

World Woman Foundation brings equality push to Venice

Posted on September 8, 2026 by Luca Moretti

VENICE — Investing in women is not charity, and the film industry still prices their work wrong. That was the message when World Woman Foundation staged a Venice gathering on September 7, at the Procuratie Vecchie on St Mark's Square, as the 83rd Venice International Film Festival ran on the Lido.

The day-long World Woman Venice Agenda brought filmmakers, producers, philanthropists and lawyers into The Home of The Human Safety Net, the Assicurazioni Generali philanthropy foundation housed in the 500 year old building. It advanced the Equality Moonshot, a pledge to invest in one million women and girls by 2030 through access to capital, commerce, skills, and content.

"I think, for women, it's really important that we move away from the assumption that investing in a woman is philanthropy," said Divya Shahani, a Toronto based entertainment lawyer. "Women's intellectual property and contributions have not been priced correctly."

The producer Rashaana Shah, founder of Mulberry Films, turned on the festival circuit. "My distributors do not want laurels on my poster," she said. "Every festival wants one film from each country or certain numbers from the women's and I think this whole selection process should become more blindfolded."

The American director Maria Soccor also argued against labels. "If we start looking at content as content, and not separating it so much, and get rid of that idea of who's your audience, then we're really making true art," she said.

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Screenshot
Entertainment Lawyer Divya Shahani; International lawyer Joseph Gulino; director Maria Soccor (*Credits: Italy Now*)

Access before capital

Asked whether capital or access was the bigger barrier, all three speakers on the finance panel chose access. “You need to be in the right rooms, talking to the right people, making the right networks,” said Joseph Gulino, vice chair international of the National Italian American Foundation, which represents about 17 million Italian Americans and funds filmmakers. “Capital will flow from that.”

Shahani argued the fix is structural. Creators who sign away all rights with no reversion clause lose their work forever, she said, and copyright law should let them reclaim property that sits unexploited.

Language and reach

A Danish producer described a Danish language film travelling the world on a theme audiences recognise, the female body as battleground. The Indian actor and producer Manasi Parekh asked that films keep their original languages, calling that uniqueness “something that we need to keep as precious as it is.”

Venice has always sold other people’s stories. This gathering asked who owns them.

Venetian patron Donà dalle Rose wins World Woman award

By Alina Trabattoni and Sabina Castelfranco



Chiara Modica Donà dalle Rose (*Credits: Italy Now*)

VENICE — Chiara Modica Donà dalle Rose, the Venetian lawyer and art patron who exhibits as Rosa Mundi, received the World Woman Hero Honoree Award 2026 on September 7, as the 83rd Venice International Film Festival ran on the Lido.

World Woman Foundation, led by CEO Rupa Dash, presented the award at the Procuratie Vecchie, home of The Human Safety Net, the philanthropic foundation of Assicurazioni Generali, Europe's third-largest insurance company.

"Receiving this prize is a great recognition, one I take in my hands thinking of all the great women who over the centuries have helped make this world better," Donà dalle Rose told Italy Now. "To be a woman is to love life and those around you, and to build the future with harmony, gentleness, and wisdom."

"Chiara has never treated heritage as something static," said Joseph Gulino, vice chair international of the National Italian American Foundation. "She has taken an extraordinary Venetian and Italian cultural legacy and continually found ways to make it relevant to the present."

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Chiara Modica Donà dalle Rose (*Credits: Italy Now*)

Patron and lawyer

Born in Venice, Donà dalle Rose studied law in Paris and Strasbourg. She now presides over the Fondazione Donà dalle Rose, in the family palazzo in Cannaregio, and sits on the board of Iuav, Venice's architecture and design university.

Her best known project is BIAS, the *Biennale Internazionale Arte Contemporanea Sacra* (international biennial of contemporary sacred art), first held in 2016 and grouping artists by spiritual pavilion rather than nationality. She also chairs WISH, World International Sicilian Heritage.

The award came at the World Woman Venice Agenda, a day of panels under the foundation's Equality Moonshot, a pledge to reach one million women and girls by 2030 with capital, commerce, skills, and content.

Organisers said the prize recognised her work "advancing equality, art, and cultural dialogue on the global stage." Asked whether capital or access was the greater barrier, all three finance panellists chose access. "Women's intellectual property and contributions have not been priced correctly," said Divya Shahani, a Toronto entertainment lawyer.

"Money matters, but access often determines who gets the opportunity to receive it in the first place," said Sara Winslow, founder of the Ambitchous Collective and author of The Power of Women Trivia Series.

A patron who sorts artists by belief rather than passport was honoured in a room arguing that talent, too, deserves to be judged blind.

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