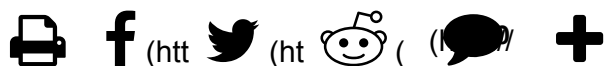


Virginie Devesa on Female Filmmakers, Ukraine, Moving Into Production

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Co-head of Paris-based sales agent Alpha Violet talks about her mission and passion

For five years Virginie Devesa (<http://variety.com/t/virginie-devesa/>), has successfully been running Paris-based sales company Alpha Violet (<http://variety.com/t/alpha-violet/>) together with colleague Keiko Funato (<http://variety.com/t/keiko-funato/>). Alpha Violet is primarily dedicated to making visible promising talents. It has a special interest in female voices. While Alpha points to transparency and professionalism, Violet symbolizes overlooked, hidden or marginalized contents. Devesa and Funato carefully hand-pick their films by asking: "Does this material need us?" Variety talked to Devesa at the Locarno

What's the history of Alpha Violet?

It's a Paris-based sales company I founded five years ago with my good Japanese friend Keiko Funato. I worked with her in a sales company prior to our deciding to become independent and to create our own female label. We later brought on board Jean-Baptiste Bailly-Maitre who helped us building up the project and financing it.

What are your mission and values?

We are primarily dedicated to first features – we like to discover new talents and their raw material with a preference for female filmmakers. Around 35% of Alpha Violet's catalogue of now 30 features are made by women. Moreover, we seek to discover new territories and continents. Our last movie, "Wolf and Sheep," is a good example. It's a first feature film from Afghanistan made by the female director Shahrbanoo Sadat. It fuses fantasy and contemporary Afghan reality with originality and won the Art Cinema Award at Directors' Fortnight in Cannes.

Are you looking to specialize and to cover a specific niche of films with Alpha Violet?

We have two directions: Female filmmaking, which is always our priority, and Eastern Europe. I always dreamt of representing a Ukrainian film. Like Romanian or Bulgarian cinema that today are building, we aspire to shed a light on Ukrainian cinema. With "The Tribe" we already managed to get people interested internationally. We adore this country and would be highly interested in working on more Ukrainian films and in developing a real industry. Look at Romanian cinema: 10 years ago we knew only the classics, but suddenly we have four-or-five new well-known Romanian filmmakers. So why not the Ukraine?

Another question would be the role of the festivals in your work, also with you being here at Locarno?

Very important. For arthouse films and to launch the career of a first feature film, festivals are of great value. That's where it starts and that's also our knowledge base. We can link our support for a film with festivals. In building up a career, especially for a first film, the presence at festivals is key. However,

The next film you will work on is “Luxembourg,” by Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy (<http://variety.com/t/myroslav-slaboshpytskiy/>) that you are co-producing. Isn't it a dilemma being a producer and a sales agent at the same time?

It's difficult, but that's why we have Jean-Baptiste supporting us with the producing branch of Alpha Violet. Of course, there are moments where I feel slightly schizophrenic about it. Because I do have ideas for selling it, while I am confronted with another set of questions regarding its production. It's the first project we are co-producing. It certainly is a challenge and takes up a lot of time and energy. But how can you resist?

How do you find your films?

By searching for them, travelling to festivals like Locarno and tracking the work of production companies whose line-up we like and whose projects we keep an eye on. Of course we also consider the films sent in by newcomers. We take the time to screen and reply to all of them. We focus on only five-or-six films per year, hence the greatest difficulty is that we need to be very selective.

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