors of our industry are trying to get back on tracks, there's an elephant in the room that still needs to be addressed. To put it bluntly: do we think our industry is a healthy place to work in?

A survey commissioned by the UK Film & TV Charity, which was released on February 2020, just before the lockdown, painted a disparaging picture. Among its findings were that film industry professionals are twice as likely to experience anxiety compared with the national average, that workers are three times as likely to self-harm compared with the national average, and that over half of workers have considered taking their own life, and one in 10 have attempted to do so. Moreover, these numbers increase when we start to take into consideration our diverse workforce (BAME, LGBTQ+ and disabled workers), who are impacted significantly more than their white, heterosexual and non-disabled counterparts and, as a result, are more likely to consider leaving the industry because of concerns over their mental health and lack of support. And while this survey refers to the situation in the UK, there's no reason to believe that the situation in other countries is any better.

The film industry is a particularly demanding environment, obsessed with success and dominated by external and internal pressures, dynamics of power, constant risk and financial instability. Inevitably, all of these elements have an impact on the mental health of its workers, which, paradoxically, also risks compromising their performance, blocking their creativity, in an industry that thrives on it, clouding their vision when it comes to making important and difficult decisions, and overall undermining the quality of the work carried out.

For all these reasons, while we are in a rush to go back to normal, we strongly believe we should take some time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to. Because clearly there were a few dysfunctional things going on in our industry which the pandemic, if anything, has made even more evident. And since we have all been forced, in a way or another, to reset, reboot and restart, we might as well take this opportunity to do it with the right foot.

This is why StepIn 2021 is going to take a different approach, in order to tackle some crucial issues, such as mental health, gender equality, diversity representation and inclusion, and economic fairness – different topics, but very much connected to each other. We are aware that, at best, we can only scratch the surface of a complex conversation, but if we can start a dialogue, raise awareness, and maybe propose some good practices, together we can take the first steps to envision a better future.

Marcello Paolillo
StepIn Project Manager

OUT-OF-THE BOX INTRODUCTION

By Invitation only + Live Streaming

Given the topics to be discussed, this year, before our usual opening keynote, we decided to have an out-of-the-box introduction, held by someone who is not within the film industry, but who, since early childhood, has been fascinated by the question: "What is a healthy mind?"

Diego Hangartner is Coach and Founding Director of the Institute of Mental Balance and Universal Ethics, and has dedicated over 30 years to study, research and understand the mental processes to help people find mental balance and wellbeing.

Here a brief description of Diego's introduction by Nick Vivarelli:

Diego Hangartner first cited the alarming survey commissioned by the UK Film & TV Charity, released in February 2020, just before global lockdown that found British film industry professionals to be twice as likely to experience anxiety compared with the national average and more significantly said that that over half of them have considered taking their own life, and one in 10 have attempted to do so.

Hangartner then focussed on change from within. In a fascinating slide presentation he provided a scientific understanding of how the brain works in particular how it reacts to aggression. "What usually happens is that when you are being triggered to be in fear mode, then a lot of areas in your brain and in your mind freeze up and become no longer accessible," he said. "The threat response blocks the pre-frontal cortex -- thinking, reason," he said. And due to energy preservation, productivity gets worse. Also, threat is not only physical, but psychological (which can be an even worse experience in terms of suffering).

Hangartner delved further into different modes of fear triggered on the workplace which he labelled as: status (am I better or worse than the other); certainty (is my competitor threatening me or not?); autonomy (am I in control of my life, of what is happening to me or not?); relatedness (am I a part of this group or not? For example the whole issues of gender equality and LGBT); and finally fairness (do I think it's fair that this person is earning so much money, or not?). These are all factors that contribute to the fear.

Speaker:



DIEGO HANGARTNER
Coach and Founding Director
Institute of Mental Balance and Universal Ethics
(IMBUE)

Diego has dedicated over thirty years to external scientific research and internal meditative exploration of the mind and consciousness. He started as a pharmacologist specializing in psychopharmacology and addiction, always interested in what constitutes a healthy mind and how to cultivate it. He spent many years at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in India, studying, translating and publishing several Tibetan works, and organized many large events with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Asia, Europe and the USA.

