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"Women in Focus" Conference Shows What It Takes to Make It in Movies

Emmy-winning producer Dorothea Petrie to moderate

Event open to the public in addition to filmmakers and students.

ORANGE, Calif. Six top women production designers who have helped design the worlds of some of the biggest hit films of all time will talk about their creative and career decisions at the Seventh Annual Women in Focus Conference, Friday, April 20, at the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts at Chapman University. The conference is free and open to the public, but reservations are required. The event takes place in the Paul and Daranne Folino Theater in Marion Knott Studios at 283 Cypress in Orange, Calif. To reserve a seat, call (714) 997-6515.


Designed to encourage dialogue between emerging and established women in the film industry, the conference is being sponsored by Orange County philanthropists Twyla Reed Martin, Nancy Baldwin, Nancy Wynne, Eve Kornyei, and Zee Allred.

Representatives of Women in Film, a professional organization made of up of some of the most prominent women in the industry, will present the Meredith MacRae Scholarship to a Chapman woman student who shows exceptional acting, directing or producing talent.

Given the dominance of men in the film industry, it’s critical that we help our young filmmakers meet and talk with women who have made it in the industry. Although there is no one path to success, we believe that both men and women students can learn a great deal from the experiences of our conference guests, says Bob Bassett, dean of Dodge College.

The conference includes two panel sessions and a networking mixer. For the first session, Career Path (1:30 - 2:45 p.m.), the production designers will screen clips from their films and talk about how they broke into the industry and the career challenges they have faced in an industry dominated by men. During the second session, Creative Vision (3:00 - 4:15 p.m.), the panelists will examine the creative challenges of designing the world of a film; in particular, a house each designed that set the tone of a film. An informal mixer will conclude the conference at 4:30 p.m.
Although women are playing ever-more-prominent roles in the film industry, it is imperative that we continue to lift up the achievements of women and support the work of emerging women filmmakers, says Dean Bassett. Women can not only articulate issues of specific importance to women, but bring a valuable perspective to every story. The world of storytelling simply cannot reflect the human condition if women do not have an equal voice in the film and television arts.

Previous conferences featured women in a variety of positions, including cinematographers, screenwriters, editors, producers, studio executives and producers.

Chapman Universitys Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, home to 1,100 students, is comprised of the Sodaro-Pankey Undergraduate School of Media, offering undergraduate degrees in film and television production, screenwriting, public relations and advertising, film studies, digital arts, and television and broadcast journalism; the Conservatory of Motion Pictures, offering graduate degrees in film production, film and television producing, screenwriting, and film studies; and the Media and the Public Interest Institute. Marion Knott Studios, the new $40-million, 76,000-square-foot home of the Dodge College, opened in fall 2006.