

4 African episodic screenwriters selected for second edition of AuthenticA Series Lab

Four African episodic screenwriters Tiah Beye (Senegal/Côte d'Ivoire, now based in France), Wanjiru Kairu (Kenya), Kelly-Eve Koopman (South Africa) and Moreetsi Gabang (Botswana) have been selected for the second edition of AuthenticA Series Lab.



Image supplied. AuthenticA Series Lab participants: (top left to right:) Tiah Beye and Moreetsi Gabang, (bottom left to right:) Wanjiru Kairu and Kelly-Eve Koopman

They will begin their six-month mentorship on 19 September. AuthenticA Series Lab is one of six film industry development programmes created and managed by the Cape Town-based media organisation Realness Institute.

“Providing African writers with the support, time, and space they need to do their best work is an important intervention in the media landscape. I look forward to working with this new cohort and their stories,” says Mehret Mandefro, co-founder and director of development and partnerships at Realness.

An intense programme to support the professional development of writers of series scripts, AuthenticA Series Lab was designed in collaboration and presented in partnership with the StoryBoard Collective with the support of Series Mania Forum, the French Embassy in South Africa, and the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) with project funding from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“TV series have the capacity to reach across geographies and cultures. Affording these four talented writers the time and space is AuthenticA’s purpose,” says David Rimer, founder of The StoryBoard Collective, the Geneva-based philanthropic organisation that supports the development and impact outreach of transformative stories.

“AuthenticA Series Lab pitches in 2023 have been a great success and have demonstrated the interest of the international industry in projects coming from Africa. We are delighted to be renewing our partnership with the Realness Institute for a second edition. The new cohort is of high quality and I am sure that the projects will find partners in Lille,” says Laurence Herszberg, general director of Series Mania.



5 African screenwriters selected to 7th Realness African Screenwriters' Residency programme

13 Jul 2023



The African episodic screenwriters

- Tiah Beye, Senegal/Côte d'Ivoire

Beye went to France to study and became aware of the lack of representation of Black-led stories in the media. This compelled her to start working behind the camera and tell stories that needed to be heard. She graduated from Kourtrajmé School, an unconventional and free cinema school founded by Ladj Ly. She produced a documentary *Hairoines*, exploring the relationship between Black women and afro hair, during the Covid-19 lockdown. In 2022, she participated in Netflix's Grow Creatives programme.

- Moreetsi Gabang, Botswana

Gabang graduated valedictorian from film school, Afda in Johannesburg, and is an alumnus of many film development programmes including Talents Durban, Talents Berlinale, DFM Institute Business, and DFM Jumpstart. He completed his Master's degree (First Class) after receiving a scholarship to study at UAL: London College of Communication. His short film *Motswakwa* (Foreigner) was nominated for Best Short Film at the 2019 African Movie Academy Awards. His short film *Zombie Date Night* in Tlokweng won the 2023 NEFTI Competition Award as well as the Audience Choice Award. He is a two-time recipient of the Bessie Head Literature Award.

- Wanjiru Kairu, Kenya

Current chairperson of the Kenya Scriptwriters Guild, Kairu is a versatile award-winning writer and director whose creative expertise spans radio, television, and film. Her portfolio boasts collaborative contributions, which earned an international Emmy for Best Production in an audio drama. Beyond television, she wrote over 10 films for DStv, and her short films have garnered international recognition and nominations. She is an instructor at Africa Digital Media Institute (ADMI), Africa Digital Media Academy in Kigali, and Multichoice Talent Factory, and a script consultant for

several films and TV series across East Africa.

- Kelly-Eve Koopman, South Africa

Cape Town-based Koopman describes herself as a writer, change-maker and “artist”. She has written and published several works, including her debut memoir *Because I Couldn't Kill You* longlisted for the *Sunday Times* National Book Award in 2019. She is also the co-curator of the celebrated LGBTQI anthology *They Called Me Queer* and the African online speculative fiction anthology *Our Move Next*. Koopman just concluded a residency at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Studies, writing her first novel. She works across different disciplines and mediums including film and television and is currently doing her Masters in Creative Writing at The University of the Western Cape. Koopman is also an Atlantic Fellowship for Racial Equity alumnus and in her capacity as an activist has worked for and with various organisations and social movements.



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28 Jun 2023



Mentorship

The four will be mentored by story expert, Selina Ukwuoma and creative producer, Mehret Mandefro, and participate in online sessions over six months as well as attend in-person residencies in South Africa at the Coot Club, and in Switzerland at the StoryBoard House culminating with a pitching session on stage at the Series Mania Forum 2024 in Lille, France.

The Series Mania Forum is one of the leading content development markets in Europe, with an expected over 4,000 participants from all over the world. The four will be tasked with crafting both a Concept Story Pitch Deck and a pilot script as part of their journey with the mentors.

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