



'Ne Zha' Voice Actor, International Filmmakers Talk Women's Cinema at Shanghai's Inaugural Kering Women In Motion Forum



The voice behind China's beloved animated character Ne Zha took center stage alongside global cinema luminaries as the Shanghai International Film Festival hosted its first-ever Kering Women In Motion forum, bringing the luxury conglomerate's decade-long advocacy for women in film to Chinese shores.

The star-studded panel at the 27th edition of the festival, titled "Kering Women In Motion Talk – In Her Flow," and moderated by actor and host Andrew Liang, featured an eclectic mix of talent: Lyu Yanting, the voice performer who brought the mischievous boy character to life in animated blockbusters "Ne Zha" and "Ne Zha 2"; Brazilian actor-producer Luiza Mariani fresh from creating a female-led film crew; Indian filmmaker Kiran Rao, who doubles as a Golden Goblet Awards juror this year; and Chinese actor-turned-producer Liang Jing, now eight years into her behind-the-camera transformation.

"This is particularly meaningful because this year marks 120 years of Chinese cinema and 130 years of world cinema," noted Andrew Liang as rain poured outside the venue — a scene he observed echoed the queues of moviegoers a century ago waiting to see pioneering Chinese actresses like Butterfly Wu and Ruan Lingyu.

Chen Guo, managing director of the Shanghai International Film and TV Events Center, welcomed the gathering as part of the festival's commitment to maintaining "sensitivity, professionalism, and forward-thinking" in exploring industry developments, while celebrating how "female filmmakers continue to expand the boundaries of our cinema with their keen perception, vivid expression, and courage to break through."

Cai Jinjing, president of Kering Greater China, marked a milestone moment as she opened the forum celebrating the initiative's 10th anniversary. Since launching at Cannes in 2015, Women In Motion has honored everyone from Jane Fonda to this year's recipient Nicole Kidman, while staging over 100 events globally. "We extend our commitment to the fields of culture and arts," Cai explained, "working to make more female artists' creativity seen and more women's voices heard."



The conversation revealed striking parallels across continents. Liang Jing described witnessing “heavyweight female directors” breaking into traditionally male genres like science fiction and suspense, moving beyond narratives of “female suffering” toward stories of “self-reliance and confidence.” She offered a preview of her upcoming August release “Dongji Rescue,” featuring what she called “a very typical female awakening character.” In the film’s island culture setting, she explained, “traditional women have been in a disadvantaged position for hundreds of years,” but when oppression leaves everyone with no way out, “women’s determination and power explode, maternal love explodes,” ultimately driving the story’s development.

Rao reflected on the universal resonance of women’s stories, particularly regarding her films “Dangal” and “Secret Superstar,” where she served as a producer: “Our struggles are fairly similar on many levels. That’s why these films did so well in China, despite being culturally so different.” She emphasized the importance of creating “complex, interesting women characters” that move beyond traditional patriarchal expectations.

Lyu Yanting offered rare insights into the animation world, where her female voice bringing a male character to life initially surprised audiences. “Many people wanted to explore how a female voice actor could produce such powerful energy,” she said, advocating for more “realistic, character-driven roles” that move beyond traditional voice acting categories of “loli” (cute girl voices) and “royal sister” (mature woman voices).

Mariani brought news from Brazil, where women directors have climbed from under 2% in the 1970s to 15% today. Her latest film “Cyclone” – premiering at the festival – features a largely female crew. “It took me 20 years to make this film,” she revealed, adding emotional weight to her later advice for young filmmakers: “Work and work and work... keep working, keep working hard.”

But perhaps the most telling moment came when panelists addressed the persistent question of work-life balance – a query, as Andrew Liang noted, rarely posed to male filmmakers. “As women, if we want to fully invest in work, we need to choose too many things, we need too much courage,” reflected Lyu Yanting, speaking to a challenge that transcends borders and languages.

The collaboration between Shanghai International Film Festival and Kering, supported by municipal leaders and French and Italian consulates, signals an ambitious expansion of the luxury group’s cultural advocacy. As the panelists delivered their final advice – Liang Jing urging filmmakers to “dare to break down walls,” Rao emphasizing the need to “find your voice” – the forum established a new platform for championing women’s stories in one of the world’s largest film markets.

