
Grants Catalogue 2019

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

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Over the last nine years, the Doha Film Institute's Grants Programme has supported powerful stories and moving storytelling across a broad spectrum of issues and perspectives and has evolved into a key initiative for the next generation of filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond. The programme echoes our core mission to amplify important voices of our time and help filmmakers realise their storytelling aspirations, to develop and support world cinema while fostering cultural diversity.

Our regional film industry is shaped by brave new voices who can capture our stories through a cinematic lens that lends value and context to deliver our voices to the world. I am proud that the 2019 Grants cycle presented a record slate of 79 projects by first and second-time filmmakers from more than 30 countries. The diversity of this year's selection is incredible, and each project tells an important story that is specific to its local context but also universal.

We are overwhelmed by the programme's growing acclaim among promising filmmakers who entrust their creative vision to our funding initiatives. Covering feature, documentary, short film, and TV series, this year's programme represents powerful emerging voices from the MENA region, including Qatari filmmakers and the first featured project from Yemen. Two of the TV series grants projects are helmed by Qatari talent, highlighting the ever-growing talent pool within our country that is exploring evolving forms of creativity and new possibilities.

It gives me great pride to see women filmmakers from across the region emerge as creative leaders of a new wave of filmmaking, who craft compelling stories with global resonance. 38 of the chosen projects are by talented female directors, including Qatari nationals, whose creative prowess and dedication to the arts is indicative of the state of Arab cinema today.

The vast breadth of compelling stories presented within the 2019 Grants cycle is enriched by our international recipients from beyond the MENA region, with stories that foster a greater appreciation for the people and the world around us. We are delighted that 13 projects in the post-production stage helmed by international filmmakers have been chosen for the line-up, representing China, Afghanistan, Canada, Serbia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Switzerland, India, Romania, Italy, Ukraine, Argentina, and the Philippines, which I think is a testament to the strength of our Grants Programme.

To date, the Grants Programme has supported over 500 films from 70 countries, and our grantee alumni have captured global audiences with their compelling narratives and poignant storytelling techniques. We proudly look towards past and future grant recipients as an extension of DFI's everlasting commitment to the development of independent cinema and wish them all the very best in their endeavours to strengthen its footprint on the world stage.

Fatma Hassan Al Remeihi
CEO, Doha Film Institute

Doha Film Institute
Grants Team

Hanaa Issa, Director of Strategy and Development

Khalil Benkirane, Head of Grants

Meriem Mesraoua, Grants Senior Coordinator

Yassine Ouahrani, Grants Coordinator

Vanessa Paradis-Halajian, Grants Coordinator

Feature Narrative

'81

A Road to Damascus

A Son

Another Day in Baghdad

Behind Closed Doors

Dirty, Difficult, Dangerous

In a Dream You Saw a Way to Survive and You Were Full of Joy

It Comes by Night

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Lonely Rock

Mehdi

Mica

Motherhood

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Nezouh

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Omar La Fraise

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Queens

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Vanishing

The Winter Within

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Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Dawood Al-Anwari

Ali Al-Anssari

Directors / Screenwriters



Fahad Al-Kuwari

Mohamed Al-Ibrahim

Yasser Al-Naemi

Co-screenwriters



Abdulaziz Al-Malki

Ahmed Al Baker

Producers



Contact

Mohamed Al Ibrahim

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'81

Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Action, Sports, History, Based on a True Story, Epic

Based on the true story, coach Evaristo guides the underdog Qatari youth team to a historical display at the 1981 FIFA Youth World Championships in Australia.



When tasked by officials to pursue entry into the 1981 FIFA Youth World Championships in Australia, Evaristo finds himself in the position of building a team from scratch. After initial doubt, Evaristo's outlook changes once he starts scouting for talent on the dirt-covered streets of Doha. After handpicking a squad of misfits, they embark on a journey of various training camps. There, the team learns to adhere to Evaristo's method of the off-side trap and counterattack. The side qualifies and even prevails in the first round of the tournament, only to realize that they will play against the tournament favourites, Brazil and England. Through determination, skill, and strategy, Evaristo leads the Qatari team to an unprecedented final. They are defeated, but return as heroes, winning the hearts and minds of Qatari citizens and football fans around the world.

Director's Note

Qatar has a large pool of success stories, all of which exist in the collective unconscious, but have yet to be reimagined in an audio-visual format. This project is an attempt to shed light on one of these stories and arguably the most significant achievement in Arab football history. In 1981, it seemed as though the Middle East was crumbling around us—civil war in Lebanon, revolution in Iran, the assassination of Al Sadat in Egypt—we were in dire need of hope. These young players provided the Arab diaspora with the optimism it so desperately needed. Although the team lost the final match, they won the hearts and minds of fans around the world. Qatar is on the verge of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, now is the time to document this achievement, and bring it back to life through the cinematic medium. This story is a testament to the power of sports to bring people together and act as a global mission of diplomacy, peace, and hope.

Director's Biography

Ali Al-Anssari is a media graduate from Bangor University, North Wales. He began practicing Photography many years ago and has now made the transition to cinematography and directing. Ali directed 'I' in 2012 and 'Qarar' in 2014, and both have been invited to numerous film festivals, and were featured in the Cannes Film Festival's Short Film Corner.

Dawood Al-Anwari is a Graphic Design graduate from Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar. He began working on films as an assistant art director in 2010. Al-Anwari was a lead designer in Medinah in 2015-16 and an art director for Khameskom Falla in 2016. Other works include multiple short films and TVCs. Dawood currently works at the Doha Film Institute.

Company Profile

Katara Studios is the world's most technically equipped audio/audio-visual facility located in the burgeoning hub of the Middle East, Doha, Qatar. The company boasts three studios including a full orchestral room, as well as a world-class mastering facility, full video production and Dolby Atmos Feature Film Dubbing Theatre.

Development

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Meedo Taha

Director / Screenwriter



Marie Mouchel-Blaisot

Richard Magnien

Producers



A Road to Damascus

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Environmental, Politics, Social Issues, Thriller

When a reclusive Professor of Botany witnesses a political murder on the road between Beirut and Damascus, he goes on a secret hunt for the killer, who has trampled the only living thing he values—his dying acacia tree.



Gunshots ring out—a bus from Beirut to Damascus crashes. The only witness is a young botanist collecting branches along the road. The last victim dies in his arms with a final plea: “Feed the cat”. When it’s soon revealed that among the dead passengers was a former prime minister travelling unaccompanied, the botanist cowers deeper into his insulated life, terrified of getting involved. But those final words echo through his mind, keeping him up at night, leading him to discover an empty apartment, a starving cat, and a telescope aimed at his own bedroom window. As the country plunges into turmoil, he embarks on a quest for answers through a minefield of absurd clues: a victim whose murderer no one seems to be looking for, a deaf cat with hazel and blue eyes, a map of star constellations, a veiled woman in men’s shoes, and an acacia tree wavering between life and death. ‘A Road to Damascus’ is an existential thriller set in a country where family and politics are deeply intertwined, and where desire and fear share the same bed.

Contact

Meedo Taha

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Director's Note

‘A Road to Damascus’ tells the story of a Lebanese botany professor who at 35 years old is too young to have experienced the carving up of the Levant, yet old enough to have inherited its fragments. In his polarized society, he gets his hands dirty digging into the soil, while never involving himself in relationships beyond Nancy, his student-turned-lover. Then one fateful morning, he witnesses a tragedy that awakens his sleeping country, and he walks away. But in this faux thriller, loud moments give way to an intimate character study. A string of absurd clues like a blind cat and an empty apartment with a telescope aimed at the Professor’s own bedroom window, force the narcissist to become a detective. This is how I felt when I returned to Lebanon after years away and found a home haunted by a past that I had to confront to earn my place in its present. The fund will go towards further developing the script with the support of DFI, and towards shooting a proof-of-concept short film about the Professor in Beirut. Thank you for believing in ‘A Road to Damascus’ and in us.

Director's Biography

Meedo Taha is a Lebanese director and writer whose work questions identity outside predefined social or political groups. His screenplay ‘Other People’ received support from the Samuel Goldwyn Screenwriting Awards, Francis Coppola’s Screenplay Competition, and the Sundance Institute. His short film ‘The Incident’ screened worldwide, with awards from the Directors Guild of America, Phoenix Film Festival, and Lebanese Film Festival. ‘A Road to Damascus’ is based on his novel of the same title and has participated in Rawi Screenwriters Lab and DFI Producers Lab. Meedo earned a PhD in Architecture from the University of Tokyo and an MFA in Directing from UCLA.

Company Profile

MAT Productions is an independent French company which develops and produces French and international projects, feature films and creative documentaries. The company is managed by Richard Magnien and Marie Mouchel-Blaisot, who have over 20 years of experience in production and distribution, with several award-winning films in international festivals. In addition to ‘A Road to Damascus’ by Meedo Taha (in co-production with Lebanon), their current projects include ‘Fataria’ by Walid Tayaa (in co-production with Tunisia), ‘L’Agnello’ by Mario Piredda (in co-production with Italy), and ‘Bedridden’ by Byamba Sakhya (in co-production with Mongolia).

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Mehdi M. Barsaoui

Director / Screenwriter



Habib Attia

Producer



A Son

Tunisia, France, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, French

Runtime: 96 mins

Genre: Drama, Identity, Psychological, Social Issues, Thriller

Tunisia—Summer of 2011. A modern and happy family from a privileged background sees their car ambushed by an armed group. It doesn't take long for some buried truths to resurface.



Tunisia, Summer 2011. Fares, Meriem, and their 10-year-old son Aziz are a modern and happy Tunisian family coming from a privileged background and cut off from the reality of a Tunisia still flickering, eight months after the fall of the Ben Ali regime. Enjoying a few days in the south of the country, they are victims of a dramatic incident that will change the course of their lives. It doesn't take long for some long-buried truths to resurface, shaking the balance and harmony of this family that will never be the same again...

Director's Note

I never had a father. Not that he is dead, but he just decided to run away from his responsibilities. That's why I want to make this film. I'm inventing the father I never had. I live in a rather macho patriarchal society, built on well-entrenched Arab-Muslim values and where the father is sacred. Very often, Tunisian society reduces fatherhood to a blood relationship, a patronymic or a genetic sequence. What would happen if we learned that our son does not have our genes? 'A Son' is not just a movie about paternity, it is also a movie about love conflicts in times of crisis, a film on those moments when life changes dramatically—where truths break out. My intention is to take my characters on an initiatory voyage that comes across diverse social classes, habits and customs and paradoxes of a Tunisian society that wants to liberate itself but remains hostage to its contradictions. A sort of journey towards truth, redemption and search for oneself. A journey about forgiveness, acceptance and second chances.

Director's Biography

Mehdi M. Barsaoui is a graduate of the Higher Institute of Multimedia Arts in Tunis. He also has a university degree in Film Direction from DAMS in Bologna, Italy. He directed four short-features, which were selected and multi-awarded in many international film festivals. His latest short 'We're Just Fine Like This' won the Golden Muhr for best film at Dubai International Film Festival 2016. Mehdi also worked on several international feature-films as an AD and editor. 'A Son' is his first feature fiction film.

Company Profile

Since 1983, CINETELEFILMS has been one of the leading production companies in Tunisia and the Arab world by producing some of the biggest blockbusters in Tunisian and Arab cinema such as 'Man of Ashes', 'Silence of the Palace', and 'Halfaouine'. Habib Attia, the company's managing director since 2007, produces narrative and documentary films dealing primarily with contemporary sociocultural issues. His latest ventures as producer include 'We Could Be Heroes' (2018) premiered in HOTDOCS winning the Best International Documentary award, 'Beauty and The Dogs' (2017) that premiered in Cannes Un Certain Regard official selection winning the Best Sound Creation award, 'Writing on Snow' (2017) opening film in Carthage Film Festival, 'Zaineb Hates the Snow' (2016), which premiered in Locarno and won Golden Tanit in Carthage Film Festival, and 'Challat of Tunis' (2014), which opened the Acid Programme in Cannes Film Festival, and won the Best First Film award in FIFF Namur.

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Maysoon Pachachi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Irada Al Jabbouri

Co-screenwriter



**Patrice Nezan, Laurent Versini,
Talal Al Muhanna, Alexander Ris**
Producers



Contact

Patrice Nezan

Les Contes Modernes

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Another Day in Baghdad

Iraq, UK, France, Germany, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 110 mins

Genre: Drama, Identity, Social Issues, War

Sara and her neighbours open to us a door to their everyday lives. In a middle-class district of Baghdad, marked by physical and moral mutilations, saddened by the war, and in front of the extreme ambient violence, each tries to find the thread of their existence.



Sara and her neighbours open to us a door to their everyday lives. In a middle-class district of Baghdad, marked by physical and moral mutilations, saddened by the war, and in front of the extreme ambient violence, each tries to find the thread of their existence.

Director's Note

Iraqis have lived through decades of dictatorship, war and sanctions and since the invasion of 2003, ongoing extreme daily violence and chaos. Their lives are ruptured and full of loss, which there has been no breathing space to process and repair. This is the emotional context in which people get on with their daily lives in a situation where the unthinkable has become the norm. The powerful external circumstances affecting everyone, create a sense that you are living a story, at the same time individual / personal, and collective. This film reflects this experience and is like a Persian miniature, where in every corner of the picture space, individual stories with their own trajectories are being lived simultaneously - individual, but connected, and together, describing a collective drama. The way you tell the story is part of the story. In this film, the light on a palm frond or the sound of a dove in the afternoon is in counterpoint to the traffic jams, checkpoints, and blood on the streets. People live between these two poles and I want to create small moments of lyricism. There is also quite a lot of humour in the film - another kind of resistance.

Director's Biography

Maysoon Pachachi is a London-based filmmaker of Iraqi origin. She was educated in Iraq, the USA and the UK. She studied Philosophy at University College London (BA Hons) and then filmmaking at the London Film School. She was for many years a documentary and drama film editor in the UK, and has worked since 1994 as an independent documentary film director, mainly making films in, and about, the Middle East. Maysoon has also taught film directing and editing in Britain and Palestine (in Jerusalem, Gaza and at Birzeit University). In 2004, with her colleague, Iraqi filmmaker, Kasim Abid, she co-founded the Independent Film & Television College, a free-of-charge film-training centre in Baghdad, whose students have now produced 17 short documentary films, shown at festivals and screenings internationally and within Iraq at a travelling festival. 'Another Day in Baghdad' is her first feature film.

