



AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE  
NAMES KAREN SCHWARTZMAN  
AS SENIOR DIRECTOR OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 20, 2021, Los Angeles, CA** – The American Film Institute (AFI) has appointed Karen Schwartzman as its Senior Director, Innovative Programs for the AFI Conservatory. Building upon AFI’s foundation of both educating and celebrating great storytelling, the new Innovative Programs at the Conservatory will create a dynamic space where technologists, innovators, storytellers and social justice change makers, among others, will come together to collaborate, create and build upon AFI’s short-term, non-degree programs.

“As we look ahead and embrace emerging technology as tools for storytelling and democratization, AFI is dedicated to bringing technologists and storytellers together to create and impact social change,” said Susan Ruskin, Dean of the AFI Conservatory and EVP of the American Film Institute. “In Karen Schwartzman, with her extensive experience in program development and centering diverse voices, we have found a great collaborator and look forward to pushing the boundaries of storytelling.”

As Senior Director, Innovative Programs, Schwartzman will develop short-term programming to support a variety of initiatives, including curriculum-building pilot programs, as well as new and existing community outreach and inclusivity programs for underrepresented storytellers, and oversee program management and strategic planning. The initiatives will complement AFI’s MFA curriculum, as well as create more inclusive programming to champion greater cultural diversity and inclusion in storytelling. These cross-disciplinary programs will be designed to be scalable and digitally connected to reach a broad range of learners.

“I’m thrilled to build upon AFI Conservatory’s stellar track-record of educating and preparing creatives for successful, award-winning careers in the entertainment industry, as well as supporting AFI’s world-class community of artists, with leading-edge, accelerator programs for diverse creators to excel and lead the digital and cultural transformation of our industry,” said Karen Schwartzman, Senior Director, Innovative Programs.

Schwartzman is an accomplished leader with over 20 years of experience in film, media, entertainment, education and brand sectors. Most recently, Schwartzman served as the Director of

Development at Loyola Marymount University's School of Film and Television. Previously, she consulted through her company Creative Axis International, providing strategic development, planning and programming services for organizations like Telluride Film Festival, Producers Guild of America, Museum of Moving Image among others, as well as her past role as Managing Director, Strategic Marketing & Special Issues. Schwartzman earned a MA in Cinema Studies from San Francisco State University and a BFA in Photography from University of San Francisco.

Support for Innovative Programs is provided in part by AT&T.

### **About the American Film Institute (AFI)**

Established in 1967, the American Film Institute is dedicated to celebrating excellence in the art form and creating national education initiatives that inspire artists and audiences alike. AFI's pioneering programs include filmmaker training at the AFI Conservatory; year-round exhibition at the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center and at AFI Festivals across the nation; the AFI Movie Club creating a global community of movie fans; workshops aimed at increasing diversity in the storytelling community; honoring today's masters through the AFI Life Achievement Award and AFI AWARDS; and scholarly efforts such as the AFI Catalog of Feature Films that uphold film history for future generations. Read about all of these programs and more at [AFI.com](http://AFI.com) and follow us on social media at [Facebook.com/AmericanFilmInstitute](https://Facebook.com/AmericanFilmInstitute), [YouTube.com/AFI](https://YouTube.com/AFI), [Twitter.com/AmericanFilm](https://Twitter.com/AmericanFilm) and [Instagram.com/AmericanFilmInstitute](https://Instagram.com/AmericanFilmInstitute).

### **About the AFI Conservatory**

The AFI Conservatory opened its doors in 1969 to an inaugural class that included Terrence Malick, Caleb Deschanel and Paul Schrader. Today, the Conservatory offers a two-year MFA degree in six filmmaking disciplines: Cinematography, Directing, Editing, Producing, Production Design and Screenwriting. In a collaborative production environment, AFI Fellows learn to master the art of storytelling, collectively creating up to 175 films a year. Fellows actively participate in the entire life cycle of a film, from development through production and exhibition.

Alumni of this elite program, ranging from modern masters to bold new voices defining the state of the art form include Andrea Arnold, Darren Aronofsky, Ari Aster, Sam Esmail, Brad Falchuk, Liz Hannah, Patty Jenkins, Janusz Kamiński, Matthew Libatique, David Lynch, Melina Matsoukas, Polly Morgan, Rachel Morrison and Wally Pfister, among others.

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