

Qumra 2019 concludes with Alice Rohrwacher's witty masterclass on the role of cinema in bringing people together

- *A desire to connect with people and change their perception is what drives Qumra Master Rohrwacher to make films*
- *The importance of seeing films in theatres must not be forgotten as online streaming services grow, she argues*

Doha, Qatar: 20 March 2019: The fifth edition of Qumra – an annual industry event by the Doha Film Institute that provides mentorship, nurturing, and hands-on development for first- and second-time filmmakers – concluded with a frank and witty masterclass by Italian director Alice Rohrwacher about the importance of film in connecting people.

Rohrwacher has directed three critically successful feature films, that have earned her an international reputation as one of the most exciting filmmakers today. Her first film, *Heavenly Body* (2011), screened at the Directors' Fortnight during Cannes Film Festival, *The Wonders* (2014) won the Cannes Grand Prix, and her latest film *Happy as Lazzaro* (2018) won the Best Screenplay Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

Her masterclass brought to a close six days of lively discussions, interactions, mentoring sessions and workshops for up-and-coming filmmakers at Qumra. Using clips from her three films, Rohrwacher took the audience on her journey through filmmaking. She revealed that she had no formal training in film before she made *Heavenly Body* and prepared by "reading every book I could find about how films were made."

Rohrwacher said that although she has learned something new during each new film project, there is one guiding principle that she keeps close to her heart: "My mission is to make my audience look at the world they live in with a different view after watching my films. I need to connect with them to bring them into the reality of the film and draw out their emotions."

To invoke an emotional response from audiences, filmmakers should not rely on digital camerawork or special effects, Rohrwacher continued. She said: "For me, simplicity is key. The problem with digital camera and other new technologies are that they can give a filmmaker too many options and it's easy to get carried away. My advice to filmmakers is to remember that stories in film are told through imagery and symbolism – and sometimes the simplest images are the most powerful."

Rohrwacher ended her masterclass with her thoughts on the rise of streaming services such as Netflix, which added *Happy as Lazzaro* to its film library last year. She argued that, although they help to bring films to a much wider audience, they are no substitute for watching films in theatres. She said: "I make films for the movie theatre, not for people's iPhones. Films are most beautiful to watch on a big screen. But more important than the size of the screen is the communal experience of watching films with a group of people that you don't know, of sharing an experience with strangers. I think that cinema's ability to bring people together in this way is incredibly powerful and we must make sure that we don't lose this."

The fifth edition of Qumra brought together more than 150 acclaimed filmmakers, industry professionals and experts to nurture 36 projects by first- and second-time filmmakers in various stages of development. The six-day event took place 15–20 March at Souq Waqif and the Museum of Islamic Art, and featured

Qumra Master Classes, Qumra Talks and screenings in the Qumra Masters and New Voices in Cinema series.

Supporting Qumra as Cultural Partners for 2019 were Qatar Museums, the Museum of Islamic Art and Souq Waqif, while the event was supported by FNAC. SONY, represented in Qatar by Fifty One East, was Official Electronics Partner; Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels was Official Hotel Partner; and ViRTUOCITY, the Middle East's biggest Gaming Hub, facilitated Qumra's VR exhibition.

Extending support as 'Friends of Qumra' are: Sarajevo Film Festival, the French Embassy in Qatar, L'Institut Francais du Qatar and Northwestern University in Qatar. Screen International once again comes on board as the Media Partner along with 106.3 FM Radio Olive & 91.7 FM Radio Suno.

For further information about the Doha Film Institute's other upcoming initiatives visit: www.dohafilminstitute.com.

-ENDS-

Note to Editors

About Qumra

Directors and Producers attached to thirty-six projects in development and post-production are selected to participate in the event. They will include a number of emerging filmmakers from Qatar, as well as recipients of funding from the Institute's Grants Programme. The robust programme will feature industry meetings designed to assist with propelling projects to their next stages of development, including master classes, work-in-progress screenings, bespoke matchmaking sessions and tailored workshops with industry experts. This creative exchange will take place alongside a programme of public screenings curated with input from the Qumra Masters.

The event is organised in three main sections: The **Qumra Master Classes** are daily sessions; each led by one of the Masters. The participating filmmakers have full access to these sessions, which are also open to accredited industry guests to attend in an observational capacity.

The **Qumra Meetings** are a series of one-on-one meetings, workshops and tailored mentoring sessions between representatives from the selected projects and seasoned industry experts.

The **Qumra Screenings** are open to the public and feature projects funded by the Institute through its grants and co-financing initiatives, as well as a series of films chosen by the Qumra Masters accompanied by Q&A sessions.

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

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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