Company Profile

Les Contes Modernes ("The Modern Tales"), aims at taking part in intellectual debates within our contemporary societies by any means necessary (fiction, animation, creative documentary and VR). Les Contes Modernes federates authors and artists of various horizons (film directors, visual artists, choreographers, graphic novelists, philosophers, game-designers etc.) who question the world surrounding us in all its complexity and who put the aesthetic search at the heart of their creations. Our artistic process in favour of body movement more than dialogues is an attempt to draw a universal language, to step across the borders.

Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Hend Fakhroo

Director / Screenwriter



Justin Kramer

Producer



Behind Closed Doors

Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Women's Issues, Psychology, Social Issues

Six-year-old Leila wakes up one day and finds her mother gone with only her father to take care of her. After months of trying, the small family finally settles into an emotional equilibrium, only to have their mother suddenly return.



Qatar. Six-year-old Leila wakes up one morning and finds out that her mother, Sara, is gone. Leila becomes completely dependent on her father, Ali, especially for emotional support. Days turn into weeks, and Ali cannot take care of Leila by himself. He becomes compelled to hire Rosa as a live-in caretaker for Leila. Leila and Rosa quickly forge a strong bond, and the three of them fall into a comfortable routine, until one day Ali announces that his wife is coming back. When Sara left, she checked herself into a mental rehabilitation centre following a suicide attempt. Her return will threaten the well-being of the entire family, including herself.

Contact

Hend Fakhroo

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Justin Kramer

The Film House

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Director's Note

This film takes an intimate look at a family from three different female points of view, all centring around the father figure. It's important for me to show how different perceptions can affect a person's judgement, especially within an abusive marriage. The idea of making a film, and opening a discussion, about emotional and physical abuse is taboo in most of the world, let alone in Arab countries. It's time we took a closer look at our immediate surroundings.

Director's Biography

Hend Fakhroo is a Qatari writer and director. Hend graduated with honours in 2005 from St Edward's University in Austin, Texas. She directed her first short 'His Name' in 2012 and her second 'The Waiting Room' in 2016. Both have done well on the festival circuit. Hend has been developing her first feature, 'Behind Closed Doors', for three years and has participated in the Hezayah writing lab with screen doctor Antoine LeBos.

Company Profile

Made up of talented, experienced and creative storytellers, producers, documentarians, animators, photographers and filmmakers, The Film House is an award-winning Doha-based film, video, and multi-media production company unlike any other in the region. With a wealth of local knowledge and with Qatar's community in mind, the company is primed to foster local talent and to redefine visual storytelling in the region. The Film House is home for high-calibre international and local productions.

Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2019

Wissam Charaf

Director / Screenwriter



Mariette Desert

Co-screenwriter

Charlotte Vincent, Pierre Sarraf

Producers



Contact

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Dirty, Difficult, Dangerous

Lebanon, France, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Fantasy

Ahmed, a Syrian refugee, hopes to find love with Mehdiya, an Ethiopian maid—but their love seems impossible in Beirut.



Roaming the streets of Beirut searching for metal objects to be recycled, Ahmed, a Syrian refugee with hundreds of shrapnel wounds in his body, thought he'd find love with Mehdiya, an Ethiopian domestic. But in this city, such a story seems almost impossible. Mehdiya is having a hard time. Old Ibrahim, her employer who she looks after, is going insane. His wife, Leila, can no longer cope and daily life in the house becomes a ridiculously absurd dialogue of the deaf. And when Leila's son, Fadi, arrives to visit his parents, things get even worse. Mehdiya decides to run away with Ahmed, and so begins an adventure that will take Ahmed and Mehdiya to the Eastern border where Ahmed's family has taken refuge. But meanwhile, Ahmed's right arm slowly turns black, hard and metallic.

Director's Note

In today's Lebanon, two fallen angels cross paths, only to have to face danger and racism. In this melodrama of cruelty, comedy and tenderness, we offer an intimate vision of a society, where racism against foreign domestic workers has become a norm at the time when Syrian refugees have arrived en masse. This film is about sentimental refugees. Impossible love, everyday cruelty, remaining human in a de-humanizing system are the main issues we wish to address. What if those two "songs" sung by Mehdiya the Ethiopian maid and Ahmed the Syrian refugee as they roam the streets of Beirut joined together, fell in love? Ahmed and Mehdiya bear the weight of the world on their shoulders. Ahmed carries metallic objects, while Mehdiya has to carry Ibrahim through his promenades. But this dramatic tone is often diffused by incongruous, sometimes even slightly fantastic situations. We wanted to convey the fantasy of such an encounter. The protagonist's struggle to preserve their relationship and to exist as "Ahmed and Mehdiya" as opposed to "the housemaid" and "the refugee". In this story, we wish to avoid playing only on empathy. Preserving one's humanity against all the odds is where we want to take our heroes in order for them to go further in their path.

Director's Biography

Wissam Charaf is a Lebanese/French director. From 2004 to 2018, he directed the shorts films 'Hizz Ya Wizz' (2004), 'An Army of Ants' (2007), 'After' (2016) and 'Unforgettable Memory of a Friend' (2018), selected in various film festivals such as Locarno, Rotterdam, and Clermont-Ferrand. In 2012, he directed his first documentary 'It's all in Lebanon' (2014), awarded by the Bronze Tanit for Best Documentary at Carthage Film Festival. In 2016, he directed his first feature film 'Heaven Sent' (2016), selected by ACID in Cannes which won, among others, the Grand prize at Tübingen Film festival.

Company Profile

Over the past few years, Aurora Films, based in Paris, France, has specialized in French and international co-productions and has produced about 50 films including shorts, documentaries and feature films. Out of the seven feature films produced, five were selected at Cannes. Recent films include 'Exotica, Erotica, Etc.' by Evangelia Kranioti, which premiered in the Forum Section of Berlin Film Festival 2015, 'Heaven Sent' ('Tombé du ciel') by Wissam Charaf selected by ACID in Cannes 2016 as well as 'Diamond Island' by Davy Chou, which was awarded the Prix SACD 2016 at the Critic's Week in Cannes 2016.

Development
Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2019

Remi Itani
Director /Screenwriter



Cait Lyn Adamson
Producer



In a Dream You Saw a Way to Survive and You Were Full of Joy

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Based on a True Story, Drama, Politics, Social Issues, Tradition, Women's Issues

Layal, a young Lebanese girl, finds the gap between her daily life and internal state is growing when she discovers that she's pregnant.



Layal, a young Lebanese girl, finds the gap between her daily life and internal state is growing when she discovers that she's pregnant. Increasingly distancing herself from the world, her friend's help is of little use, and they both continue their way of life as devout Muslims, and carefree young women. Layal's emotional state fluctuates as she falls in and out of love, experiences maternal instincts and let's go of them. Her isolation becomes increasingly pronounced, numbing her sense of urgency to act upon the situation.

Contact
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Director's Note

I established the groundwork of this film around six years ago, but I had my doubts about exploring a personal experience that might seem to be an exception rather than the norm. Eight years later, I witness a new generation going through the same cycle of secrets, fear and denial; this time, I am a witness with the right distance and maturity. Nearly a decade passed, and these stories still lurk in the shadows. 'In a dream you saw a way to survive, and you were full of joy' explores what's dominated in a Beirut culture and dominates it. The film normalizes the sexual experience for a woman, so that we are able to see beyond the act itself and allows us to examine women's positions in society and the oppressive forces acting upon them.

Director's Biography

Remi Itani is a Lebanese film director and producer. Graduate of the London Film School MA Filmmaking with distinction, Remi started her career as a documentary director for Al Jazeera Documentary Channel. She has participated in numerous writing and directing workshops, among them a filmmaking workshop with Werner Herzog in Cuba. Her work has been considered to more than twenty international film festivals such as IDFA Documentary Film Festival and the Rotterdam International Film Festival. Remi's work has been featured on BBC Arabic, Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera Documentary Channel.

Company Profile

Stray Films is a UK registered and based production company collaborating with a wide pool of professionals in bringing socially engaging films to broad audiences. Stray Films is committed to find and develop new ways to make films supporting writer-directors in their pursuit to convey something deep and urgent. We collaborate with directors in constructing specific, individual cinematic languages that stem from the awareness of their cultural, social and political contexts.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Alyx Ayn Arumpac

Director / Screenwriter



Armi Rae Cacanindin

Producer



It Comes by Night

Philippines, France, Norway, Qatar / Tagalog

Runtime: 70 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Politics, Social Issues

'It Comes by Night' follows the lives of people whose fates entwine during the extrajudicial killings in Manila. Shot over the course of two years, the film documents the policies set into motion by Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte against suspected drug peddlers, users, and small-time criminals.



When men turn up dead, the old folks whisper of the “aswang”—a shapeshifting beast from folklore. In Manila, bodies pile up, and lives entwine as the state wages a brutal war against drug and crime.

Director's Note

When I started this film in mid-2016, there were 5000 people killed in Duterte's war against drugs. Now the number is almost at 30,000 and shows no signs of stopping. The war against drugs is ultimately a zealous autocrat's war against the urban poor who catapulted him into power. How a people with a tradition of democratic values elected a provincial mayor to the highest post of the land on promises of restoring peace and order in the capital by—among others—dumping the bodies of “drug pushers and do nothings in Manila Bay and fattening the fish there” gives a sobering context into which we can examine our society. The entire process also brings forward many undeniable ethical issues. How does one show death, despair, and violence without falling into the trap of poverty porn and obscenity? How does one ask difficult questions to individuals who have suffered so much? I have often heard that creating the documentary changes the filmmaker forever. I could never have imagined how much. Manila is my home, and everyone I love is here. And yet, it feels like the city is unravelling itself to me only now.

Director's Biography

Alyx Ayn Arumpac is a Filipina documentary filmmaker. She studied under the Docnomads Master Course in Europe, the University of the Philippines, and attended the Berlinale Doc Station, Talents Tokyo, Docs by the Sea, and IDFAcademy. Her documentaries have screened in Clermont-Ferrand, Winterthur, Zurich Film Festival, Jihlava, Kasseler Dokfest, Uppsala, doclisboa, Timishort, Budapest, and more. She directs and produces documentaries for one of the top TV networks in Manila. Her latest project, 'Aswang', is the first Filipino documentary to receive the Aide aux Cinemas du Monde, and is a recipient of the IDFA Bertha Classic and Europe co-production grants.

Company Profile

Cinematografica Films is a Philippine-based production company founded in 2005 by leading Filipino producers Arleen Cuevas, Armi Rae Cacanindin and Raya Martin—the first and only Filipino thus far at the Cannes Cinefondation Residency. It aims to craft innovative local stories with emerging and established voices, while also promoting fresh new ways of seeing them at home and abroad. Cinematografica is committed to exploring different visions from all over the world. It specializes in international co-productions with several productions/co-productions made from the past ten years, premiering in A-list festivals such as Cannes, Toronto, Locarno, and Rotterdam.

Contact

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Cinematografica Films

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Fernando Martinez Sosa

Director / Screenwriter



Pablo Arellano

Co-screenwriter / Producer



Liborio

Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Qatar / Spanish / 2020

Runtime: 97 mins

Genre: Drama, Social issues

Liborio is a Dominican peasant who disappears in a hurricane and returns as a prophet, understanding that the best way to help the people is to keep them together. He cures the sick and offers food for the body and soul. His community grows until something changes—the country is invaded by the US Marines.



Liborio is a peasant who gets lost in a hurricane and takes shelter in a cave. When his township considers him dead, he is found by his son. Awaken, Liborio says he's been given a mission: to bring the good and take away the evil. He begins to cure the sick, to speak the truth and teach by example. People begin to congregate by his side. He moves to the mountains to have total freedom and develop his dream of an independent community. Local authorities offer him weapons in exchange for his loyalty to side with them in the case of political unrest. The US Marines invade the country and want to disarm and disband the community. Liborio wants to avoid a confrontation but knows they can't run forever.

Contact

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Director's Note

Liborio is a question. An excuse to approach a magical place and the people who inhabit it, and an attempt to preserve some fragments of their fragile way of life. Liborio is also a peculiar character in our history. A person that some people see as a Messiah, but others see as a symbol of our cultural backwardness. I don't try to understand or judge their faith, but to show the sincerity of how they live it. That's why all the songs and rituals are made by real followers of the historic Liborio. The movie is structured in seven episodes, each one narrated by a different character that is related to the central one. It is an exploration of the oceanic feeling, that makes us feel we are part of something bigger than ourselves and allows us to see the community as a place of empathy and tolerance. To me, that's Liborio's greatest teaching.

Director's Biography

Fernando (Nino) Martinez

Sosa, graduated as a film editor from the EICTV of San Antonio de Los Baños Cuba, later assuming the coordination of the editing department of the school. Then, he moved to Spain where he began a career as an editor working in several awarded and nominated feature films and documentaries such as—'The Hours of the Day', 'Solitary Fragments', and 'Me Too'. He has also taught classes, lectures and conferences in several film schools and art centres. As a director, he approached the Dominican Immigration to the USA in his documentary 'Nena's Window'. 'Liborio' is his first feature film.

Company Profile

Balsie Guanabana Macuto is focused on projects that deal with social issues with an artistic sensibility. The company aims to produce high-quality auteur films, while maintaining the goal of reaching a general interest.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Alejandro Telémaco Tarraf

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Lucas Distéfano

Co-screenwriter



Alberto Balazs

Producer



Contact

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Lonely Rock

Argentina, Mexico, UK, Qatar / Spanish / 2020

Runtime: 82 mins

Genre: Docufiction, Drama, Identity, Tradition

Deep inside the Argentinian highlands in a small community at an altitude of 4,000 metres, a native llama herder is following the traces of an invisible puma who is killing his livestock. Through his search, a mystical exchange is revealed between him, his ancestors and the changing form of the puma.



Fidel is a fifty-year-old llama herder living in a sparsely populated community in the Argentinian highlands. After a recent increase in puma attacks on his livestock, he sets out into the night in search of the wild animal. Fidel decides to ask the community shaman for a reading, and through the sacred coca leaves he receives the words of the puma; that he has changed his skin and is no longer in this form, that the puma lives in the memory and in the fire. After finding yet another young llama killed on the hillside, Fidel encounters a procession of people carrying a man without a name. They ask him to help bring this anonymous figure to “his departure” higher up in the mountains where a fire burns at the edge of a cliff. As the fire illuminates the night sky, an alchemy of past, present and future unravels.