Diego was COO of Mind and Life Institute in the US and co-founder and director of Mind and Life Institute in Europe until 2015. Mind and Life is an organization that brings together scientists and contemplatives to discuss, research and fund research into how to tackle some of the toughest challenges facing mankind. Today, he continues his research and teaching with the Max Planck Institute, EPFL (The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), Zürich University of Applied Sciences, and is a lecturer at the Business School of the University St.Gallen.

Diego currently works in the interdisciplinary field to develop and provide tools and programs that foster mental balance. He created and teaches "The Wheel of Mental Balance", a methodology to cultivate a healthy and resilient mind. Diego is also a certified coach (PCC), using neuroscientific, performance and clinical scientific insights, combining them to strengthen mental fitness and wellbeing. In this capacity he has been working with individuals, teams and organizations with a special focus on fulfilment, flourishing, change management, and leadership development.

PART I - OPENING KEYNOTE

By Invitation only + Live Streaming

How can we create a healthier workplace? Is our environment finally shifting towards a true acknowledgment of gender equality? And how do diversity representation and inclusion, in addition to being a moral imperative, also impact the financial aspects of our industry?

Moderated by Variety correspondent Nick Vivarelli, the opening keynote introduced the main topics of StepIn 2021 through the points of view and experiences of three remarkable panellists.

Here a summary of the opening keynote by Nick Vivarelli:

A discussion with three keynote speakers was then led by U.S. producer Gale Anne Hurd – who has shattered gender barriers in the U.S. industry while becoming a guiding force behind some of the most iconic genre works in film and TV history, including “The Terminator,” “Aliens,” and “The Walking Dead” – then examined some of the biggest challenges to changing the culture that is behind frequent abuses in an industry that attracts a lot of narcissists. Hurd pointed out that it was fear of retribution that allowed Harvey Weinstein to get away with his sexual assaults and kept a lid for so long on disclosure of another powerful U.S. producer Scott Rudin’s abusive behavior towards his staff. “In the U.S. industry there is an extremely toxic work environment and verbal abuse is not illegal,” she noted, adding that “the laws need to change.” Hurd also pointed out that in the U.S. a lot of times people don’t know what kind of behavior on the workplace is legal based on the local jurisdiction. She gave a concrete example of a measure to make for a healthier workplace that she has put in place on the “Walking Dead” sets where there is an anonymous hotline to report sexual harassment. And also mentioned on-set intimacy coordinators and transgender consultants as steps forward.

Katherine Dennis Gonzalez, an expert on solution-focused therapies pointed out that in some parts of Europe, such as the Nordics, there is an increasing correlation between companies being socially and financially sustainable.

Allison Hironaka, who is an L.A.-based agent in CAA’s Media Finance Department, talked about some meaningful change happening in contracts and negotiations in terms of both parity in pay and protection against unhealthy work conditions. Hironaka pointed out that within contracts that CAA is stipulating these days “there’s more expectation for a safe workplace, not just for talent, but for everyone involved in production.” Now “the hope is that the unions on the side of the production and crew can help that,” Hironaka added. “And the agents on the part of talent can help protect them, but obviously they have the help of the unions as well.” Hironaka also underlined that streaming platforms can help move the needle when it comes to diversity in storytelling.

“One of the most important things that I am excited to be a part of and that I think we should all push forward is this incredible new type of project that is coming out,” said Hironaka referring to projects from streaming services and studios that “have led the way to show that [having] more diverse actors – and having a wider group of representation on all sides of the production -- has led to providing entertainment that speaks to a particular audience but also speaks to a wider audience.”

“When you look at ‘Lupin,’ which has been so successful and Omar Sy -- incredibly successful in France and now known globally -- does that open the door for the next person?,” she asked.

Keynote Speakers:



GALE ANNE HURD
Producer

Gale Anne Hurd is one of the industry's most respected film and television producers. In 1984, after working in various capacities for legendary producer Roger Corman, Hurd produced and co-wrote her first feature film, *The Terminator*. The film was a box office and critical success, and has since become a genre classic. This success was quickly followed by *Aliens*, which received seven nominations and two Academy Awards®, followed by the Academy Award®-winning films *The Abyss*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, and *The Ghost and the Darkness*. Some of her additional credits include *Armageddon*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *The Waterdance*, which won Sundance's Audience and Screenplay Awards, and *MANKILLER*, the award-winning Native American PBS documentary. Hurd's most recent feature, the Lionsgate/CBS Films' *Hell Fest*, was released theatrically worldwide in 2018 and is now available on Netflix.

