

Press Release

Doha Film Institute Announces Fall Grant Recipients: 21 projects from 24 countries to receive funding

- *21 projects by first and second-time filmmakers from around the world selected for grants*
- *Represented MENA countries include Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Syria and Tunisia*
- *Filmmakers from Italy, Madagascar, Myanmar, Nepal, The Philippines and USA receive grants for first time*
- *12 of 21 projects selected are directed by women*
- *Four grantee alumni to screen at the 65th Berlinale*
- *Submissions now open for next funding round*

Doha, Qatar; February 3, 2015: The Doha Film Institute today announced recipients of the Fall 2014 session of its grants programme, ahead of the 65th Berlin International Film Festival where four of the Institute's previous grantees will be presented, including three world premieres.

Twenty-one projects from 24 countries – comprising 9 narrative feature films, 8 feature documentaries, 4 short films (three narrative and one experimental) – will receive funding for development, production or post-production.

The Fall session marks the 9th session of the grants programme, which is dedicated to supporting new cinematic talent, with a focus on first and second-time filmmakers.

Eleven of the projects are from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, 8 are from the OECD's Development Assistance Committee list of countries (DAC), and two are from the rest of the world. For the first time, filmmakers from Italy, Madagascar, Myanmar, Nepal, The Philippines and USA will receive grants.

Among the 21 projects selected for funding, three films are from Tunisia – Walid Mattar's narrative feature 'Northern Wind' which is a subtle exploration of friendship between two men whose lives cross paths due to a factory relocation, Claire Belhassine's feature documentary 'The Man Behind The Microphone', about Hedi Jouini who is known as the 'Frank Sinatra of Tunisia', and second-time grantee Kaouther Ben Hania's documentary 'Zineb Hates the Snow', an intimate family portrait about a young girl who is relocated to Canada following the death of her father.

Two projects from Qatar-based filmmakers were awarded grants – Nora Al Subai's 'Opening Doors', the true story of Amna Mahmoud, a courageous Qatari teacher who opened the first school for girls in Qatar in 1957 and Karem Kamel's 'Light Sounds', about an unlikely duo of Sri-Lankan immigrants who work as cleaners in a washroom neighbouring a mosque.

Several projects with unique perspectives on the conflicts in the MENA region are among the grantees: *Dégradé* is the debut feature from twin brothers Arab & Tarzan Abunasser about twelve women stuck in a Gaza hair salon for an entire afternoon, as they witness a violent confrontation taking place across the street; 'In the Future, They Ate from the Finest Porcelain' by Larissa Sansour is an experimental short about Palestine which examines the role of myth in history and national identity; and 'To All Naked Men' by Bassam Chekhes is a narrative drama set in the aftermath of the Syrian war.

Fatma Al Remaihi, CEO of the Doha Film Institute, said: "Our Fall grantees represent some powerful new voices in cinema. The cultural diversity among the projects is very inspiring, as is the fact that once again, we are seeing so many strong female-driven projects."

"It is also very encouraging to welcome some of our grantee alumni who are returning with new projects. This demonstrates the very real development in their own creative journeys and just how meaningful this programme is for providing an infrastructure of support for emerging talent. Our commitment to these films extends much further than a one-time grant - we are dedicated to supporting filmmakers for the life-cycle of their project and in many cases, into their next. "

Twelve of the 21 funded projects are directed by women, including Deniz Erguven's 'Mustang', a Turkish project about five vibrant girls who grow out of childhood in a family obsessed with their virtue, Anahita Ghazvinizadeh's 'They', about the transition from childhood to adulthood and the open-ended questions of identity faced by the young protagonist, Nour Wazzi's thriller drama 'The Trophy' and 'Scales' by Saudi Arabian director, Shahad Ameen, which blends fantasy and reality in a tale of a 13 year-old girl fighting against her imminent fate of becoming a mermaid.

Female-driven projects are also strongly represented in the documentary category where 7 of the 9 grantees are women. They include Marie-Clemence Andriamonta Paes's 'Madagascar 1947, The Sound Of Silence', about the largely unknown post-WWII rebellion by Malagasy war veterans which was harshly suppressed by the French colonial authorities, Jewel Maranan's 'Tondo, Beloved' about the effects of poverty as people are caught up in the path of Manila's port expansion, and Maryam Ebrahimi's 'The Confiscated Images', about Iranian Gulf war photographer, Saeed Sadeghi, whose images were used to propel the myth of the Holy War.

Tamara Stepanyan has received a grant for the third time, making her the first third-time grantee of the programme. Her feature documentary, 'Limbo', explores the experience of Armenian asylum seekers.

Four of the Institute's grantee alumni are screening at the 65th Berlin International Film Festival which opens on Thursday. Two documentaries will make their world premiere in The Forum section - David Yon's 'The Night and The Kid' (Fall 2012 grantee) and Michel Zongo's 'The Siren of Faso Fani' (Fall 2013 grantee). Also in the Forum section is Ghassan Salhab's 'The Valley' (Fall 2012 grantee) which had its world premiere at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival, while 'Out on the Streets' (Spring 2013 grantee) by Jasmina Metwaly and Philip Rizk will have its world premiere in Forum Expanded.

Submissions for the current grants session are now open and will close on February 15. The fund is available to projects by filmmakers from around the world with an emphasis on supporting filmmakers from the MENA region with certain categories of funding reserved for MENA and Qatari filmmakers.

The fund is primarily for first and second-time filmmakers with the exception of the category of Post-Production which, as of the 11th session, will be newly open to established filmmakers from the MENA region.