Director's Note

I was born as my grandfather died. I inherited his first name as my second name. For many years I have had the feeling of carrying some kind of lost heritage. Being Argentinian with Arab ancestry, I recognize how my background is part of such a diverse tapestry of cultures. Our natives form part of the oldest civilizations on earth. My interest lies in extracting this ancient voice and its offering to the current socio-political climate. I bring my viewfinder to ‘El Condor’. A place where civilization, as we know it in the Western world, has not yet emerged. A place where electricity just arrived, and the way of life is closer to that of our ancestors. ‘Piedra Sola’ is a film inspired by universal archetypes and the Andean Cosmovision, where the past is thought to be ahead and the future behind. The film’s edit embodies this cyclical alchemy of future, present and past, and the wider significance of Pachamama meaning ‘time’ and ‘universe’. Through working with non-actors and local conflicts, my interest lies in the diffusion between documentary and fiction, dream and reality; A narration that encapsulates the essence of human longing—a portrait of man and his persistent communion with nature.

Director's Biography

Alejandro Telémaco Tarraf is an Argentine filmmaker. He studied cinema at Buenos Aires University and cinematography at SICA. His work has screened at international film festivals including Rotterdam, BAFICI, Busan, Montreal, and La Habana. In 2014, he was selected for the 9th Buenos Aires Talents programmed by Berlinale Film Festival, and in 2015 he was selected as an audiovisual artist as part of Biennale of Young Artists, Buenos Aires.

Company Profile

Founded in 2008, Viento Cine is a film production company based in Buenos Aires, Madrid and London. The producers formed as a collective to share a vision, capturing social and cultural themes through working between the boundaries of documentary and fiction in Argentina, showcasing the range of diverse identities and heritage of the region. Over the years, they have gained international recognition at film festivals including Rotterdam, Montreal, Bafici, Busan, Visions Du Reel, Zinebi, Tampere and La Habana amongst others.

Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Yassine Qnia

Director / Screenwriter



Benjamin Delaroche

Producer



Mehdi

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Comedy, Drama

Mehdi, 30, is struggling to make his relationship with Sarah work. But the only thing he has to offer at the moment—is to ask her to come back to his mother’s place.



Mehdi, Vessale and M'Barek are three thugs based in Aubervilliers. Mehdi, 30, lives alone with his mother since his former girlfriend Sarah and their son, Ilyès, left. Mehdi would like them to come back, but he doesn't dare to talk to Sarah. M'Barek would like Mehdi to partner with him to buy a shop and walk the line. Mehdi pretends he's not interested. In fact, he has spent his money to buy a house in Morocco for his mother, but she wants to stay in Aubervilliers. The three thugs prepare their next heist, the safe of an import-export warehouse. It goes wrong, and M'Barek turns himself into the police to save his friends. Vessale vanishes and Mehdi tries to win back Sarah's heart. He takes care of their son, but the only thing he has to offer is to ask them to come back to his mother's place.

Director's Note

I still live in Aubervilliers in the neighbourhood where I've grown up. I've seen the rise and the fall of friends who decided to walk the path of petty crime. I used to consider them as lions. Now I realise how naive they were as I see where their mistakes have brought them. Odd as it seems though, their failures have made them look more human, and this is precisely this dignified humanity that I want to show in this fiction, with all its contradictions. Lalou could be one of those friends. Like them, he's struggling to realise that his world is like a house of cards that is about to plummet. His burglaries do not pay that much anymore. Even his friends M'Barek and Vessale know it and start to think about the future. Lalou, who still lives with his mother, could have a future: He has Sarah and their son Ilyès. But willy nilly Lalou has been raised in a men's world where there is little room for discussions about gender relations. His ego, his pride and his inability to change these views prevent him from opening his eyes and stop denying the obvious: he loves Sarah.

Director's Biography

Yassine Qnia is a self-educated Franco-Moroccan screenwriter and director. In 2011, he shot his first short film 'Fais Croquer' ('Don't be Tight') which was invited to many film festivals in France and abroad. Yassine shot two more short films, 'Molii' (2013) and 'F430' (2017), that won awards at several film festivals. Yassine still lives in the area of Aubervilliers (France) where he develops his film projects and works as a topographer on construction works.

Company Profile

Why Not Productions was founded in Paris (France) in 1990 by Pascal Caucheteux and Grégoire Sorlat and has so far produced over 100 feature films. Films directed by Arnaud Desplechin, Xavier Beauvois, Bruno Podalydès, Jacques Audiard, Ken Loach, Cristian Mungiu or Andrei Zviaguintsev, which were invited to many film festivals around the world where they won several awards. Why Not Productions keeps on looking for new screenwriters and directors, keen to discover promising young filmmakers like Yassine Qnia.

Contact

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Why Not Productions

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Ismaël Ferroukhi

Director / Screenwriter



Lamia Chraïbi, Denis Carot

Producers



Contact

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La Prod

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Mica

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 110 mins

Genre: Drama, Immigration, Social Issues

Born and raised in a slum in Meknes, Mica finds himself propelled into the metropolitan world to be an errand boy in Casablanca. Sophia, an ex-tennis champion, notices his will to fight his destiny, and takes him under her wing.



12-year-old Saïd (Mica) sells grocery bags in souks. He lives with his mother and ailing father in a slum near Meknes. One day, Hajj Kadour comes to take Mica to be an errand boy for the family he works for. This job would be an opportunity to help Mica's family, to whom he would send his meagre salary. After a while, Mica comes back to visit his hometown, learning that his childhood friend migrated to Marseille, he decides that he too wants to leave Morocco. Mr. Slimani, Mica's boss, hires Sophia, an ex-tennis champion, to make a winner out of his son, Omar. However, Sophia ends up noticing Mica, and takes him under her wing. Hajj Kaddour condemns it, but the little boy sees it as an opportunity to go to Europe. In his first tournament, Mica gets into a fight and is fired from the tennis club. Jobless and homeless, Mica roams around Casablanca for a few days, too embarrassed to go back to his family. At some point, he finds Sophia, who helps him once again. Both of them grow closer, but although she manages to convince him to pick up his training, Mica has one obsession—migration.

Director's Note

By sketching the portrait of a young, brave and endearing character, I wish to make 'Mica' a film that is both poetic and full of hope, whilst still grounded in reality. Despite the obstacles that Mica faces, I want to show that one does not need to flee their country to hope for a better life. Two characters are essential for Mica to realize that. With no father of his own, Mica finds two father figures in Sophia and Hajj Kaddour. They both pass on to him, in their own way, their knowledge and their view of the world, one being modern and the other more traditional. In addition to that, it is also thanks to tennis that Mica will be able to change his world. Although it is clear that the stakes for Mica are far greater than that of sport, the tennis community seems to me an ideal backdrop to show the clash between the different social classes that make up Moroccan society. In order for this journey to be credible, it will be essential to ensure that the sports scenes are precise and realistic. Creating balls digitally would increase the scenes' credibility by showing the actors hitting the ball professionally and with more ease. Finally, I want to make 'Mica' a human and universal film that targets an audience of all ages. I want it to be a family film that retells a story of apprenticeship through a story that is dear to me.

Director's Biography

Ismael Ferroukhi is a French-Moroccan film director and screenwriter. Born in Kenitra in 1962, Ferroukhi migrated to France in his youth and grew up in a small city in the south. He gained exposure in 1992 with his short film 'L'Exposé', which won two prizes (Kodak and prize for the best short film) at Cannes Film Festival. His directorial debut, 'Le Grand Voyage', won the Lion of the Future for a First Film at Venice Film Festival in 2004. His last film 'Free Men' was screened at Cannes Film Festival in 2011.

Company Profile

La Prod develops fiction in its broadest sense by combining imagination and rigour without compromise or self-censorship. La Prod accompanies directors in the creative process, including Hicham Lasri, Narjiss Nejjar, Ismail Ferroukhi, and Mohcine Besri. The company co-produced Oliver Laxe's 'Mimosas' (Grand Prize of the Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016) as well as Balint Kenyeres' 'Tegnap/Hier' and has produced various feature film projects and television programs.

Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Meryam Joobeur

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Annick Blanc, Nadim Cheikrouha

Maria Gracia Turgeon,

Sarra Ben Hassen

Producers



Motherhood

Canada, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Psychological, Social Issues, Thriller, Women's Issues

Salha, a Tunisian mother, is blindly protective of her son Malek when he returns home from Syria with a mysterious young wife in tow. When men from the community start vanishing, Salha slowly realizes Malek is connected to the disappearances, and the bond between mother and child is tested.



Salha, the matriarch of a farming family in the remote north of Tunisia, is overjoyed when her son Malek returns home from Syria with a mysterious young wife in tow. She is willing to do anything to protect them and believes everything that Malek tells her of his experience in Syria. However, when men from the community start vanishing, Salha's fragile world begins to shatter. 'Motherhood' is an exploration of the limits of maternal love and how guilt can haunt the human spirit.

Director's Note

'Motherhood' mixes elements of social drama, psychological horror and magical realism to explore the complex impact that the rise of ISIS has had on Tunisian society. 'Motherhood' addresses this social issue through an intimate lens of one family, through the eyes of the mother Salha as she is faced with the return of her son from Syria. Salha is forced to face the limits of her maternal love as she witnesses the ramifications that her son's return has on her family and the entire community. The film is an exploration of communal responsibility, the difficulty of communication and the devastating impact of guilt on the human spirit.

Director's Biography

Meryam Joobeur is a Montréal based Tunisian filmmaker and co-founder of the production company 'Instinct Bleu.' Her short films 'Gods, Weeds and Revolutions' (2013) and 'Born in the Maelstrom' (2017) starring Sasha Lane screened in dozens of national and international festivals. Her recent short 'Brotherhood' (2018) recently premiered at TIFF where it won Best Canadian Short. She is currently developing two feature films including 'Motherhood,' the feature adaptation of 'Brotherhood'. She is an alumni of TIFF talent lab, Rawi Screenwriters Lab and Berlinale Talent Lab.

Company Profile

Founded in 2010, Midi La Nuit's love of innovative storytelling and striking visuals has led the company to produce cutting edge films. The company fostered films such as 'Pre-Drink' (Best Canadian Short TIFF 2017), 'How Tommy Lemenchick Became A Grade 7 Legend' by Bastien Alexandre (Tribeca 2018), 'Fauve' by Jérémy Comte (Oscar nominee, Sundance Special Jury Award 2018, Telluride 2018), 'The Color of Your Lips' by Annick Blanc (Canadian screen Awards 2019), 'Brotherhood' by Meryam Joobeur (Best Canadian Short TIFF 2018, Sundance 2018) 'Nowhere Elsewhere' (8 international prizes: Palm Spring, Hong Kong, Créteil, VIS 2011), and 'Plain and Simple' by Raphaël Ouellet (Grand prize FNC 2016).

Contact

Maria Gracia Turgeon

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Bahman Tavooosi

Director / Screenwriter



Wendy Donnan, Gisela Savdie,

Andrea Gutierrez

Producers



The Names of the Flowers

Canada, USA, Bolivia, Qatar / Aymara, Spanish / 2019

Runtime: 80 mins

Genre: History, Social Issues

As Bolivia stages the 50th anniversary of the “Great Che Guevara”, Julia, an old countryside teacher, is invited to share her historical story with the world—passing a bowl of soup to the captured guerrilla in her classroom, while he recited a poem about flowers to her hours before his death.



As Bolivia stages the 50th anniversary of the death of the “Great Che Guevara”, Julia an old countryside teacher is invited to share her historical story with the world—passing a bowl of peanut soup to the captured guerrilla in her classroom while he recited a poem about flowers to her hours before his death. The invitation is cancelled soon after, as other women step forward with the same “soup and flower” story.

Director's Biography

Bahman Tavooosi began his career as a journalist and filmmaker at the age of 18 in the capital city of Tehran. After making a few short films, Tavooosi moved to Canada where he directed the celebrated feature documentary ‘Dress Rehearsal for an Execution’. Aside from being broadcast on TV channels such as BBC, CBC, VOA, the film received nominations and awards from more than 50 film festivals among them Hot Docs, RIDM and Hot Springs. In 2014 Tavooosi founded Peacock Film Production through which he collaborated in film productions featuring at TIFF, Locarno and New York Film Festival.

Company Profile

La Gacela Ciega is a Florida based film production company founded in 2017. The company has thus far completed production of the short film ‘Mani Cura’ which has participated in international film festivals, among them Le Marché du Film of Cannes, and ‘Los Nombres de Las Flores’, the debut fiction film of Iranian Canadian director Bahman Tavooosi. The company has a miniseries and a feature documentary film under development currently, to be produced in late 2019.

Contact

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Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Soudade Kaadan

Director / Screenwriter



Nezouh

Syria, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Children, Coming-of-Age, Immigration, War, Women's Issues

A bomb falls on Zeina's house opening for her a window to a new life.



During the Syrian conflict in Damascus, a missile destroys the ceiling of Zeina's house. She is 12 years old, and for the first time, she is sleeping under the stars. She had previously been forbidden even to open a window. For the first time, she sees the outside world and makes friends with Amer, the boy next door. But Zeina feels guilty about her short-lived happiness when she sees her father, Mutaz, burst into tears at the sight of the destruction to his house and life. He hangs a bedsheet on every falling wall until her house looks like a grotesque tent. When the violence in Damascus escalates, Amer's family decides to leave. But Zeina's father refuses to become a refugee and tries everything to stop his family from leaving his home/improvised tent. The women in the family, though, have nothing more to lose and join the others who are fleeing. Zeina soon discovers that a window is now opening up to a new life for her.

Contact

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Director's Note

It was only after the bombing started in our neighbourhood in Damascus that I left the house with my sister. Damascene society was really closed even in liberated families. Women were allowed to travel, work, study, everything but to live alone. With the new wave of displacement, it's becoming normal for the first time to see young Damascene women living alone and separating from their families. Many of my friends started to make decisions they would never dare to make before. Now, sadly, that there is no more society and its structure and priorities have changed, something new happened. In the middle of war, chaos and tragedy, there is always some light and some freedom. Media is unable to notice this change since the stories of armed men with religious flags are more captivating than stories of women opening the house door in wartime. "Nezouh" in Arabic is the displacement of soul and people; it is the displacement of spirits and bodies in Syria. And with displacement, there is definitely change. 'Nezouh' tries to talk about this inevitable invasion of light in the middle of this chaos. It is maybe also about the displacement of darkness.

Director's Biography

Soudade Kaadan is a Syrian director, born in France. She studied theatre criticism in the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Syria and filmmaking in Saint Joseph University (IESAV) Lebanon. Her first feature fiction film 'The Day I Lost My Shadow' was awarded the Lion of the Future Award for Best Debut Film at Venice Film Festival 2018 and has been screened in several festivals including TIFF, BFI, Busan and IFFR. Her recent short film 'Aziza' won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize in 2019. Currently, she is working on her second feature film 'Nezouh' selected and awarded at Atelier de Cannes 2019.

