

Culture Files

***Culture Files*, the first cross-media project selected for the Netherlands Production Platform, was developed by prolific German production house gebrueder beetz filmproduktion in order to address the problem of engaging younger audiences with cultural, education and historical content within a shifting media environment.**

“The public broadcasters have lost their young audiences,” points out project producer Georg Tschurtschenthaler. “I think the average viewing age in Germany is around 60 [for cultural programmes] and that’s true more or less all over Europe.”

“So we have developed a different visual style, using different story-telling techniques and exploiting different media,” Tschurtschenthaler explains of the 5 x 52 minute series that will unravel the mysteries surrounding some of Europe’s most illustrious thinkers and artists, among them Beethoven, Pasolini and Richard Wagner. “They [the youth audience] won’t come back just to public broadcasters. They are somewhere else. They are on the Internet, they are reading comics, they are reading books, they are playing games. Yes, they are watching TV too, but you need to tell your story or transmit your content in different ways. That’s the basic idea behind this project.”

The series follows a successful pilot entitled *The Kleist File* about the mysterious death of German poet Heinrich von Kleist, produced with Arte and will incorporate three components; television, gaming and comics. What connects everything will be an inquisitive (and ingenious) female detective driven by curiosity to discover how some of the greatest artworks in European history were created.

This year gebrueder beetz filmproduktion developed a similarly structured project, the six-part Soviet-themed *Farewell Comrades*, that attracted 35 partners from fourteen countries. “It’s a tv series, it’s a big web format, it’s a book and we will have iPad and iPhone applications. During the process we have found out that this approach works.”

The company is using the Netherlands Production Platform to roll out *Culture Files* ahead of the doc markets of Leipzig and IDFA (Amsterdam). While here in Utrecht Tschurtschenthaler is keen to explain the bespoke potential of project investment.

“We hope to find co-producers for one or several episodes of the series,” he points out. “We could make a programme about a Dutch cultural icon, such as Van Gogh, for a Dutch investor, for example. That is realistic. Or we can find somebody who is interested in the whole package. It’s a pretty open concept at the end. We’re here to find partners.”