

Be bold, be heard!

 By [Beverley Klein](#)

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Tania Pehl is a journalist and photographer who was the MC of the Black Filmmakers Film Festival held during Open Design week 2016.

The Festival brings together emerging filmmakers and performers and showcases their work. I found out more about the Festival from Pehl, as well as some of the challenges women face in the film industry in South Africa, and how to overcome them.



Tania Pehl

Give us some background about yourself, and how your interest in film, photography and communications began?

Pehl: I am a journalist/photojournalist and my interest in film stems from the fact that I am a very visual person. I love to communicate through images because I feel that is best form of expression I am able to gauge with. Hence my interest in and role in communications within the Black Filmmakers Film Festival collective; I love sharing information with people and engaging because it is an intrinsic part of my personality.

Tell us more about the Black Film Makers Festival...

Pehl: Black Filmmakers Film Festival hosts monthly screenings on the last Wednesday of every month. The aim is to create a platform and showcase films made by people of colour – whether you are the director, producer or have a lead role. We aim to celebrate the amazing work done by POC across the African continent.

It is also a way for people within the industry to network. We also have a number of projects running such as our Ndim Ndim project; The Gugulethu lounge invites you into the homes of six families, where you will be exposed to a unique cinematic experience that involves inspiring short films made by renowned Kenyan director, Jim Chuchu and thereafter be treated to South Africa's famous Chisa Nyama braai.

What is your involvement in Open Design this year?

Pehl: We were given the platform to share local films made by black directors; it was also a way for us to discuss whether as POC are we missing in action or merely shut out. We had industry professionals come speak to us about film and their role as directors, as well as discussing film as a business.

Does a glass ceiling exist in your industry?

Pehl: Having spoken to the BFFF team about this, we find that "The unseen, yet unreachable barrier that keeps minorities and woman from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements."

Most importantly one of our members, Sarah Summer had something very relevant to share. She said that, "The film industry is not necessarily an industry where you can make money unless you go corporate or work on other peoples projects."

We have a problem with the production of our films and actually making it a viable industry for film directors because you land up doing it as a passion project and believe that after you make your first feature things will get better, but that it is not

the case.

Sarah had a meeting with a producer recently and she said she is scared of making money in the future, she is working really hard but that doesn't necessarily translate to her having a sustainable lifestyle. This producer advised her to get another job in order to sustain herself, so you have all these kind of ideas of where we want to go and what we want to do creatively, but once we get there we are not making the money so once we get there.. what then? It is this huge labour and then it's stuck. That's why we need audience development and the BFFF screenings are important because it gets people to invest in SA film.

■ ***Based on your experience, what advice would you give to women pursuing a career in the film and communications field?***

Pehl: Do it! The industry is so dominated by men that we rarely hear from women professionals and how they made it. Their process, their journey... just their story. We need sound advice from women who GET IT! We are powerful and engaging and our voices need to be heard; to impart knowledge.

■ ***What is your message for Women's Month?***

Pehl: Just embrace yourself. Feel and express ones emotions. Be bold! Be heard!

"Of course I am not worried about intimidating men. The type of man who will be intimidated by me is exactly the type of man I have no interest in." Chimamanda Adichie

ABOUT BEVERLEY KLEIN

Beverley Klein is the editor of the Marketing Media South Africa section on Bizcommunity.com. With a background in journalism and historical studies, she's dived into the world of industry news, curating content, writing and interviewing thought leaders. She's often spotted in a forest on the weekend and rarely seen without a camera. Follow @BevCPT.

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