Company Profile

Kaf Production is a Syrian production house, based in Lebanon, and founded in late 2008 by Amira Kaadan and Soudade Kaadan. The Company was crafted from the sisterhood and friendship of both founders. Kaf produced several award-winning documentaries and their first feature fiction film 'The Day I Lost my Shadow' won the Lion of the Future for Best Debut Film at Venice Film Festival 2018. Kaf's latest production, 'Aziza', won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2019.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Tatiana Huezo

Director / Screenwriter



Nicolás Celis, Jim Stark

Producers



Noche De Fuego

Mexico, Germany, Brazil, Qatar / Spanish / 2020

Runtime: 102 mins

Genre: Drama, Coming-of-Age

Life in a war-torn town, seen through the eyes of three young girls on the path to adolescence.



In a mountain town, where corn and poppies grow, the girls sport boyish haircuts and have hiding places underground to escape the threat of being stolen. Ana and her two best friends grow up together, affirming the bonds of their friendship and discovering what it means to be a woman in a rural town marked by violence. Their mothers train them to flee death, to escape those who turn them into slaves or ghosts. They create their own impenetrable universe, but one day, one of the girls doesn't make it to her hiding place in time.

Director's Note

My need to tell this story was influenced by the fact that I am the mother of a child who is growing and beginning to experience the painful parts of life. This stage of life, along with the violence in Mexico, informed the world I created in 'Noche de Fuego'. The project presented a valuable opportunity to develop these themes while exploring my own reality. In Jennifer Clement's novel, I found that the characters became perfect repositories for my personal search. The story is set in a rural area marked by poppy cultivation. The ambiguous presence of narco-traffickers and armed forces inflicts a constant psychological assault on the community. In this context, the feminine condition is more exposed to brutality. 'Noche de Fuego' is a story that invokes the resistance of children, of their magic and honest gaze in the face of a violent reality.

Director's Biography

Mexican-Salvadoran filmmaker **Tatiana Huezo** graduated from Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica and has a Masters' Degree in Documental de Creación from the Universidad Pompeu Fabra. She gained an international reputation with her first feature documentary, 'The Tiniest Place' (2011). Her second documentary, 'Tempestad' (2016) premiered at the 66th Berlinale in the Forum Section and went on to participate in 100 festivals. It was also the Mexican entry for the Oscars and Goya awards in 2017, later receiving the nomination at the Goya Awards for best Iberoamerican film. Currently, she is in post-production on 'Noche de Fuego', her first fiction film.

Company Profile

Based in Mexico City, Pimienta Films was founded in 2008 by brothers Nicolás and Sebastián Celis as an independent production company. Its primary activity is the production of fiction and documentary feature films that portray their author's perspectives, artistically and creatively. Pimienta's projects have been acclaimed by critics and welcomed by national and international audiences thanks to their artistic quality and unique vision. The company has worked with renowned directors such as Alfonso Cuarón, Amat Escalante, Ciro Guerra, Cristina Gallego, Jonás Cuarón, Tatiana Huezo, Elisa Miller, James Franco and Rafi Pitts, among others, while also gaining a reputation for promoting new national talent.

Contact

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Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Elias Belkedar

Director / Screenwriter



Jérôme Pierrat, Thomas Bidegain

Co-screenwriters



Mourad Belkeddar,

Yacine Medkour, Salem Brahimi

Producers



Contact

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Omar La Fraise

Algeria, France, Qatar / French

Genre: Drama, Comedy, Music, Identity, Redemption

Omar, a crook forced to be on the run in Algeria, needs to quiet down to avoid prison. Deprived of adrenalin, he swings between his urges and must strike his own balance.



Omar Zerrouki, better known by his street name Omar la Fraise, is an old school gangster. Forced to flee from France to Algiers, he now lives off petty scams alongside with his sidekick Krime. But the axe falls: the French courts sentence him to 20 years of jail time. To stay in Algiers, away from French prisons, Omar must now clean up his act. But so far he has known little else than a life of crime and violence: transitioning to normal human relations governed by a social contract and healthy communication will be easier said than done. Not to mention earning an honest living. Omar manages to find a job in a pastry factory. But quiet daily routine is not Omar's way: deprived of the adrenaline of his former life, he relapses and starts mixing with a gang of violent kids from the streets of Algiers. Factory boss by day, thug by night: Omar thinks he has found some kind of balance to cope with this newfound life on the straight path...until he meets Samia. As he will discover, violence and petty crime are incompatible with love. The death of his friend Krime will make him aware of his vital need for change. With the help of Samia, Omar will finally free himself.

Director's Note

Cinema and Algeria are integral to my life. The cowboy movies of my father's childhood screened in Algeria echo my childhood summers spent running around in Algiers. Algeria has always been a land of adventures, dangers and tales that mix sweeping collective history with individual stories. Algeria has a power that turns history into myth, from the War of Independence to the "hirak". My deepest desire is to take the stories Algeria offered me as a heritage and give back to Algeria a story of my own. I feel close to Omar, as he and I were raised in France. As he, my itinerary—he through his life of crime, I through cinema—took me back to Algeria. As he, I rediscovered Algeria through love. There are very few films made in Algeria. I feel an urgency to take fiction and mythology and bring them to the silver screen.

Director's Biography

Elias Belkedar is a Franco-Algerian producer, director and writer. In the past five years, he has produced music videos, short films and feature films at Iconoclast Films. He co-wrote the first feature film of director Antoine de Bary 'My Days of Glory', which was screened at the Venice Film Festival in 2019. The film stars Vincent Lacoste and Emmanuelle Devos. In 2018, he directed his first short film 'A Wedding Day', selected at the 57th Semaine de la Critique where he won the Canal+ Award. The film was also screened at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Company Profile

Iconoclast Films is an audiovisual production company created in 2011 by Mourad Belkeddar, Nicolas Lhermitte and Charles-Marie Anthonioz. After having produced numerous commercial films and clips thanks to its incubator of renowned talents— Harmony Korine, Gus Van Sant, Romain Gavras, Yoann Lemoine, So Me, Paul Gore, and Edouard Salier. They joined forces in 2012 with Jean Duhamel to create Iconoclast Films. The company has an office in Los Angeles where Harmony Korine's latest film, 'The Beach Bum', was co-produced with Matthew McConaughey and Gus Van's latest feature film, 'Don't Worry He Won't Get Far on Foot' with Joaquin Phoenix and Jonah Hill. In 2018, 'The World Is Yours' by Romain Gavras, with Vincent Cassel and Isabelle Adjani released in French theatres. A few months later, 'At Eternity's Gate', a film by Julian Schnabel co-produced by Iconoclast Films, was presented at the Venice Mostra. Antoine de Bary's first feature film, 'My Days of Glory', will be released in theatres in 2020, selected in the Orizzonti section of the 2019 Venice Film Festival.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Shahrbanoo Sadat

Director / Screenwriter



Katja Adomeit

Producer



The Orphanage

Afghanistan, Denmark, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Qatar / Afghan / 2019

Runtime: 100 mins

Genre: Drama, History, Politics, Youth

As the Mujahideen approach, the children of the orphanage dream themselves away into the Bollywood movies they love.



'The Orphanage' is set in Kabul in the late 1980s. 15-year-old Qodrat lives on the streets and sells cinema tickets to Bollywood movies on the black market. He is a big Bollywood fan and likes to daydream himself into scenes from his favourite movies. One day, the police bring Qodrat to the Soviet orphanage. During summer, USSR invites Qodrat and his fellow orphans to a summer camp in Moscow, where they visit Lenin, the mummy. Back in Kabul, the political situation is changing. The Soviets are leaving, and rebels are dominating the streets of Kabul. When an armed group of rebels reach the orphanage, Qodrat uses his daydreams to imagine how all the children of the orphanage defend their home and defeat them.

Director's Note

Most Afghans are not aware of the importance of their stories. I'm studying Afghanistan, and I am learning a lot. My heart is exploding, seeing, how rich the country is in culture and stories. I want to share it with others, talk about Afghanistan through everyday life, through simple stories, which tell a lot. Cinema has no reputation these days in Afghanistan. When someone asks me about my job, I have to lie and say I am a teacher. This is a perfect and respectful job for a woman in Afghan society. I have to pretend I am like everyone else, while everyone else also pretends they are like everyone else. Sometimes I am asking myself, why I can't just leave Afghanistan and live somewhere else, where the possibility of being killed every day is less or zero. I can't answer. There is something inside me fighting with my brain, I even think I have no brain but two hearts instead. I dream about changes, that one day I live in Afghanistan and there is no war. I do believe that what I am doing now is part of the big change I am dreaming of. And it makes me proud and happy.

Director's Biography

Shahrbanoo Sadat is an Afghan writer and director, based in Kabul. She studied documentary in Atelier Varan Kabul. In 2013, she opened her production company Wolf Pictures in Kabul. Her first feature film 'Wolf and Sheep' was developed with the Cannes Cinéfondation Residence in 2010, Shahr, who was 20 years old at the time, was the youngest ever selected. The film won the main award at Director's Fortnight 2016. 'The Orphanage' is the second part of a pentalogy, and these five films are based on the autobiographical piece written by Anwar Hashimi.

Company Profile

Adomeit Film is a production company, established and owned by Katja Adomeit. The purpose of the company is solely to produce artistic film projects for cinema, TV and web. Adomeit Film develops and produces international fiction, documentary and hybrid films, focusing on arthouse projects by young filmmakers from all over the world, establishing long-lasting relationships with the scriptwriter/directors. Adomeit Film works closely with its filmmakers as part of the creative team, and together they constitute what they call the "Adomeit Family". The work in the family is based on the continuous exchange of ideas, content and advice. The films are intended to address and entertain an international audience and have been co-produced internationally, screened worldwide, and won awards at acclaimed festivals. Adomeit film consists of Katja Adomeit (CEO and producer), Jón Hammer (Producer), Tine Mikkelsen (Producer assistant) and directors Anna Eborn, Annika Berg, Daniel Borgman and Shahrbanoo Sadat.

Contact

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Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Ameer Fakher Eldin

Director / Screenwriter



Tony Copti

Producer



Passerby

Syria, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama

52-year-old farmer Adnan lives in the occupied Golan Heights by the Israeli-Syrian border. His life turns into constant chaos when he encounters Basel, a wounded soldier from the war in Syria.



After spending unfruitful years studying medicine in the former Soviet Union, Adnan decided to quit and return home. He went against the will of his father, an old, stubborn and very religious man, who all he wanted was to see his son a doctor. Adnan became an alcoholic, further angering his father. Considering it an insult to his morality and religion, the father's punishment was severe. Adnan was disinherited from the apple orchards which the family owned, and in which he worked and spent most his time. Tired and embittered Adnan accidentally encounters Basel, a wounded soldier who escaped the Syrian war in search of his original village. Adnan decides to rescue him, and the two embark on a perilous journey to fulfil Basel's dream. But first, Adnan has to confront the village leaders, the Israeli army, and most of all—his father.

Contact

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Director's Note

In the past eight years, in the occupied Golan Heights, we have been experiencing the sounds of the war in Syria echoing from far beyond the border. The same in the film, a war so close always echoing far from the eye. More than fifty years, and after its occupation by Israel in 1967, the Syrian Golan is often referred to as the forgotten occupation, and the plight of its Syrian population is unknown to many. Therefore, the work aims to give a voice to the voiceless, to raise and discuss existential questions and dilemmas, especially when people are forced to witness the horrors of the conflict, taking place in their beloved homeland. The story is about fathers and the wars that their sons have inherited from them, told in the snowy landscapes of the Syrian Golan Heights, where nature plays a major role in the film; the snow, the rain, and the fires in the heating stoves motivate the characters and expose their stormy souls. This is the place where I can conjure spaces and horizons that I have lost over time.

Director's Biography

Ameer Fakher Eldin is a Syrian screenwriter and director. He was born in the former Soviet Union to Syrian parents from the occupied Golan Heights. After earning his BA in Cinema Studies, he made several award-winning short films. 'Thanatos Gaze' (2012), 'Between Two Deaths' (2016), 'Voicemail' (2017). Fakher Eldin has also served as a jury member at TISFF, and as a lector at various film funds. He presents in his films a poetic look at life under occupation, using a distinct cinematic language that frequently explores the use of unique cinematic aspects.

Company Profile

In 2011, Tony and his brother Jiries joined forces and created Fresco Films—a fresh and dynamic company that specializes in developing and producing feature films having in mind the general audience as well as the highest artistic value of the project. Fresco Films provides hands-on production services with finance structuring. Many of our clients are international feature film and television production companies. We provide comprehensive, turnkey production and location support for shooting in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan. Work includes; 'The Attack' by Ziad Doueiri produced by Jean Brehat, 3B productions and 'Girrafada' by Rani Massalha produced by Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, MACT productions.

Development

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Rim Mejdi

Director / Screenwriter



Nabil Merrouch

Producer



Plum Season

Morocco, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Coming-of-Age, Drama, Fantasy, Social Issues, Women, Youth

Nouha, a 16-year-old teenager, flees her broken home for the mountains, where she gradually undergoes an irreversible transformation.



Nouha, a 16-year-old teenager, lives in a close relationship with her mother. Her father reappears after a long absence, disturbing the balance of the household. Nouha spends time wandering in the streets on her scooter with a group of bikers lead by Amine and Omar, two teenagers with whom she escapes to the Atlas Mountains after she discovers her parents remarried behind her back. They drive by scooters to the heights of the Grand Atlas, and Nouha disguises herself as a boy to escape the attention of the conservative village. The group of teenagers live in a small house belonging to Omar's uncle, spending their time between the river and the forest. Nouha then encounters supernatural forces that affect her reality as she goes through a spiritual transformation that has irreversible consequences on her body and soul.

Contact

Nabil Merrouch

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Director's Note

For my first feature, I chose to tackle adolescence because it's a particular and sensitive time, to which I connect deeply: I still conserve the memory of being scared of growing up and becoming an adult. Nouha, the main character is an adolescent who bears the weight of a vivid anxiety of time passing by. She tries to deal with, by constantly escaping the inexorable sands of time. She has no choice but confront her existential crisis. The film is a modern tale of a teenage girl awakening to supernatural dimensions, which take her to cross reality's borders. What are the internal challenges adolescents meet as they grow up? What's the impact of the inevitable process of growing up on their body and soul? Using those questions, the film opens a window to steal a glimpse into the contemporary Moroccan adolescent world with intimacy and delicacy.

