

Santander Travel Award Report: Industry Representation at the Berlin Film Festival

The Santander Travel Award provided essential financial assistance which enabled me to visit the Berlin Film Festival in February 2020, with the aim of enhancing my perspective on inclusivity in the film industry. The Berlin Film Festival is among the most business-focused of the major film festivals and is home to the European Film Market, which provided an invaluable window into the degree to which actual change is taking place on the business side of the industry, as opposed to what is said in publicity, which may or may not be backed up by genuine action. The gaining of this insight was not only pertinent to my studies as an MA student of Producing for Film and Television, but also personally, as a female producer looking to enter the industry upon the completion of my course.

Over the last few years, the film industry has been subject to many calls for a higher level of diverse representation, both from figures within the industry and outside of it. Attending the European Film Market enabled me to gain a sense of whether these calls and the publicity around them were producing much change in what was actually being produced and marketed on the business side of things. The European Film Market draws companies from all over the world, and so I was able to interview industry professionals from a wide range of individual and geographical backgrounds. Of particular interest to me was the Irish Film Board, who have a number of financial incentives in place to encourage the employment of female writers, directors and producers. Being able to interview the women who worked for the Board provided a very useful insight into how these changes came about and the effect they are having.

Also of interest to me was the level of actual representation of non-white industry professionals, both from simply walking around the Market and from interviewing people. I was able to speak to professionals of different ethnicities and gather a sense of varying perspectives on the progression of representation in this area. The film industry has long had an issue with being white dominated, both in front of and behind the camera. Speaking to people at the European Film Market gave an illuminating look at how much work there is to

be done still in the industry on this front, particularly behind the closed doors of a place such as the Market, which is not open to the public.

The money from the Santander Travel Award enabled me to pay for flights, accommodation and a pass into the Film Festival, without which none of these interviews would have been possible. It will certainly inform the work I do in the future, both academically and – I hope – professionally.