For more information about eligibility and submission process visit:

<http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/grants/guidelines>

A full directory of past grant recipients is available to view online at:

<http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/projects/grants>

Doha Film Institute grantees for the Fall 2014 session are:

FEATURE NARRATIVE – DEVELOPMENT

Scales by Shahad Ameen (Saudi Arabia, Qatar)

Thirteen-year-old Hayat was almost sacrificed to become a mermaid by her father when she was an infant. Now she faces the same problem once again because of her newborn brother.

FEATURE NARRATIVE – PRODUCTION

Birdshot by Mikhail Red (Philippines, Qatar)

A farm girl mistakenly shoots and kills an endangered Philippine Eagle. When authorities begin a manhunt to track down the eagle's killer, they stumble upon an even more horrific discovery.

Dégradé by Arab & Tarzan Abunasser (Palestine, Jordan, France, Qatar)

Gaza, nowadays. Twelve women are stuck in a hair salon for a whole afternoon, witnessing a violent confrontation taking place across the street.

Northern Wind by Walid Mattar (Tunisia, France, Qatar)

A shoe factory is relocated from France to Tunisia. The fates of Marcel, who becomes unemployed at 50, and Foued, a young Tunisian womaniser, are turned upside down.

They by Anahita Ghazvinizadeh (Iran, United States of America, Qatar)

Suspended between childhood and adulthood, J imagines possible futures through familial relationships. Plants, poetry and medicines provide the environment where these relations take place.

To All Naked Men by Bassam Chekhes (Syria, Netherlands, Turkey, Lebanon, Qatar)

One night, Salman wakes up frightened. He is driven to escape the investigation that was taking place in his dream, as he realises that he knew something about the crime.

White Sun by Deepak Rauniyar (Nepal, Qatar)

A dark comedy about life in a Nepali mountain village in the wake of the decade-long armed conflict.

FEATURE NARRATIVE – POST-PRODUCTION

Mediterranea by Jonas Carpignano (Italy, France, Germany, Qatar)

After leaving his native Burkina Faso, Ayiva makes the perilous journey across the Sahara and Mediterranean in search of a better life in Italy.

Mustang by Deniz Gamze Ergüven (Turkey, France, Germany, Qatar)

Five vibrant girls grow out of childhood in a family obsessed with their virtue. Their trial of strength for freedom crests into a spectacular attempt to break free.

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY – PRODUCTION

Limbo by Tamara Stepanyan (Lebanon, Armenia, France, Qatar)

Marseille, 2014. Dozens of Armenian asylum seekers are trying to survive while waiting for their applications to be considered. They live in an indeterminate space, wandering in limbo.

Madagascar 1947, The Sound of Silence by Marie-Clémence Andriamonta-Paes

(Madagascar, France, Qatar)

1947, Madagascar: a rebellion is harshly suppressed by French colonial authorities. This unknown story will be told from a Malagasy perspective by questioning the Sikidy geomancy tradition.

The Confiscated Images by Maryam Ebrahimi (Sweden, Qatar)

Saeed Sadeghi is the Iranian photographer responsible for images from the Gulf War that were used to propel the myth of a holy war to many Iranians.

Tondo, Beloved by Jewel Maranan (Philippines, Germany, Qatar)

'Tondo, Beloved' is a film about four people in different stages of life - birth, youth, adulthood and death - who are caught in the path of expansion of Manila's busiest international port.

Zaineb Hates the Snow by Kaouther Ben Hania (Tunisia, France, Qatar)

Zaineb, a nine-year-old Tunisian girl, lost her father. Her mother is going to remarry - in Canada, where Zaineb can finally see snow! But Zaineb has decided to hate the snow.

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY – POST-PRODUCTION

City of Jade by Midi Z (Myanmar, Taiwan, Qatar)

Can they escape the army's interrogation and the temptation of drugs? Sleeping, eating and mining in the City of Jade.

The Man Behind the Microphone by Claire Belhassine (Tunisia, United Kingdom, Qatar)

An amazing story of love and family, celebrity and music. A portrait of Hedi Jouini, the godfather of Tunisian music.

The Silk Railroad by Martin DiCicco (United States of America, Georgia, Qatar)

Wealth, opportunity, and discord collide along the route of a railroad under construction between Europe and Asia.

SHORT FILMS – DEVELOPMENT

Opening Doors by Nora Al-Subai (Qatar, Canada)

Facing opposition from some parts of her community, Amna Mahmoud, a courageous Qatari woman, opened the first school for girls in Qatar, in 1957. This is her story.

SHORT FILMS – PRODUCTION

The Trophy by Nour Wazzi (Lebanon, United Kingdom, Qatar)

Sometimes the ones that love us most, can cause the greatest harm...

SHORT FILMS – POST-PRODUCTION

Light Sounds by Karem Kamel (Egypt, Qatar)

Two lives, two dreams, a mosque, and the desire to be heard.

SHORT EXPERIMENTAL OR ESSAY – PRODUCTION

In the Future, They Ate from the Finest Porcelain by Larissa Sansour

(Palestine, United Kingdom, Qatar)

A narrative resistance group buries porcelain in Palestine for future archaeologists to excavate, seeking to influence history and support future claims to their vanishing lands.

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About Doha Film Institute:

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation established in 2010. It supports the growth of the local film community by enhancing industry knowledge, cultivating film appreciation and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. Doha Film Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films, educational programmes, film screenings, the Ajyal Youth Film Festival and Qumra.

With culture, community, education and entertainment at its foundation, the Doha Film Institute serves as an all-encompassing film hub in Doha, as well as a resource for the region and the rest of the world. Doha Film Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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