Director's Biography

Born on August 7, 1989, in Marrakech, Morocco, **Rim Mejdi** attended the school of visual arts of Marrakech in 2007. She graduated with a B.A in 2010 and M.A in 2014 in Film Directing from ESAV Marrakech. Her short fiction 'Out of Town' was selected and screened in several festivals including Locarno, Cinemed Montpellier, Carthage Film Festival, and Cairo International Film Festival among others. She is currently working on the development of her first feature fiction 'Plum Season' and on a documentary in post-production 'Waiting for the End of the Times'.

Company Profile

Tifaw Films is a production company founded in 2018 by young Moroccan Filmmakers Rim Mejdi and Nabil Merrouch. The company collaborates with budding Moroccan directors on their fiction and documentary projects of different formats. It aims to produce high-quality films for cinema and videos related to arts and culture in Morocco.

Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Yasmine Benkiran

Director / Screenwriter



Jean des Forêts, Saïd Hamich

Producers



Queens

Morocco, France, Belgium, Qatar / Arabic (Darija)

Genre: Drama, Adventure, Women's Emancipation, Myths & Legends

To give her daughter a brighter future, 27-year-old Zineb escapes from prison and kidnaps her 9-year-old, Ines. On the road, she holds up a truck, taking the young Asma hostage and forcing her to drive them away from the police. From this road trip in a truck soon flourishes a deep friendship.



Casablanca, Morocco. 27-year-old Zineb is a repeat offender behind bars. When she learns that her wild and fanciful nine-year-old daughter, Inès, has been expelled from school and sent to a children's home, she escapes from prison, kidnaps her daughter, and heads south. On the road, she holds up a truck driven by the young Asma and takes her hostage. Zineb is loud spoken and unpredictable. Asma, on the other hand, is quiet and hardened to life. They appear to have nothing in common, but Inès' fate brings them together in a mission to offer the child a proper future. The trio soon has the police on their tail, thus starting a long escape that takes them across the rugged red terrain and flower-filled valleys of the Atlas to finally reach the Atlantic coast.

Contact

Jean des Forêts

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Director's Note

Astral calm. Meandering asphalt and never-ending, empty roads. Your only companions—the trucks. Whoever has travelled in Morocco has met these vehicles. Massive, creaking, they climb the mountains and seem to defy gravity. I spent a part of my childhood on these roads, alone with my mother, and with these trucks that scared and fascinated me in turn. From this was born my desire to bring this powerful vehicle to the screen and make it both the instrument of a woman's liberation and, ultimately, of her damnation. 'Queens' explores various female figures in this yet unresolved era. Do you remain a quietly obedient virginal effigy? Or emancipate yourself at the cost of attracting scorn and disgrace? Freedom comes at a cost: it will turn Asma into an outlaw. Nothing behind, and everything ahead—Zineb, Asma and Inès find themselves propelled onto the road. Queens is an adventure movie with political scope. Furthermore, there is a specific, dark poetry I want to distil throughout the film. As the story progresses, the film builds bridges between fairytale and reality and slides into another genre. It embodies a desire for cinema on the side of childhood, magic, hope and the wish to believe.

Director's Biography

Yasmine Benkiran grew up on the Moroccan Atlantic coast and came to Paris when she was 18. As a screenwriter, she writes for both television and cinema. She is currently developing 'Black Library', an anthology television series of mixed genre (fantasy, psychological thriller, science-fiction) as well as 'On the Nile', an animated spy movie. In 2018, Yasmine directed her first short film, 'Winter Time' (Tangier IFF, Off-courts Trouville). She is now developing her first feature film as a director, 'Queens'.

Company Profile

Founded in 2010, Petit Film is based in Paris. We produce and co-produce films from a selection of French and international directors, cineastes, visual artists, formalists and storytellers. At all times, we work in close cooperation with distributors, sales agents and festivals.

Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Amira Géhanne Khalfallah

Director / Screenwriter



Jaber Debzi

Producer



The Return of the Jerboas

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Environmental, Social Issues, Youth

Set in the year 2000, forty years after the explosion of the nuclear bomb 'Gerboise Bleue' in the Sahara, a young doctor lands in a village inhabited by the blind.



Algeria, 2000. Hakim, a young doctor, arrives in the desert. He moves in with Ammar's family, who built the village dispensary. Soon Hakim discovers an oasis populated by blind and partially sighted people. Since his arrival and despite his consultations, the Oasiens are getting sick, and some are dying. Very quickly, he befriends Petite, the only child in the village with whom he conducts an investigation to understand what is happening. This leads him to discover that the village suffers from the effects of radioactivity following the explosion of the first French nuclear bomb in the Sahara, "Gerboise Bleue", in 1960.

Contact

Jaber Debzi

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Director's Note

My story takes place in a small oasis in the heart of the Algerian desert, four decades after the explosion of the first French nuclear bomb, Gerboise blue in 1960. Water has been flowing under the bridge ever since, but very few people know what really happened, and no study has been conducted on the field to measure the consequences of this bomb which was estimated three times stronger than Hiroshima. Before being a director, I am a biologist, and I worked near that region in a tomato factory some years ago, without knowing that everything that was surrounding me and everything that I was eating was potentially radioactive. Hakim, the doctor, arrives in this village as ignorant as I was of this history. He discovers a village where the majority of the population has lost sight, which was the case for many people in the desert after the explosion of the bomb. In the dying oasis, lives "Little one", the only child in the village who quickly ties friendship with the doctor, fascinated by an object he possesses, the camcorder. This device, which according to her, saves images of the past. An allusion to the missing part of our history.

Director's Biography

Amira-Géhanne Khalfallah

was born and raised in Algeria.

She graduated in cellular and

molecular biology, but moved

more towards writing. Based in

Morocco since 2007, she is also a

journalist specializing in culture.

After two short films, she wrote and

developed her first feature narrative

film 'The Return of the Jerboas'

themed around the question of

nuclear tests in the Sahara during

the 1960s and their damages.

Company Profile

Prolégomènes is a film company created in 2015 and led by Jaber Debzi. It was born of a deep desire to take a look at a territory and its men, Algeria, through the cinema. Its ambition is to accompany filmmakers through the creative process. Always with the concern of setting coproductions and partnerships; and so, to bring films to the largest audience. Among the notable films Prolégomènes has produced is 'Until the Birds Return' (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2017) directed by Karim Moussaoui.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Rabah Ameur-Zaimeche

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



South Terminal

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic, French / 2019

Runtime: 96 mins

Genre: Drama

While witnessing his country's chaotic collapse into civil war, a hospital doctor receives several death threats after his journalist brother-in-law is murdered.



In a Mediterranean country descending into insecurity and armed conflict, a doctor strives to do his duty against all the odds, until one day when his life is turned upside down.

Director's Note

Our intention is to approach our subject through the trajectory of a doctor, a witness with an excellent vantage point on a country's collapse into the unspeakable violence of civil war. The period chosen is contemporary; the story is decontextualized, allegorical. Fathoming heartbreak and grief, measuring the reign of the absurd and the omnipresence of terror, glimpsing the price of blood, burying his dead, trying to heal and cure in spite of everything, such is the daily existence of a doctor in a small beachside town. While his journalist brother-in-law is murdered, he in turn receives death threats. The horror of civil war plunges him into chaos, engulfs him, separates him from his partner, Hazia, and gradually isolates him from the rest of the world. The film propels itself then into the searing tale of solitary escape. Terminal Sud aims to decipher part of our present and capture events while remaining open to the unexpected and the contradictory, by combining counter-currents, escapes, and glimpses of life that are as real as the oppression experienced by the characters. Unsparing and moving, our story will travel the infinite distances that span contemplation and action, dramatization and restitution of raw movement.

Director's Biography

Born in 1966 in Algeria, **Rabah Ameur-Zaimeche** arrived in France in 1968. He grew up in the Bosquets housing project in Montfermeil, on the outskirts of Paris. After graduating in humanities, he founded Sarrazink Productions in 1999. Since then, he has produced and directed six feature films.

Company Profile

'Headed South' will be the sixth feature film produced by Sarrazink Productions. The company was founded in 1999 by the filmmaker Rabah Ameur-Zaimeche with the aim of making his first feature 'Wesh Wesh, qu'est-ce qui se passe?' / 'Wesh Wesh, what's going on?' (Prix Louis Delluc for First Film – Wolfgang Staudte Award, Berlin International Film Festival) in 2002. Since then, Sarrazink produced 'Bled number one / Back home' (Youth Prize - Un certain regard, Official Selection, Cannes International Film Festival 2006), *Dernier Maquis / Adhen* (Director's Fortnight, Cannes International Film Festival – Special Jury Prize, Dubai International Film Festival 2008), 'Les Chants de Mandrin / Smugglers' Songs' (Prix Jean Vigo – McMillan Award, Harvard's Film Study Center 2011), 'Histoire de Judas / Story of Judas' (Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, Berlin International Film Festival) and 'Terminal Sud / South Terminal'.

Contact

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Johnny Ma

Director / Screenwriter



Jing Wang, Wu Xianjian

Producers



Contact

Jing Wang

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To Live to Sing

China, France, Qatar / Mandarin / 2019

Runtime: 100 mins

Genre: Drama, Music, Social Issues, Women's Issues

A hot-tempered Sichuan opera troupe manager, faced with demolition of her theatre, must find her troupe a new home before the "family" falls apart.



Zhao Li is the manager of a small Sichuan Opera troupe of 11 members living and performing together in a rundown theatre located in the outskirts of Chengdu, China. But when she receives an order of demolition to the troupe theatre, Zhao Li hides the news from everyone else, fearing that this could spell the end of her opera troupe. Secretly, Zhao Li wouldn't mind stopping since troupe life has become difficult over the years. But what else can she do? Besides demolition, she also worries that her 17-year-old niece Dan Dan, the starlet of the troupe, will leave them for a better future in the city. To keep her troupe "family" together, Zhao Li begins to search for a new theatre for the opera troupe to both sing and live in. As she struggles with modern government bureaucracy, her opera world slowly begins to seep into her real world. Just as Zhao Li uses performing opera as a way to escape from the troubles of her real life, soon characters from opera begin to show up in that real life...

Director's Note

I first came across Zhao Li and her opera troupe back in 2013 when I watched a TV documentary depicting their daily lives. The images were hastily captured on a handi-cam but I was completely captivated by its larger than-life characters. I was reminded of one of my favorite Ozu films, 'Floating Weeds' (1959). Just like the travelling troupe in that film, for Zhao Li and her troupe, performing was not only their job but it was also their way of life. I believe the only way for me to make this film is with the real troupe members depicting themselves. By placing the real opera troupe in the center of the film and giving them a chance to relive this alternative version of their own story, I hope to create a film where reality and fiction fuse together in a hybrid docu-fiction approach. I believe audiences both in China and abroad will be able to relate to the story in a larger context and global trend of the traditional family values colliding against the tide of modern change.

Director's Biography

Born as **Ma Nan** in Shanghai, China, **Johnny** first immigrated to Toronto at the age of ten. He graduated from Columbia University and was a fellow at the Sundance Institute Screenwriting and Directing Lab in 2014. In 2012, Johnny moved back to China to make his thesis film, 'A Grand Canal' (2013), which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. 'Old Stone' (2016), Johnny's directorial debut world premiered at the Berlinale. It was awarded the Best Canadian First Feature Award at Toronto International Film Festival and Best First Feature at Canadian Screen Awards.

Company Profile

Founded by Shanghai-based veteran producer Wu Xianjian, with 15 years of line producing experience in China, IMAGE X PRODUCTIONS is a full-service production company specializing in high-end commercials. It has partnered with top advertising agencies and created campaigns for clients like Coca Cola, Tiffany and Sony. Its recognition in the commercial industry includes major awards in the Asia-Pacific region, such as One Show Gold Pencil, Great Wall Awards and Times Awards. In 2013, IMAGE X partnered with Shanghai-born Canadian writer/director Johnny Ma and Beijing based producer Jing Wang, and since then has transitioned into narrative filmmaking with the short film 'A Grand Canal' which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. After their successful first collaboration, Johnny and Jing joined the company in 2014, and they worked together on Johnny Ma's debut feature 'Old Stone', which world premiered at Berlinale and won Best Canadian First Feature Film at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Robert Cremona

Director



Fouad Yammine

Screenwriter



Christian Bou Chaaya, Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya, Lucien Bou Chaaya, Peter Daher

Producers



Contact

Lucien Bou Chaaya

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TV Society

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, English / 2020

Runtime: 74 mins

Genre: Based on a True Story, Comedy, Drama

The airing of the Arabic version of an international dating TV show, that offers a panel of women the choice of a potential male suitor, sparks uproar and turns the show host into a public enemy.



The airing of the Arabic version of an international dating TV show, that offers a panel of women the choice of a potential male suitor, sparks uproar and turns the show host into a public enemy. Written, narrated and played by the show host himself, Fouad Yammine, 'TV Society' is a journey of self-discovery and finding one's role to play in society despite all the challenges.

Director's Note

Coming from a rarely-portrayed Middle Eastern young generation, I feel the urge to pay homage to my pop modern culture and take the audiences to an in-depth journey of an unexposed side of this vibrant part of the world, by unfolding on-screen lesions of a polemic recently caused by a dating TV show. Although TV, as traditionally known, is being disrupted worldwide by new alternatives and challenging technologies, it still holds a solid position in our daily lives and directly affects the behaviour of its viewers. In our 'TV society', a society that is yet another version of any post-war, patriarchal and/or bigot society not willing to face and accept its realities, a dating TV show sparked nationwide controversy. I found it crucial for me to take part in this film as it follows a young man of my age, in his quest to find his "true colours"; a quest that I highly relate to as I fled to live in the West for a while. TV Society's visual tones are set by a high contrast between reality, the emotional human side of the characters and the staged world of TV with all its glittery edge.

Director's Biography

Robert Cremona was born and raised in Lebanon. He graduated in 2008 with top honours and an award-winning short film 'Le temps des cerises' from IESAV- USJ, one of the leading film schools in the Middle East. In 2011, he released online his second short film '#signhereplease'; a commentary on the impact of technology on our day-to-day social connections, entirely shot with a smartphone in NYC. His directing work also consists of commercials and documentaries. 'TV Society' is his first feature film.

Company Profile

Founded in 2013, Kabreet Productions is headquartered in Beirut with teams in Amman, Beirut, Berlin, and Paris. Kabreet's previous works include 'Jinn' (Netflix, 2019) and 'Very Big Shot' (Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya, 2015). 'Very Big Shot' was Lebanon's official entry to the 2016 Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. It premiered in the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival then went on grabbing numerous awards in notable international film festivals, had a successful theatrical run and was the first Lebanese film to be available on Netflix worldwide. 'Jinn' is Netflix's first Arabic-speaking original series. Created, produced and executed by Kabreet Productions, the show premiered in June 2019, worldwide.

Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Lucien Bourjeily

Director / Screenwriter



Farah Shaer

Producer



Vanishing

'Zawal' / Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Social Issues, Politics, Family, Women's Issues

Rita, a single mother, juggles her family and work with the crucial help of Zofan—a domestic worker, whose mysterious disappearance draws Rita into an investigative journey with unexpected consequences.



In modern-day Beirut, single mother Rita juggles her work as an investigative journalist with that of caretaker to both her eight-year-old daughter and her elderly mother. A balance made possible only with the crucial help of Zofan—an Ethiopian helper, who has lived with them for several years. However, one day, while Rita is busy filming a report about illegal and corrupt quarries, Zofan mysteriously disappears without a trace. Rita becomes totally engulfed in this intriguing mystery. As she investigates Zofan's disappearance, Rita's life is thrown off balance, and she discovers the hidden side of her helper's life with unexpected consequences on her own.

Contact

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Director's Note

Through my anti-establishment activism, I met many journalists and news reporters. I grew especially close to those favourable to the cause, still uncorrupted by the system. Even though they were well-known and successful investigative reporters, just a couple of years later, I watched them leave, one by one, the TV stations where they worked. The mystery behind their career path led me to this film. Meeting with them, I heard many inside stories that helped me understand what led them to quit. What I came to understand is how omnipresent corruption in Lebanon is, and how the story of these reporters represented so much more than their specific circumstances. I became passionate about delving into the inner life of a citizen who is trying to live outside of a system of corruption that is present in every aspect of life, to show the day-to-day concessions a person must make, and grasp the duality of such an existence. How do we keep on fighting for what we believe in and at what cost? How much of our beliefs, struggles, and memories slowly fade away and vanish as life hits us hard with day-to-day hardships?

Director's Biography

Lucien Bourjeily is a Lebanese writer, director, and political activist who has sought refuge in storytelling from an early age. His work as a writer/director of both film and theatre awarded him the Fulbright Scholarship to earn his MFA in Filmmaking (2013) at the Loyola Marymount University in LA. He wrote/directed more than a dozen plays, two of them were banned in Lebanon, and another two premiered at the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT). In 2014, he was nominated for the "Freedom of Expression" award in London by Index on Censorship. His debut feature film 'Heaven Without People' (2017) travelled to more than twenty-five film festivals worldwide and won six awards, including the Special Jury Prize at the Dubai International Film Festival.

Company Profile

BeirutCUT is an independent film production house, established to be the continuation of the experienced path of its founders who have been working as independent directors and producers on several short films such as 'I Offered You Pleasure', 'Soukoon', 'Shakwa', and one feature film 'Heaven Without People'. These films participated in acclaimed film festivals such as Telluride Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand, Busan, LA Film Festival, and Shanghai Film Festival among many others and won several awards such as the Jury Prize at Dubai Film Festival, Motion Picture Association of America Award among many others.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Aamir Bashir

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Shanker Raman

Producer



The Winter Within

'Maagh' / India, France, Qatar / Bakharwal, Hindi, Kashmiri, Urdu / 2020

Runtime: 98 mins

Genre: Drama

Nargis finds herself at the crossroads of a new beginning with Yaseen. Just then, her husband returns.



In Srinagar, Kashmir, Nargis works as a domestic helper for a middle-class family. Her husband, Manzoor, has disappeared after joining the armed rebellion against the Indian State. When her employer discovers that Nargis' husband is a militant, she is fired from her job and is left with no choice but to return to her village. There, Nargis weaves the shawl that Manzoor had begun, in the hope that he will return. Yaseen, a handicrafts trader, supports Nargis by giving her work. And as an admirer, the possibility of a new beginning. One day Manzoor reappears. Captured and tortured in detention, he is a shadow of his former self. Nargis devotes herself to rehabilitating Manzoor back to health even as he battles his demons. Although released, he has to report to the nearest army camp. One day, he makes an unscheduled visit to the camp, which will have devastating consequences.

Contact

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Director's Note

In the last three decades, approximately eight to ten thousand cases of enforced disappearances have occurred in Kashmir. Mostly young men picked up by the Indian security forces, never to return home. Until now, more than six thousand unmarked graves have been discovered in Kashmir. The relatives of the disappeared persons believe that their loved ones may be buried in these graves, but the State refuses to conduct DNA tests to identify the bodies. These unmarked graves form the backdrop of the film which explores torture, both mental and physical and its horrific consequences. Nargis, the moral centre of the film, like Penelope in Homer's Odyssey, weaves for survival in the time of war, and in the hope of her militant husband, Manzoor's return. But unlike the Odyssey, Manzoor's return is anything but triumphant. He is a shadow of his former self, having undergone torture in detention. 'Maagh' (The Winter Within) is a tragic tale of Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination, and freedom from state oppression. An oppression that is ripping apart the social fabric, under which, it is Nargis, a woman—who shows a greater commitment to the ideas of justice and freedom.

Director's Biography

Aamir Bashir Born in Srinagar, Kashmir, Aamir Bashir is a professional actor and filmmaker based in Mumbai, India. After his schooling in Kashmir, Aamir graduated in History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi and went on to read Law at the University of Delhi. After working in television as a news correspondent and a travel show host, Aamir moved to Mumbai in 1998 to pursue a career in acting, with several credits in independent as well as mainstream films to his name. 'Harud' (Autumn) was his maiden venture as a writer, director and producer. 'Harud' won the Don Quixote Award at the Fribourg International Film Festival 2011 and the prestigious National Award for Best Film in Urdu in 2013. Aamir Bashir is currently working on post-production of 'Maagh' (The Winter Within).

Company Profile

Sangbaaz Films is a production company based in Mumbai and founded by the director Aamir Bashir, and director of photography, Shanker Raman. 'The Winter Within' is the company's first feature film.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Koutaiba Al-Janabi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



The Woodman

Iraq, UK, Qatar / Arabic / 2019

Runtime: 80 mins

Genre: Immigration, Road Trip, Thriller

On the run from some unseen but heard malevolent forces, the Woodman finds refuge in an isolated house where a woman resides and an unlikely friendship kindles.



A surreal feature film with a thriller theme, and a life-sized wooden dummy as the protagonist, representing the outsiders, the migrants in our world. This is the reverse of the usual representation—the Woodman wants to go home, back to his forest. Three people's paths cross; the Woodman's, the Woman's, and the Woodcutter's in a transitory place and time, each longing for something lost, for love, for belonging. With limited dialogue, the story is being told from the Woodman's perspective in the present. The Woodman is being chased by evil powers through his forest until he hides in a strange place, the Woman's house. When she notices someone is there, she is frightened but feels sympathy towards the Woodman upon discovering him. When she leaves the house, as she too feels the invisible threat, the Woodman remains trapped, his refuge becomes his prison. The Woodcutter is the caretaker of the house. He is suspicious of the sounds coming from the house, and the strange character inside. But he is also lonely, longing for intimacy. A connection develops to the Woodman, and he ultimately helps him escape. Will the Woodman find his way home to his forest? Was this all a dream or is the story real?

Contact

Koutaiba Al-Janabi

Real Art Pictures

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Director's Note

This film had to be made, it would have been difficult to convince potential partners about a wooden dummy as a protagonist of a film, that is not animated and does not speak. The idea of the woodman is the result of my lifelong involvement and interest in refugees. Since my first photography project in the 80ies in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Lebanon as a student at the photography school, the spirit of these people captivated me for life. Having been involved emotionally, artistically, I too became a refugee although I did not leave my country as one. Added to my personal experience was the recent global movement and overwhelming media focus on migration - I decided to delve deeper into the psyche of the REFUGEE distilling this idea into the Woodman, who is looking for a way to go home. We treated him as a human being, developing empathy by lighting, composition. The film has very minimal dialogue. During editing we can feel how the Woodman is developing into a fully rounded character, using a wide range of film editing language, sound and music.

Director's Biography

Koutaiba Al-Janabi was born in Baghdad, and studied photography and cinematography in Budapest, Hungary. He worked as a producer/director for television, as cinematographer on feature films, and he now directs and produces short films and documentaries ('The Train', 'Wasteland', 'The Ever Restless Man'). His feature film 'Leaving Baghdad', won first prize in Dubai, a British Independent Film Award, and was nominated for Cinema for Peace Award in Berlin. 'Stories of Passers Through' (2018), a feature film shot over 30 years is being shown at film festivals worldwide. 'The Woodman' is a feature film in post-production.

Company Profile

Real Art Pictures is an independent film production company founded in 1998 by Koutaiba Al-Janabi. The organisation has produced a number of short films and documentaries and 'Leaving Baghdad' (2010), Koutaiba's debut feature as a director. The company has a growing portfolio of feature projects in development, including 'Night Trains' (supported by the Hubert Bals Fund), 'Window' (supported by the Doha Film Institute), and 'Walls without Borders'.

Feature Documentary

143 Sahara Street

A Rifle and a Bag

After a Revolution

Al Yarmouk Ghetto

Between Two Wars

The Body of René

The Cave

The Disqualified

Do You Love Me

The Flower Men

Fouledh

Handala, The Boy Without A Face

Kashkash

Machtat

Merry Christmas, Yiwu

The Mother of All Lies

Mothers

Nardjes A.

The Passion According to Andrew

The People

School of Hope

Searching for Kikhia (working title)

Their Algeria

The Voice of the Wild

Wake Up on Mars

Watch Before Deletion

Yalla, Baba!

Feature Experimental or Essay

Firefly in The Darkness of Time

Temporarily

An Unusual Summer

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Hassen Ferhani

Director / Screenwriter



Narimane Mari

Producer



143 Sahara Street

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2019

Runtime: 100 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary

Malika lives alone in the middle of the Sahara Desert. She runs a restaurant, a stopover for many truckers and occasional tourists on the Trans-Sahara highway, crossing from Algeria to Mali.



In her little restaurant in the middle of the Algerian desert, a woman writes her history. There she welcomes truckers, wanderers and dreamers for a cigarette, a coffee or eggs. Her name is Malika.

Director's Note

Through meeting Malika, I finally found the idea for my road movie. Firstly, a road movie is about roads, and in this film, we centre on the Trans-Sahara Highway. A road movie is about characters, here we meet Malika and a multitude of passing truck drivers. A road movie is also about stories, Malika's story and the stories that the road evokes. Finally, a road movie is about movement, here - travellers come and go through Malika's daily life. I want to stay at Malika's for quite a while, spend time with her, stay with her, her dog, and the blind cat. I do not necessarily want to know what brought her to this no man's land, nor how she's lost the north. I'm trying to discover what she sees from her neck of the woods.

Director's Biography

Hassen Ferhani was born in Algeria in 1986. In 2006, he directed his first short film, 'Les Baies d'Alger', which was screened in official competition in numerous international festivals. In 2008, he participated in a workshop at La Fémis, where he directed the short film 'Le Vol du 140'. Since 2009, Ferhani has worked as an assistant director. In 2010, he co-directed the documentary 'Afric-Hotel', which screened at Visions du Réel and FIDMarseille. 'Roundabout in My Head' (2015) was his first feature-length film and has been awarded several major international prizes including FID, IDFA, Torino, Amiens, Carthage, Algiers, Entrevues Belfort, Festival Filmer le Travail de Poitiers, and Vues d'Afrique.

Company Profile

Allers Retours Films is committed to producing engaging and creative cinema. It selects and works with the projects of artists who involve themselves in contemporary history through film and the visual arts.

Contact

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Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

**Cristina Hanes, Arya Rothe,
Isabella Rinaldi**

Directors / Screenwriters /
Producers



A Rifle and a Bag

India, Romania, Italy, Qatar / Gondi, Hindi, Madia / 2019

Runtime: 89 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary

A young Indian couple of surrendered Naxalites is fighting for their children's future.



Somi and her husband Sukhram met and fell in love while fighting in the Naxalite commando, the Maoist guerrilla army that has been fighting since the 1960s for the rights of the tribal communities of India. A few years ago, they deserted the movement and surrendered in front of the police. They live in a settlement they built with other former comrades, but their social status as surrendered Naxalites is compromising the future of their two children. They want to give their children the best education possible, but that comes with high risks. The film shows their attempt to escape this dead-end while exploring their controversial past.

Director's Note

When she was 12 years old, Somi left her tribal village and joined the Naxalite guerrilla. At 24 years old, she surrendered to the State under the Surrender Policy. Deserting the movement meant leaving behind everything she believed in and starting from scratch, building a new life for herself and her children. The act of surrendering has tampered with her value system and the ideology for which she violently fought for years. This shift in her life has led to a moral vacuum, disengaged from her surroundings and beliefs. 'A Rifle and a Bag' accompanies Somi as she struggles to make her violent past compatible with her desire to integrate as a civilian in society. The excruciating wait for social rehabilitation is holding Somi and her children back. The promised policies of compensation from the government are nowhere to be seen in the near future. Their sense of identity is now being challenged, and it is this state of mind that we want to tackle in the film to discover the complex texture of moral, ideological and political engagement.

Directors' Biography

Cristina Hanes is a Romanian filmmaker. Her film 'Antônio e Catarina' won the Pardino D'oro Award for Best International Short in Pardi di Domani at Locarno Festival in 2017 and was screened in over 20 film festivals around the world. She is an alumna of DocNomads (2016) and Aristoteles Workshop (2013). She completed her BA in Cinematography in 2013 in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Arya Rothe is an independent filmmaker from Pune, India. She graduated in 2016 from DocNomads. Before DocNomads, she studied at FAMU - National Film School of the Czech Republic. Her short film, 'Daughter's Mother' (2018) had its world premiere at 61st Dok Leipzig Film Festival.

Isabella Rinaldi is an independent filmmaker based in Rome, Italy. She graduated DocNomads after getting her bachelor's degree in film studies at the Sapienza University of Rome. She is currently directing one episode of the documentary series 'Borderline' produced by Off World from Belgium.

Company Profile

NoCut Film Collective was co-founded in 2016 by three filmmakers Cristina Hanes (Romania), Arya Rothe (India) and Isabella Rinaldi (Italy) after collaborating in the framework of DocNomads Master Course in Documentary Directing. The collective directs and produces author-driven documentaries, envisioning filmmaking as collaborative and transcultural. 'A Rifle and a Bag' is the collective's first feature-length creative documentary. The film is supported by Doha Film Institute (Qatar), IDFA Bertha Fund Classic (Netherlands), Asian Cinema Fund (South Korea) and AlterCiné Foundation (Canada).

