

Press Release

Challenge yourself with questions to discover precise tools for filmmaking, advises Qumra Master Cristian Mungiu

Doha, Qatar – 11 March, 2015: In the concluding master-class at Qumra, the new industry event by the Doha Film Institute, Qumra Master Cristian Mungiu, a Palm d'Or winner, advised young filmmakers to challenge and inundate themselves with questions to arrive at the precise tools for filmmaking.

“Ask why you are making the film, for whom you are making it,” said Mr. Mungiu. “Ask if the film matters to them and what kind of film you want to make. Unless you know the answers to these questions, you cannot advance. And once you have found the answers, you will find the precise tools to make the right filmmaking decision.”

As one of the Qumra Masters, Mr. Mungiu mentored four filmmakers whose projects are participating in an intensive development programme. These included: Mahdi Fleifel's dark comedy/docufiction/drama ***Men in the Sun*** (Palestine, Greece, UK, Denmark, Qatar); Alfouz Tanjour's drama ***Wooden Rifle*** (Syria, Qatar); Faiza Ambah's drama *A Reverence for Spiders* (Saudi Arabia, USA, France, Qatar); and Imamaddin Hasanov's documentary ***Holy Cow*** (Azerbaijan, Germany, Romania, Qatar).

At the session moderated by Jean-Michel Frodon, journalist and critic, Mr. Mungiu took the audience through his personal journey of watching films by the dozen on VCR, screening them for his friends and eventually finding himself in cinema, later in life, after the collapse of the Communist government in Romania. “That was a ‘meet your fate’ moment,” he said, when he resigned his job in the media, and moved to Bucharest to study film.

Mr. Mungiu said that growing up in Romania, the priority as a young man was to get into college for a shorter period of compulsory military service than to dream of being a filmmaker as the only film school was predominantly catering to the elite.

The film school he eventually attended, said Mr. Mungiu, “was useful but not systematic. We learnt about films without watching them because the school didn't have them. The important thing, I learnt, was to read a lot and understand what others before us did.”

While his debut feature *Occident* premiered in the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes, it was his second film *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* that brought him instant international recognition with the Palm d'Or and defined him as a New Wave filmmaker. His own approach to films was to take a hard look at reality, and “use it as a model.”

Mr. Mungiu said winning the Palm d'Or was "a very happy accident," and while it did not trigger concreted means of funding for new projects, it helped bring attention to Romanian cinema. "What I planned as a polemic film became a celebration of a nation," he said with a chuckle.

But it also helped bring out the other side in Mr. Mungiu, to understand about film distribution and in fact reintroduce the concept of film caravans. "The fact is that the reality [of winning the honour] did not match up to the expectations. People wanted to watch the film and they couldn't because there were no cinemas." Mr. Mungiu raised funds and rented equipment from Germany for a caravan that toured all of Romania, screening the film to vast audiences of over 20,000 people in 20 cities over 30 days.

"I hoped it would attract attention to the local situation and that more cinemas might open, instead what we got was all the filmmakers doing more caravans," he said. While it did not change the situation on ground, Mr. Mungiu said the experience enabled him to see the other side of the filmmaking process.

Mr. Mungiu, whose collective film with four other filmmakers, *Tales from the Golden Age*, was screened in the Modern Masters section at Qumra, said he consciously tries to stay away from his earlier films. "A completed film is a dead body; you cannot extract life from it. You have to seek light and life from a different place and it is complicated."

Having powerful female characters in his film, Mr. Mungiu said, is a not a conscious choice. "It is the choice of the story, and today in all the very dramatic events that happen in our society, women are more in the middle than men because women tend to become the victims."

Mr. Mungiu said he has found the subject for his next film after months and weeks of being frustratingly clueless, advising the young filmmakers to "focus on what you have to do, think about it even as you go about your routine, and one day, the spark just comes."

Qumra hosted more than 100 leading film industry professionals who came together for a series of bespoke mentorship labs, master classes, meetings and film screenings, to nurture regional talent. In all, 29 projects in various stages of production were chosen to participate in the intensive industry programme designed to take them to the next stage.

-ENDS-

About Qumra:

Qumra is an initiative that seeks to provide mentorship, nurturing and hands-on development for filmmakers from Qatar and around the world, alongside a series of screenings for Doha audiences featuring films by international masters and recipients of support from the Institute.

** The Arabic term 'qumra' is popularly said to be the origin of the word 'camera', and to have been used by the scientist, astronomer and mathematician Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham, 965-c.1040 CE), whose work in optics laid out the principles of the camera obscura.*

About Doha Film Institute:



مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام
DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the local film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Youth Film Festival; and Qumra. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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