Along with *The Walking Dead*, Hurd is also an Executive Producer of the show's companion series, *Fear the Walking Dead*, as well as the third chapter in the 'Walking Dead' series, *The Walking Dead: World Beyond*, which was just renewed for a second season. She also serves as a Consulting Producer on AMC's top-rated talk show, *Talking Dead*. A 'Walking Dead' feature film was also announced and will premiere theatrically via Universal Pictures, with Hurd serving as a Producer.

Hurd's anthology series, *Lore*, based on the popular historical podcast of the same name, is currently streaming its first and second seasons on Amazon. Her recent Executive Producer credits also include two seasons of *Falling Water* for the USA Network and *Hunters* for Syfy.

A long-time former Board Member and Officer of the Producers Guild of America, Hurd received the organization's coveted David O. Selznick Award for Achievement in Feature Film. She has served as a Governor of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and on the Boards of the American Film Institute, the Waterkeeper Alliance, and the Ocean Conservancy. Gale was inducted into the prestigious International Women's Forum Hall of Fame, and her Star can be found on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



ALLISON HIRONAKA
Agent in the Media Finance Department at CAA

Allison Hironaka works as an Agent in the Media Finance department at leading entertainment and sports agency Creative Artists Agency (CAA). She's based in the Los Angeles office and works on the financing and sales of independent feature films.

Hironaka began her career in film at Paradigm Talent Agency. She joined CAA in 2014.

Hironaka graduated from the School of Business at Queen's University at Kingston with a degree in Commerce. She is from Calgary, Alberta, and worked in natural resources as a political risk analyst prior to her career in entertainment.



KATHERINE DENNIS GONZALEZ
Psychologist and Mental Health Consultant

British-Colombian Psychologist and Mental Health Consultant with experience in Philosophy, Neuropsychology, Clinical Psychology, Applied Positive Psychology, Narrative Psychology and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. She's interested in human relationships, language, culture and consciousness research, and in the intersections between the mind, the brain and culture. Katherine is increasingly focused on human flourishing and the potential of solution focused therapies and education for the promotion of social change and wellbeing.

Keynote Moderator:

NICK VIVARELLI

Variety | Italy and Middle East correspondent

Born in Florence to an American mother and an Italian father, Nick Vivarelli has spent plenty of time in both countries. After studying comparative literature at New York University, he dabbled as a literary translator and art gallery organizer before venturing into journalism and film. Since then, he has worked for several media outlets, including The Associated Press and Newsweek. A regular on the international festival circuit, he is currently Italy and Middle East correspondent for Variety. He is also the author of "Slalom," a Tuscany-set thriller published by Manni Editori in Italy and co-director of the documentary "Life As a B-Movie: Piero Vivarelli" that went to Venice and won Italy's Nastro D'Argento 2020 for best doc on cinema.

PART II - ROUND-TABLES SESSION

StepIn Participants Only

After the opening keynote, the participants were divided in 2 different round-tables, each one with a Moderator and a Notetaker, to discuss specific issues related to the main topic of the event.

TABLE 1

Moderator: DIEGO HANGARTNER
Coach and Founding Director
Institute of Mental Balance and Universal Ethics (IMBUE)

Notetaker: LAURENCE LASCARY
Founder & Producer, De l'Autre Coté du Pèriph (DACP) & Co-Chair, Collectif 50/50

TABLE 2

Moderator: KATHERINE DENNIS GONZALEZ
Psychologist and Mental Health Consultant
Expanding Circles

