



X-POLLINATOR: ELEVATOR CONCLUDES, WINNER ANNOUNCED OF THE ELEVATOR PITCH

X-Pollinator has now concluded its eight-week online development programme, **ELEVATOR** that supported twenty emerging and diverse female and non-binary writers and directors to meet the screen industry, build a network, develop their projects and become the inclusive leaders of the future.

Funded by Screen Skills Ireland, Screen Ireland and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), **ELEVATOR** supported a deeper range of under-represented and emerging voices who represent the brilliant and wide ranging multiplicities of Irish culture; and supported them in developing their networks and projects, and provided an access point to over thirty speakers from the screen industry.

Over the course of October and November, the **ELEVATOR** participants have gained a comprehensive understanding of the development process; that included an introductory session with diversity and inclusion consultant Adaku Ezeudo of PhoenixRize Consulting; a writing session with some of the writing team behind hit Irish TV series SMOTHER; a directing session with Kate Dolan (YOU ARE NOT MY MOTHER), Stacey Gregg (HERE BEFORE) and Runyararo Mapfumo (SEX EDUCATION); as well as a case study with production company Fable Pictures, the production company behind ROCKS and WILD ROSE which also featured Eve Hedderwick Turner, the creator/writer of ANNE BOLEYN..

The **ELEVATOR** participants then met with industry executives in roundtable discussions that included representatives from The Lisa Richards Agency, the WRAP Fund, Cork International Film Festival, Bankside Films, Other Parties and BBC Film.

In addition, the **ELEVATOR** participants worked with pitch and public speaking consultant Bonnie Williams of Speaking with Impact, on their project pitches, kindly supported by Creative Europe Desk Ireland. Following this they did the **ELEVATOR** Pitch: presenting themselves and their projects to an industry panel that included director Frank Berry (MICHAEL INSIDE), producer Siobhán Bourke (HIDDEN ASSETS) and Bonnie Williams.

After a competitive pitching session, the winning pitch was awarded to Esosa Ighodaro with her project JUST ENOUGH CHILLI, with honourable mentions going to Caitlin Magnall-Kearns for her project CHRIS & LOU and Al Bellamy for their project SCULPT. JUST ENOUGH CHILLI tells the story of Adesuwa, who is determined to launch a fine dining Nigerian restaurant in Dublin. The retirement plans of her mother as well as the security of her pregnant daughter's future rely on the success of this risky venture.

Esosa Ighodaro will now be awarded development funding to write a treatment and have the support of a script editor, and a designer to create a pitch book for her project, while all other **ELEVATOR** participants will be provided with one script editor meeting to further shape the development of their projects.

On winning the **ELEVATOR** Pitch, Esosa Ighodaro has said “The **ELEVATOR** programme has been so well and thoughtfully curated. I've thoroughly enjoyed the panels and the generosity of the panelists and the X-Pollinator team in not only sharing their experience and giving us a glimpse of the industry, but also attempting to hold doors open for us as well. I'm genuinely so grateful to have been a part of the X-Pollinator experience, incredibly thrilled to have won the prize and excited to get to develop my project further.”

Director Frank Berry noted that “the pitches were all genuinely fantastic and a testament to the talent and passion of the participants. It was so hard to pick a winner, but we felt Esosa Ighodaro’s pitch stood out on the day. **JUST ENOUGH CHILLI** is a beautiful story of three Nigerian women on a road trip from Dublin to London, pitched by Esosa in a very moving and succinct way.”

The **ELEVATOR** programme concluded with a producers’ networking session, giving the **ELEVATOR** participants an opportunity to present themselves and their projects to a range of producers from production companies including Venom Films, Wild Atlantic Pictures, Tailored Films, Alfonso Films, Fantastic Films, Underground Films, Subotica Films, Samson Films and Pale Rebel Productions.

Katie Holly, Lara Hickey, Evan Horan, X-Pollinator - “**ELEVATOR** was a success due to the great support of our funders, the time and generosity in sharing of all our panellists and advisors, but mostly because of our brilliant participants. Congratulations to Esosa on her winning pitch, but congratulations and thanks to all of the X-Pollinator: **ELEVATOR** class of 2021, your contributions, projects and pitches were all so unique, we are thrilled to have you as part of our network and can’t wait to see you, and your projects thrive.”

Gareth Lee, Screen Ireland, Skills Manager - “**ELEVATOR** has addressed a real need in the industry for more diverse, emerging voices, and for those from underrepresented groups to receive support to develop their projects and build their networks. We have been delighted to support this programme and we look forward to seeing future work from these talented participants!”

Celene Craig, BAI, Deputy Chief Executive - “The BAI would like to congratulate X-Pollinator and all those involved in the development and roll out of the **ELEVATOR** initiative. Programmes like **ELEVATOR** help promote a media landscape that is representative of, and accessible to, the diversity of Irish society by offering invaluable support and opportunities to under-represented groups working in the audio-visual industry. The BAI would also like to acknowledge all the participants who took part. The response to the initiative and selected finalists demonstrates the wealth of talent and creativity available in the sector. In particular

the BAI congratulates Esosa Ighodaro for her successful winning pitch, JUST ENOUGH CHILLI and wishes her the best of luck with the ongoing development of the project.”

X-POLLINATOR

Founded by Katie Holly X-Pollinator is an ambitious cross-disciplinary professional development and networking initiative aiming to kickstart collaborations between female and non-binary writing and directing talent and take positive action to rapidly address the lack of gender diversity in the Irish screen industry, and is run by Co-Creative Directors Katie Holly and Lara Hickey, and Course Manager Evan Horan.

SCREEN SKILLS IRELAND

Screen Skills Ireland, the skills development unit within Screen Ireland, has responsibility for investing in people and skills development for the screen sectors in Ireland, through the design, development and delivery of industry-focused skills development initiatives encompassing film, TV, animation, games and VFX, for all roles from new entrants to company leaders, that includes flagship programmes such as Screen Leaders and Advanced Producing. Screen Skills Ireland also supports the sector through Funding Schemes that leverage and empower stakeholders and professionals linked to the screen sector in Ireland, including schemes for Stakeholders, Mentoring and Bursaries. Screen Skills Ireland oversees the skills development requirements linked to the Section 481 film tax credit; carries out research and data gathering to identify the skills needs of the industry; and disseminates reports that are relevant to the screen sector in Ireland.

FÍS ÉIREANN / SCREEN IRELAND

Screen Ireland is the national development agency for the creative industries, fostering Irish artistic vision and our diverse creative and production talent, growing audiences, and attracting filmmakers and investment into the country. Screen Ireland is committed to providing leadership, direction and advocacy for the Irish screen industries, as well as supporting writers, directors and production companies through investing in Irish filmmaking talent. We deliver on our mission through generating inward investment by promoting Ireland as a film location as well as promoting Irish films to major international markets. Screen Ireland is also committed to supporting the distribution of feature films, bringing Irish film to wider audiences and engaging with European counterparts on mutually beneficial policy initiatives.

BAI

The BAI is the independent regulator for radio and television broadcasters in Ireland. The BAI's remit is set down in the Broadcasting Act 2009 and includes a range of objectives and functions, including: licensing radio and television services; making broadcasting codes and rules; monitoring and enforcing compliance with codes and rules and broadcasting contracts; deciding on broadcasting complaints; and, administering funding schemes for television and radio programmes and archiving. In addition, the BAI also has a statutory role in supporting

the development of the broadcasting sector through research and training. More information can be found at www.bai.ie.