Strong female characters stand out in the first edition of ORF’s UNIVERSUM History Showcase

**ORF UNIVERSUM and ORF-Enterprise highlighted blue-chip history films in an interactive online showcase and gave an exclusive insight into upcoming titles that offer multi-perspective approaches and intriguing topics.**

Vienna – As a follow-up format to MIPCOM 2021, which was held as a face-to-face event again this past October, the UNIVERSUM History Showcase took place as a digital screening event on November 8, 2021. Caroline Haidacher and Claudia Unterweger hosted the one-hour event that was streamed live from a studio at ORF’s headquarters in Vienna/Austria. Within this framework, a new range of blue-chip documentaries was presented through new trailers to co-production partners and buyers. Proven features from the past UNIVERSUM Nature Showcase – that was held on April 12, 2021 - were of course retained: In addition to a first look at the brand-new ORF UNIVERSUM History documentaries, interested participants had the opportunity to pose their questions and discuss live with the award-winning directors and producers of the films directly on ORF-Enterprise’s recently expanded platform.

Even though it was a challenging year considering production, the UNIVERSUM History titles succeeded to cover a broad range of topics and eras, and to offer fresh viewpoints. What all productions have in common is the focus on strong female characters, diversity, and multi-perspective approaches through the experts on the respective historical events.

“Once again this year, UNIVERSUM History offers an exciting journey through a broad range of stories, eras, and human destinies. Topics such as gender roles, antisemitism, or European identity have not only historical but also contemporary dimensions and tackle current debates from a historical perspective", emphasizes Head of ORF UNIVERSUM History **Caroline Haidacher**.

“We were impressed by the commitment of the filmmakers to complete all highlighted titles even before schedule, especially in such challenging times, so all presented documentaries will become available before the end of 2021", adds **Armin Luttenberger**, Head of Content Sales International at ORF-Enterprise.

**A trip back in time to gain insight into what the past still has in store for us**

Two productions already aired on ORF and are an established part in the sales catalogue of ORF-Enterprise: “**Victims of the Vikings**”, written and directed by Stephan Ludwig and Gernot Lercher, and “**The Salt Saga - White Gold of the Alps**”, a co-production by ORF, BR, ARTE and Degn Film, in association with ORF-Enterprise and funded by Austrian Television Fund, Kulturfonds des Landes OÖ and VAM. The director of the latter, **Katharina Heigl**, pointed out the importance of women in connection to trade and that the topic of this film is not only an Alpine but a European one.

The production “**Venus of Willendorf – The Naked Truth**” sheds light on one of the most important archeological findings in Austria that was even too naked for Facebook and was consequently censored. The Venus of Willendorf, or as award-winning director **Klaus T. Steindl** calls it, “the Mona Lisa of the Stone Age”, is a well-known figurine that depicts a woman in a very realistic way. The Facebook censorship was Steindl’s inspiration to make this film and he thus chose a feminist approach and based his vision on facts and new findings.

Steindl also wrote and directed the next highlight – “**The Rothschild Legacy**”, a co-production by ORF, ZDF/Arte and Metafilm, funded by Austrian Television Fund, Vienna Film Fund, Cine Art an VAM. As the title suggests, the focus lies on one of the wealthiest families of the world - the Rothschild’s. In times of conspiracy theories and hate speeches, it is still a current topic that is surrounded by a big myth, misunderstanding and prejudice. Steindl’s approach is to examine the truth in history and also who is telling the truth. The compelling docudrama takes a closer look at the history of the Rothschild Family through the eyes of Miriam Rothschild, a renowned scientist of the 20th century.

**UNIVERSUM History presents opulent productions**

“**1278 – Battle for Europe**” - a co-production by ORF, ZDF/ARTE, Česká televize and Interspot Film, funded by Austrian Television Fund, VAM and Land Niederösterreich, in association with ORF-Enterprise - takes us back 800 years to one of the biggest battles of the Middle Ages that paved the way for the Habsburg Empire. The award-winning director **Fritz Kalteis** has been a creative part behind the UNIVERSUM History team from early on. The film was created together with Česká televise as this is a topic both Austria and the Czech Republic have in common. The great fighting choreography in the battle scenes make this opulent drama especially captivating.

Theco-production by ORF, ZDF/Arte, Interspot Film and Gruppe 5, funded by Austrian Television Fund and Land Niederösterreich – “**Augustus and Livia – Empire of Blood**” - explores the life of an emperor with two names and two faces. However, it is not only a film about Augustus, but Livia developed into a stronger character. The biggest challenge for this production was to be as historically accurate as possible. As the production manager **Isabella Lesiak** pointed out, there was a lot of recent research included in the shooting of the film and it was essential to cast actors that shall represent the diversity of humankind during the times of the Roman Empire.

With this first edition of the UNIVERSUM History Showcase, ORF-Enterprise was able to put in place an innovative event to face the challenges imposed by the pandemic - a period in which it invested in digital alternatives to connect with clients and partners.

Please find pictures of the key subjects, Caroline Haidacher (Head of ORF UNIVERSUM History), and Armin Luttenberger (Head of Content Sales International at ORF-Enterprise) for further use via this link: <https://cloud.orf.at/index.php/s/M9rpYyCe7ZE4EHA>