Notetaker: ALLISON GARDNER
CEO
Glasgow Film

TABLE 1
[Hotel Belvedere, Sala Camelia]

| Moderator | Notetaker | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Diego Hangartner</p> <p>Institute of Mental Balance and Universal Ethics Coach and Founding Director</p> <p>Switzerland</p> | <p>Laurence Lascary</p> <p>De l'Autre Coté du Pèriph Producer & Collectif 50/50 Co-Chair</p> <p>France</p> | <p>Züleyha Azman</p> <p>KINO Rotterdam Rotterdam Marketing Director</p> <p>Netherlands</p> | <p>Simone Baumann</p> <p>German Films Managing Director</p> <p>Germany</p> |
| <p>Silvia Cruz</p> <p>Vitrine Filmes Director</p> <p>Spain</p> | <p>Anne Laurent Delage</p> <p>Austrian Film Commission Executive Director</p> <p>Austria</p> | <p>Fatima Djoumer</p> <p>Europa Cinema Head of International Relations</p> <p>Germany</p> | <p>Nadia Dresti</p> <p>Locarno Film Festival International Advisor & SWAN Advisory Board</p> <p>Switzerland</p> |
| <p>Mathieu Fournet</p> <p>CNC Director of European and International Affairs</p> <p>France</p> | <p>Gale Anne Hurd</p> <p>Producer</p> <p>USA</p> | <p>Eglė Maceinaitė</p> <p>Skalvijos Kino Centras Vilnius Programmer</p> <p>Lithuania</p> | <p>Corinna Marshall</p> <p>MEDIA Desk Suisse Managing Director</p> <p>Switzerland</p> |
| <p>Nicola Ofoego</p> <p>Maramako VP of Sales and Acquisitions</p> <p>France</p> | <p>Neil Peplow</p> <p>BFI Director of International Affairs</p> <p>UK</p> | <p>Julie-Jeanne Regnault</p> <p>EFAD (European Film Agency Directors Association) General Secretary</p> <p>Belgium</p> | <p>Dennis Ruh</p> <p>EFM (European Film Market) Director</p> <p>Germany</p> |

TABLE 2
[Hotel Belvedere, Sala Magnolia]

| Moderator | Notetaker | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Katherine Dennis Gonzalez</p> <p>Expanding Circles Psychologist and Mental Health Consultant</p> <p>Colombia / UK / Germany</p> | <p>Allison Gardner</p> <p>Glasgow Film CEO</p> <p>UK</p> | <p>Esther Bannenberg</p> <p>TOTO cinema & Hubert Bals Fund Consultant</p> <p>Netherlands</p> | <p>Cecilia Barrionuevo</p> <p>Mar del Plata International Film Festival Artistic Director</p> <p>Argentina</p> |
| <p>Andreas Bühlmann</p> <p>Swiss Films Head of Festivals & Markets</p> <p>Switzerland</p> | <p>Carlo Chatrian</p> <p>Berlinale Artistic Director</p> <p>Germany</p> | <p>Ursula Häberlin</p> <p>Stv. Geschäftsleiterin ssfv Deputy Managing Director</p> <p>Switzerland</p> | <p>Allison Hironaka</p> <p>CAA Media Finance Group Agent</p> <p>USA</p> |
| <p>Xu Jing</p> <p>Rediance Festivals & Sales Manager</p> <p>China</p> | <p>Jordan Mattos</p> <p>Aspect Ratio Managing Director</p> <p>USA</p> | <p>Cristina Mota</p> <p>Cinema Trindade Porto Exhibitor</p> <p>Portugal</p> | <p>Monica Naldi</p> <p>Cinema Beltrade Milano Exhibitor</p> <p>Italy</p> |
| <p>Susan Newman-Baudais</p> <p>Eurimages Head of Programme: Co-production</p> <p>France</p> | <p>Elias Ribeiro</p> <p>Realness Institute Co-Founder & Executive Director</p> <p>South Africa</p> | <p>Jela Sherlak</p> <p>Federal Office of Culture Eurimages Representative for Switzerland</p> <p>Switzerland</p> | <p>Susan Wendt</p> <p>TrustNordisk Managing Director</p> <p>Denmark</p> |

PART III – WRAP-UP SESSION

By Invitation only + Live Streaming

During this conclusive session, moderated by Variety correspondent Nick Vivarelli, all participants gathered together once again, as the two notetakers from the previous session presented a brief summary of what's been discussed during the round-tables, and offered their conclusions.

Here a summary of Laurence Lascary's and Allison Gardner's wrap-ups by Nick Vivarelli:

TABLE 1

- The COVID Crisis is an Opportunity for Change

"We surely do not want to go back to the old normal. We need a fresh start," said producer Laurence Lascary, who is co-president of France's Le Collectif 50/50 while presenting a summary of what was discussed. "We are looking for a systemic change and we are all accountable for it."