Contact

NoCut Film Collective

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Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Giovanni Buccomino
Director / Screenwriter



Naziha Arebi, Alessandro Carolli
Producers



After a Revolution

UK, Italy, Libya, USA, Canada, Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 120 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues, War, Children, Women's Issues

An intimate story of a brother and sister who fought on opposite sides of the Libyan revolution. Formally civilians, now militarized, they remain separated by ideologies but bound by their love of the family and the love of country as they attempt to rebuild their lives after a revolution.



Filmed over six years, 'After A Revolution' is the challenging story of a brother and sister struggling to rebuild their lives after fighting on opposite sides of the Libyan revolution. Separated by their ideologies but bound by the love of family, and the love of their country, they attempt to rebuild their lives from the wreckage, devoured by trauma yet never giving up. Their epic, complex journey reveals at close range the psychological repercussions of conflict, modern-day intervention and proxy wars, yet at its core—it's a story of family and survival.

Contact

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Director's Note

We have gotten used to seeing war, uprisings, interventions, and revolutions through news reports, social media and films of activism. But once the media leave the frontline, once the UN missions pack up and go home and the foreign embassies flee, what then, what's left? I'm interested in what happens to the "losers" as well as the "winners" of war, when a whole nation is in the grips of PTSD. How do people start to rebuild their lives and their country amidst the chaos? Haunted by death, trauma and trying to hold a family together, I ask myself how I would behave in their shoes. Our protagonists and their families live the repercussions of a modern-day "revolution" and its impact. Those that once were civilians, are changed forever, caught between their choices and their consequences. This is a film about Libya, epic in scale, challenging and nuanced in its approach, but ultimately it's an intimate film about family—a family both divided by their political values, but bound by the love of the homeland, and the love of the family, and constantly pulled between the two. Stylistically I'm interested in the blur between fiction and documentary and am compelled by stories that unfold in front of the lens and challenge the extremities of the human condition.

Director's Biography

Giovanni Buccomino gained his Master's in History and Philosophy at the University of Rome. While studying, Giovanni worked as a sound engineer in music and later moved into sound design and making sound work for Criterion Collection, Arte, Sky Arts, Rai, and Discovery Channel. In 2010 he directed his first feature, 'The Valley of the Moon', selected at festivals like Festival dei Popoli and Hot Docs and winner of the Jury prize at the Village Doc Festival in Milan, Italy. In 2011 Giovanni directed TV hour 'Yanqul' for the 10th Anniversary of 9/11 and a film on Libya's Tabu ethnic group for Al Jazeera. Giovanni continues working as a sound designer and field recordist as well as directing his own films. Co-founder of Bad Donkey Films, Giovanni is also a Sundance Lab fellow, was an Executive Producer and Sound Designer on Libyan feature doc 'Freedom Fields' and is currently working on his feature film 'After a Revolution'.

Company Profile

Co-founded by Giovanni Buccomino and Naziha Arebi, Bad Donkey Films develop character-driven cinema, that provokes, while also revealing an alternative narrative and intimate access into stories of conflict. Films include the award-winning and BAFTA nominated 'Freedom Fields', and the Sundance/Tribeca/FOV/DFI/ Rai Cinema supported 'After a Revolution', which is currently in post-production. Naziha is also developing a hybrid fiction film, and Giovanni is working on a mid-length for The Guardian Shorts. He also develops sound design for both fiction and documentary.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Abdullah Al Khateeb
Director / Screenwriter



Mohammed Ali Atassi
Producer



Contact

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Al Yarmouk Ghetto

Syria, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Identity, Immigration, Social Issues, War, Women's Issues, Youth

The story of a group of Palestinian civilian activists from the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus. Facing bombing, displacement and hunger that hit their small community, they turn it into a small besieged ghetto through civil work, agriculture, study, music, theatre, love and joy.



At the beginning of the Syrian revolution, Yarmouk camp near Damascus was subject to shelling and siege imposed by the Syrian regime until the complete destruction of the camp and the displacement of all its inhabitants in 2018. During this siege, the remaining residents suddenly found themselves without food, medicine, electricity or water. The film tells the story of a group of friends, who tried to face the siege, hunger and death through civil and volunteer work helping children and the elderly to bear the horrors of the situation. Filmmaker Abdullah Khatib accompanied by his mother (Oum Mahmoud), friend Firas, and English Literature professor (Abu Raafat) are four different personalities spanning four generations whose lives interconnect to illustrate the siege of Yarmouk camp. War has irrevocably altered the lives of these characters. Oum Mahmood from a housewife and mother of six children, to a relief worker and a nurse, Firas from a psychologist to a farmer and a cook, Abu Raafat from an English teacher to an unofficial spokesperson for the victims, and Abdullah from a UN employee to a photographer, filmmaker and entertainer for children. In the end, they all find themselves diverging onto different paths—changed forever by the conflict.

Director's Note

Siege is a path that leads to madness and suicide, and in order to be saved, you have to find an idea worth living for. These sentences, which I wrote one day at the beginning of the siege, are perhaps one of my most important motivations to begin to film and to document the events in Yarmouk Camp. I wanted to document the effects of the siege on its inhabitants both psychologically and socially, and in transforming human nature, diverting the paths their lives were taking, and transporting them from the simple worlds they were accustomed to and into harsher and harder worlds. I certainly wasn't the only person to pick up a camera. I was, however, the only person who refused the idea that I should circulate my footage on social media sites and news outlets without contextualizing the stories of the people I was filming. The production process is mainly based on working on this huge personal archive that accompanied me to Germany. After watching and unloading the material, I will be working on the cinematic writing process through the construction of the film main narrative line and scenes.

Director's Biography

Abdullah Al Khateeb studied sociology at the University of Damascus. Prior to the revolution, he worked as coordinator of activities and volunteers and at UNRWA as the coordinator of the Youth Support Center in Yarmouk. He founded, with friends, a social association, active in the field of relief carrying out dozens of projects in several areas in Syria, most notably Yarmouk camp. He participated in directing and filming short films that depicted life in the camp. German magazine Peace Green selected him as a peacemaker in 2014, and he was also awarded the Per Anger Human Rights Award from Sweden in 2016.

Company Profile

Bidayyat for Audiovisual Arts is a civil company launched in early 2013, specialized in the production of short and feature length documentaries by emerging Syrians filmmakers who wish to question and reflect on the different facets of the reality they bear witness, from their own distinctive point of view. Bidayyat is a platform for exchange, education and production of short and feature-length documentaries, aiming at contributing to that relates to and interacts with their societies. Bidayyat develops and produces documentary film projects through proper funds as productions.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Alina Gorlova

Director / Screenwriter



Maksym Nakonechnyi

Co-screenwriter / Producer



Ilona Bicevska, Patrick Hamm

Producers

Contact

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Between Two Wars

Ukraine, Latvia, Germany, Qatar / Arabic, German, Kurdish / 2020

Runtime: 100 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Identity, Immigration, Social Issues, War

The story of one big Kurdish family from Syria, spread across the world because of war, shown through the perspective of its young son. Living in Ukraine, Iraq and Germany, they try to find their place and keep contact with each other, fighting this enormous black and white war machine in each their own way.



Fleeing the Syrian conflict, young Andriy's family unexpectedly lands in Ukraine. Now he helps people in the so-called "grey" war-torn zone as a Red Cross volunteer. He balances himself between the peaceful and military world, traditional and contemporary lifestyle, neutrality and passionate ideas, keeping or losing connection with his family—which is spread around the world because of war. Some of them suffer from its consequences, some try to escape and some fight for their ideals, but all exist in this war-torn "grey zone". Will Andriy manage to get out of it, making his first steps into adult life, with any identity damaged or lost?

Director's Note

Using our main protagonist as a conductor, we want to create a black and white war-torn world with different spaces and characters. Andriy Suleyman is trying to help people who live near the frontline in a warzone in Ukraine and refugee camps in Iraq. Indirectly, we compare shots with the military industry, and factories that produce tanks and weapons, but at the same time big storehouses with humanitarian aid and missions of the Red Cross. All these people and situations create this black and white machinery of war, where our main protagonist is trying to find connections with his homeland and relatives, who were spread around the world.

Directors' Biography

Alina Gorlova is a director, writer, and film editor. Born and raised in Ukraine, she graduated from Karpenko-Kary Kyiv National University of Theatre, Film and Television. In addition to her focus as a documentary director, Alina is also experienced in making fiction shorts, and social and commercial ads. In 2016, she completed her first feature-length documentary, 'Kholodny Yar. Intro', which screened at the Odesa IFF (Ukraine) and Artdocfest (Moscow, Russia). Her second documentary, 'No Obvious Signs', tells the story of a female Ukrainian soldier who undergoes rehabilitation for post-traumatic stress. The film has won multiple awards, including the MDR film award for outstanding Eastern European Movie at DokLeipzig 2018. Alina was a 2019 Berlinale Talents and CIRCLE Women Doc Accelerator participant.

Company Profile

Tabor is a production company, founded by young Ukrainian filmmakers and artists, creating fiction films, documentaries, and theatrical performances. It is currently developing into the field of international co-productions. A considerable part of their activity is cultural volunteering, which brings such results, as the film 'School #3', awarded with the Grand- Prix of Generation 14+ program at the 2017 Berlin International Film Festival.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Dani Abo Louh

Director / Screenwriter



The Body of René

Syria, France, Qatar / Arabic, English, French

Genre: Biography, Immigration, War

92-year-old Hermine Morel lives her last days. Her relatives discover a package of letters written by her late husband Rene, while he was on the frontline of the Indochina War. Rene, who only had survived in Hermine's memory, resurfaces in the life of the family.



'The Body of René' is a love story interrupted by war and a black body snatched from the memory of its own family. The film crosses over the quests of a family shattered in different places, including the filmmaker himself. It all revolves around the absence of René, a French officer from Martinique who died during combat in the Indochina war back in 1951. His body was never found. Nevertheless, the discovery of a bundle of letters written by him revives buried feelings reminding the filmmaker of his native country, Syria.

Director's Note

After living in St. Petersburg for three years, I had to choose whether to finish my studies and return to Damascus or to follow Charlotte to France. I followed her. Long before the war, I chose to leave my family and Syria behind. Thirteen years later, Charlotte's family found love letters written in 1951, addressed to her grandmother, Hermine, from her husband Rene, who died in the Indochina war. Between the lines, Hermine's relatives could read and feel the war. It revived in them deeply buried feelings and resurrected in me the memory of my own country, Syria. I decided to make a film. Being Syrian today is to have participated in/suffered/fled the war. I have not known the war. I have watched it from afar, confused... Through this film, I explore "War", the loss it generates and the traces it leaves. The characters conduct their own research individually, developing their own mechanisms that help tame the feeling of loss, or help escape it. In them, I seek an echo for what will become of the Syrians once the war is over.

Director's Biography

Dani Abo Louh, born in Damascus in 1983, is a videographer, documentary film director and editor. He lived in Russia from 2003 until 2006, where he studied Directing for Theatre at the St Petersburg Academy of Dramatic Art. Since 2011, he has been directing several short films, such as 'Conte de Printemps', 'Randa', and 'No Sea in Damascus'—exploring different genres, which he interweaves in his films.

Contact

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Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Feras Fayyad

Director / Screenwriter



Kristine Barfod

Producer



The Cave

Syria, Denmark, Qatar / Arabic / 2019

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Politics, War, Women's Issues

A group of female doctors establish a subterranean hospital in order to save the lives of victims of chemical and conventional weapons during the Syrian civil war.



Through the past seven years, the civil war in Syria has spread death, horror and has cost a frightful amount of human lives. The constant bombardments and the use of conventional and chemical weapons have made it life-threatening for people to move around in the streets. Dr. Amani and her team are therefore forced to go underground, where they have built a hospital as a last life-giving bastion in the middle of the horrors caused by the war. While large parts of the population flee out of Al Ghouta, a group of brave women choose to stay in the country and set aside their own safety for the sake of their patients. They are confronted with death on a daily basis when the mutilated children and civilians are brought down into the cave for treatment. Through Amani and her female colleagues, we witness their battle to break with the Syrian view on women, their right to take responsibility and to maintain their dreams and hopes for their country and for women.

Contact

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Director's Note

While I was filming 'Last Men in Aleppo', I was able to visit several subterranean hospitals located underground used for protecting civilians from chemical attack, as well as from the brutal conflict. Here, we experience how women play a substantial role to make a difference. I decided to follow three women Amani, Alaa and Samaher. Through their eyes, I discover the different layers of the human conflict they face every day in the deadly war. The hospital became the only hope for people to survive and receive treatment, as well as a space for these women to discover their own role and identity, and fight for their rights. I try through the structure and style of the storytelling to show the underground hospital as the womb or a matrix, where it reflects the personality of the strong female characters. While observing their stories, we are forced to view our own moral role in the conflict.

Director's Biography

Feras Fayyad is an Oscar-nominated director, who won an Emmy for Outstanding Current Affairs Documentary for 'Last Men in Aleppo' (2017). Fayyad was born in Syria in 1984 and holds a BA in Audio-visual Arts and Filmmaking from the international film and television school EICAR in Paris. He has directed and edited several films, both documentaries and fiction, and has received particular recognition for his work on contemporary Syrian issues and the political transformation of the Arab world. 'Last Men in Aleppo' (2017) won the international documentary competition at Sundance Film Festival along with more than 50 other international awards.

Company Profile

For a decade now, Danish Documentary Production (founded in 2007) has been an international key player in the world of high-end cinematic documentary films. The company is run by three talented directors and their producer. The directors' count Pernille Rose Grønkvær behind such films as *The Monastery - Mr. Vig* and *The Nun* (IDFA winner), *Love Addict* and *Genetic Me*; Eva Mulvad who directed *A Modern Man*, *The Good Life* and *Enemies of Happiness* (Sundance and IDFA winner); and last, but not least Mikala Krogh, director of *A Normal Life* (CPH:DOX audience award), *Cairo Garbage*, *Everything is Relative* and *The Newsroom - Off the Record*. Their producer with whom they are in charge of the company is Sigrid Dyekjær who has produced all of their recent films, and several others as well.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Hamza Ouni

Director / Screenwriter



Cecile Vargaftig

Co-screenwriter

Erige Sehiri, Stephane Jourdain, Ahmed Kefi

Producers



Contact

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The Disqualified

Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 108 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary

Mahrez, a 37-year-old man from a poor neighbourhood in Tunis, dreams of being a professional actor. Over the course of 12 years, and against the odds—months in prison, wasted opportunities in Europe, a taboo love—Mahrez chases after his passion.