- How Do We Get There?

By understanding how the brain works. By doing so we are able to depersonalize situations and also empathize with others. Also by nurturing a safe working environment within your team. By being the inspiration that you are working for. This can influence key decision-makers in the industry.

- New Role Models

"Bridgerton" producer Shonda Rhimes and director/producer Ava DuVernay ("Selma"), who supports the work of people of color and women through her non-profit film collective Array, are the new role models. But the industry "should also keep in mind that below the line crew members can be role models as well," said Lascary.

TABLE 2

- Unions Are Important

Allison Gardner, CEO of Glasgow Film, said discussions during the closed-door round table that followed the keynotes about toxic film industry workplace situations involved "pay uncertainty; gender inequalities for huge sectors of our communities; ageism" and "support for our free-lancers" and noted that "strong unions can gain that support."

Other points that were touched on:

- Access to training for small companies around inclusion paid for by governments.
- Changing openness around roles in film for ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, etc...
- Pay structures/fair working practices; no unpaid interns.
- Support our free-lancers. There is a hiring cloud over them if they raise any issues.

- Alert mechanisms; New Behaviours; Sharing and talking about experiences; Not making judgements...
- Buy in from all within a company starting from the CEO. Follow through
- Create greater awareness of unacceptable behaviors that need to be addressed

Wrap-up Speakers:



LAURENCE LASCARY
De l'Autre Côté du Pèriph (DACP) | Producer
Collectif 50/50 | Co-Chair

Laurence Lascary began her career in the audiovisual sector in 2004, working for companies such as StudioCanal or Unifrance (New York office).

In 2008 she created the production company DE L'AUTRE COTE DU PERIPH' (DACP) to take the heat out of the debates about the working-class areas and remove inhibitions of their residents, show them that it is possible to succeed.

In 2011 she launched Young Independent Producers' Day, an innovative marketplace dedicated to the new actors of the audiovisual industry.

On 06/02/2018, Laurence received the title of Chevalier in the National Order of Merit for her contribution to the French film industry. The same year, she got engaged in the Collectif 5050, that she co-chairs.

Laurence recently joined the Equality Comitee created by France's Ministry of Culture and is one of the main administrators of the Foundation for the Memory of Slavery.



ALLISON GARDNER
Glasgow Film | CEO

Allison Gardner is CEO at Glasgow Film.

What began as a single screen cinema over 40 years ago has become Scotland's most diverse and best publicly attended independent cinema in Scotland, with Glasgow Film Festival one of the top film festivals in the UK.

Glasgow Film is...

- Glasgow Film Theatre, Glasgow's year-round centre for film-lovers.
- Glasgow Film Festival, the launch pad for the best of international and Scottish cinema.
- Glasgow Youth Film Festival, one of the most innovative youth film festivals in Europe.
- Film Hub Scotland, supporting a network of over 200 film exhibitors.

Allison joined Glasgow Film in 1993 as a Duty Manager and then began to work in the programme team eventually becoming Programme Director and Co-director of Glasgow Film Festival. She became the CEO in April 2021.

Additionally, Allison is a director of CinéFile, a distribution company that releases widely different titles ranging from classic thriller, costume drama, youthful escapism, family comedy, to documentary films.

Wrap-up Moderator:

NICK VIVARELLI
Variety | Italy and Middle East correspondent

Born in Florence to an American mother and an Italian father, Nick Vivarelli has spent plenty of time in both countries. After studying comparative literature at New York University, he dabbled as a literary translator and art gallery organizer before venturing into journalism and film. Since then, he has worked for several media outlets, including The Associated Press and Newsweek. A regular on the international festival circuit, he is currently Italy and Middle East correspondent for Variety. He is also the author of "Slalom," a Tuscany-set thriller published by Manni Editori in Italy and co-director of the documentary "Life As a B-Movie: Piero Vivarelli" that went to Venice and won Italy's Nastro D'Argento 2020 for best doc on cinema.

StepIn is organized with the support of Eurimages, in partnership with Variety and in collaboration with Europa Cinemas, Europa Distribution and Europa International.

Locarno Pro is possible thanks to the support of the Federal Office of Culture / Media Desk Suisse.