Director's Note

At the age of 25, Mahrez already embodied the failure of the Tunisian politics of education. Baccalaureate in hand, he had taken two prep years of engineering school, then studied psychology, before giving it up. He was then out of work, living with his mother, a widow for twenty-one years, at her expense. But he also embodies the vital energy of a youth who was thirsty for freedom. He loves partying and its excess, he refuses sexual abstinence, he raps, and does theatre plays. He finds all of his hopes on financial success from horse racing, and Promosport online (sport bets), in which, of course, he spends all that he happens to win, and even more. He is both central and representative, because he suffers like all of those from his generation, but he is marginal at the same time because he isn't afraid, and because he still has hope. I made him the hero of my film, the medestansi, the disqualified horse, who stops in the middle of the race and never ends the track. I've been following him for more than 10 years. His daily life; his attempts of conversion, his hours spent in cafés; his hopes as well: to marry Melek, to leave, to change his life. Today, Mahrez is still unemployed. He is lonely, more than he has ever been.

Director's Biography

Hamza Ouni is a Tunisian filmmaker who began his career at the School of Arts and Cinema in Tunis. Hamza Ouni's first full-length documentary, *El Gort*, received an international critique from the International Federation of Cinematographic Press (FIPRESCI) and was premiered at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, where he earned the prize for Best Filmmaker from the Arab World. He also received the Talent Dove Award at the Leipzig DOK festival in 2014 and the Bronze Tanit Award at Carthage in 2014.

Company Profile

Henia Production is a production company based in Tunis managed by French-Tunisian filmmaker Erige Sehiri. She has signed several films as a director including 'The Facebook of My Father' in 2012 and first feature-length documentary 'La Voie Normale' (Railway Men), awarded at several festivals, released in Tunisian cinemas in 2019, of which she is also the associate producer. Parallel to her achievements, she chooses to develop within Henia Production author-driven films.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Lana Daher

Director / Screenwriter



Jasper Mielke

Producer



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Do You Love Me

Lebanon, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, History, Identity, Immigration, Music, War, Youth

'Do You Love Me' is an archive-based essay documentary, about the bittersweet personal accounts of the generations that grew up during and after the Lebanese Civil War, interwoven with the rise and fall of the musical Bendaly Family.



'Do You Love Me', named after the widely popular Bendaly Family song that was released in 1978 during the Lebanese Civil War, is a coming-of-age film in the form of an essay documentary, about the generations of Lebanese that transitioned from youth to adulthood during, and post-civil war (1975 - present). Using solely archive footage, the film weaves together three main narrative lines. In the foreground is society (various people's personal accounts as well as war journalists, politicians, musicians etc.). In the background is the historical, military and political, life during the civil war. In the middle ground is the music focusing on René and Re-Mi Bendaly (two generations of the Bendaly Family) as well as their contemporaries (the popular musicians of the time). Depicting a country that denies its past and ignores its present, 'Do You Love Me' is a mosaic of social history and an emotional ethnography. The film is not the historical story of the civil war or the story of a small musical family but using music and interviews it tells the untold story of a generation's collective experience.

Director's Note

When I was 7, in 1991, my family and I moved to my grandmother's apartment in West Beirut. The Lebanese civil war had just ended. Besides school, the only outlet was the Technicolor TV set where I met Re-mi Bendaly for the first time. She was an iconic child-star, her songs represented hope and lost innocence in times violence not just in Lebanon, but in the Arab world. She offered me and many others an escape from our reality, an escape from my grandma's house and a war-torn Beirut. Soon after, the supposed reconstruction of the city's infrastructure and buildings started. In Lebanon, there was a sense of denial regarding what had happened. I never thought of my childhood as being a post-war childhood, until I was old enough to understand that there had been a war, and by that time my childhood was over. Twenty years later, when I discovered the song and music video of 'Do You Love Me', once again, the Bendaly Family were offering me an escape from reality, an escape from yet another violent time we were living. Today, even though there isn't an imminent war anymore, we live in a passive violence. City life seems functional, but life is volatile. There is violence in our everyday life, and we sustain it by escaping and repressing. In Lebanon, we have almost no memorials for the war or spaces

that commemorate our past. The problematic issues that led to this conflict in the first place are still very much here today. As school children, we weren't taught about our past and history because we don't have a shared history, which is why I firmly believe this film must only be made from archive material. We are using the past to give it new meaning. This archival film is about memory, but it is not only about the past—it is also about bringing perspective to our reality today because we are still living in this status of denial.

Director's Biography

Lana Daher is a filmmaker living and working in Beirut. She earned her MA in Filmmaking (Directing) from Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2012 and earlier completed her BFA in Graphic Design at the American University of Beirut. She has since shot and directed music videos, short films as well as documentaries centring on designers and their practices. 'Do You Love Me' is her first feature film which she is directing as well as co-producing.

Company Profile

Wood Water Films was founded by Jasper Philipp Mielke, Karoline Henkel and Arto Sebastian. They got together during their studies at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg and set out in 2016 to fulfil the collective dream of their own production company. Arto's short films were aired and awarded at various festivals around the globe. Amongst others, Karoline produced the feature film 'Two Mothers', which premiered at Berlinale and won the 'Dialogue en Perspective' prize. Jaspers semi-documentary film 'The Humanitarians' had great success as well and won, amongst others, the renowned 'First Steps Award'. Their passion is in fiction and documentary films of social relevance, and they urge to explore and refine cinematic expression together with their wonderful creative partners. Be it through hybrid formats, rigorous realism or poetic metaphors: they aspire not only to capture the beauty of life in their imagery, but also to reveal the disgraces of society. The company wants to dedicate itself to stories that reflect the depths and abysses of the human soul.

Development

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Yusra Ishaq

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Sara Ishaq

Producer



Contact

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The Flower Men

Yemen, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Current Affairs, Human Rights, Politics, Social Issues

In Yemen, a country shrouded in complexities, one ancient tribe is split between the borders of two bitter enemies at war with each other. Yet the divided tribe stands against both factions, refusing to be part of the war threatening their respective homelands. But what are their motives, and are they really as united as they seem?



‘The Flower Men’ is a feature and observational-investigative documentary film that explores the complex reality of one of Yemen’s most ancient and powerful tribes—Khawlan Amer, now divided by the war-torn borders of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The film attempts to compare and contrast the two groups that were once one entity, honing in on the lives and personal relationships of two brothers who live on opposite sides of this border. The brothers were separated earlier in their lives and followed very different paths; one lived a life of wealth and prosperity, while the other lived a life of poverty and hardship. When fighting between Yemen and Saudi Arabia reached catastrophic levels, the tribe made a conscious decision to reject the conflict and protect each other on either side of the warring borders. This film highlights the political twists that turned this tribe into a peace creator.

Director’s Note

When I began film producing in Yemen in 2013, I had a chance to travel and discover unexplored facets of my country. One particular trip to the wartorn North replaced my initial feelings of fear with fascination. The historical, conservative and tribal city of Sadaa was full of contradictions, notably the male dress-code. Men carried weapons yet wore flower-crowns on their heads. As I researched, I learned that these “Flower Men” also exist in a Southern Saudi tribe that goes by the same name as the Northern Yemeni tribe—Khawlan Amer. Later, I also learned the tribe and its families were divided after the establishment of the Saudi Kingdom and the creation of new borders. This film will examine the complex sociopolitical realities of the Northern-Southern Khawlan Amer tribe; how they relate and differ considering their ancient joint identity, and how the current Saudi-Yemen war impacts the lives of segregated families.

Director’s Biography

Yusra Ishaq is a first-time film director, with a strong background as a film producer in Yemen, facilitating local productions and coordinating multinational teams including international media outlets such as the BBC and PBS between 2013-2017. Yusra studied Business Administration at UUM (Malaysia) and applied her business management skills in versatile and multi-functional environments. In 2017, she co-founded the Yemen-based film foundation and production company, Comra Films. In 2018, one of the projects she worked on for PBS as a field producer was nominated for an Emmy Award.

Company Profile

Comra Films is a Yemen-based film training foundation and production company, co-founded by Sara Ishaq and Yusra Ishaq. The company is made up of a team of highly experienced fixers, award-winning directors, producers and cameramen who combine knowhow, creativity and an independent vision with local access and expertise. In Yemen, film studies are non-existent, foreign media access is blocked, and political media outlets control the world’s view of Yemen and its people. Therefore, we believe that ‘now’ is the time for independent Yemeni filmmakers to reclaim their voice and change how the world sees our country and our struggles. At Comra Films, our objective is to promote independent cinema through high-quality training programs and film productions and preserve the essence of its past and present through powerful filmmaking.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Mehdi Hmili, Abdallah Chamekh
Directors



Moufida Fedhila
Producer



Contact

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Yol Film House
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Fouledh

Tunisia, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Psychological, Social Issues

In the largest steel factory of Tunisia, four workers who suffer from psychological and physical disorders are haunted by their colleague's accidental death. In an atmosphere wrought with social and political tension, their struggle will help them overcome their pain.



In the largest steel factory of Tunisia on the cusp of being privatized, four workers suffer from physical and psychological disorders after their close colleague dies in an oven explosion in front of their eyes. The four workers consult a psychologist to overcome their trauma. We discover through these sessions the intimacy of these four workers: Batfing, the young rap singer and drug addict who claims to see ghosts. Fethi, the former cinema projectionist who is losing his sight. Ali, the pious union delegate going through a painful divorce, and Tawfik who returns from chemotherapy and fights for his right to early retirement. A debate about their health problems develops into a broader discussion about the social and environmental conditions, facing strong repression from the establishment. The young generation of workers is tired of struggling against the system and wants to leave the factory while the older ones attempt to convince them to take over and unite against the administration which seeks to privatize the factory. A strike begins, and the four workers decide to stand together against the administration to raise their concerns. It is obvious that a change needs to happen in this factory of terror.

Director's Note

'Fouledh' is a total immersion in the intimacy of the world of Steel. In this fascinating world of resistance and courage, the workers have to face their own demons to survive, but they have to face the establishment also in order to save their factory from bankruptcy. It's a poetic and political film against oblivion, about these generations of the fathers, those who sacrificed their lives to build modern Tunisia with blood and bones. 'Fouledh' is a film about legacy and the transmission from one generation to another the values of work, dignity and sacrifice. The film will be shot completely behind closed doors. It is a metaphor for contemporary Tunisia. Within this factory of terror, we will discover a micro-society with all its aspirations, hypocrisy, violence and complexities. It's a film about personal commitment and choices that everyone must make in a tense social and political atmosphere. It's a challenging cinematic and human experience. It's like this film makes us discover the other side of life. It will not make any concession, neither aesthetic nor dramatic; it will be cruel and beautiful, funny and tragic—just like the life of workers in the Menzel Bourguiba Steel Factory.

Director's Biography

Mehdi Hmili is a filmmaker, screenwriter and producer. He was born in Tunis and graduated from the Paris Film School. While in France, he directed his trilogy in black-and-white about love and exile—'X-Moment' (2009), 'Li-La' (2011) and 'The Night of Badr' (2012). His first feature-length film, 'Thala Mon Amour' (2016), was selected in worldwide film festivals and won several prizes, among them the Best Original Screenplay and the Best Actress Award at Oujda film Festival. His last documentary film 'Fouledh' selected in La Fabrique Cinema at the 72nd Cannes Film Festival won several development prizes such as the El Gouna Film Festival award. A former football player, Hmili recounts his own story in 'Streams' his second feature-length film currently in post-production. Mehdi Hmili is also a Torino Film Lab Alumni, and lives and works between Paris and Tunis.

Abdallah Chamekh is a Tunisian filmmaker. His film 'Now and Here' was selected in more than 30 international film festivals, received the Grand Prix at Med Memories 2014. In 2017, he created 'CineLabo' an in-school environment for children to learn filmmaking, which is supported by The Tunisian Ministry of Culture. Abdallah Chamekh is currently preparing his documentary film 'Fouledh', a Tunisian-German production, and currently lives and works in Tunis.

Company Profile

Yol Film House is an independent Tunisian film production company that develops and produces original and innovative projects short and feature-length films selected and awarded in numerous festivals around the world. Our vision is to tell original and moving stories that provide a refreshing challenge for an international audience. The company plays an active role in supporting Tunisian and international talents with strong potential for international co-production and distribution. Our films were part of several international film festivals such as Cannes, Sydney, Milan, Clermont-Ferrand, Montréal, Paris, Los Angeles, Sarasota, and Cape Town. We produce films with a strong international experience, both artistic and financial, and an extensive network in the industry and in festivals. From our upcoming projects, 'Streams' is the second feature film of acclaimed young Tunisian filmmaker Mehdi Hmili.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2019

Mahmoud Kaabour
Director / Screenwriter



Alex Tondowski
Producer



Handala, The Boy Without a Face

Lebanon, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary

A treasure hunt, emanating from a sketch of a young refugee that has been circulating around the world for over fifty years.



Handala, the refugee Palestinian child, appeared in thousands of political caricatures to shed light on the Palestinian condition. He remained on his feet as the Middle East was engulfed with wars, becoming a hero for an entire Arab generation. As a child of the Lebanese Civil War and once a refugee myself, I always looked up to Handala and the stories of his resilience. Today, Handala has been making new appearances. As I chase his manifestations worldwide, I encounter fascinating stories of refuge, triumph, and artistry. I wonder, what is Handala trying to draw our attention to today?

Contact

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Director's Note

Handala, the homeless Palestinian 10--year old, was my personal superhero growing up in the Lebanese Civil war. I aspired to be resilient like him, while my childhood was engulfed in physical and human losses. When I became a refugee at age 10, I innocently believed that Handala's life and mine have Gotten intertwined. For the following three decades, Handala would appear in most places I have lived in, like a watchful friend, and a reminder of the tragic childhood of my generation. Handala has been appearing worldwide along with a worsening global refugee crisis. He carries with him a Palestine that has captured the imagination of the world, while a Palestinian state struggles to be born. The deeply--reaching affinity I felt to him has been felt by many others. I find it phenomenal that this graphic icon Would become a popular design to embody suffering. This is a film about an icon that transcended the Arab world it was born in. I want to tell it amid the crises of the present, with the heart of the child who always adored him.

Director's Biography

Mahmoud Kaabour is a Lebanese filmmaker, content strategist, and the founder of Veritas Films. He graduated in Film Production from Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema in Montreal before working for the National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His films 'Being Osama', 'Grandma, a Thousand Times' and 'Champ of the Camp' won top awards at festivals like Doha Tribeca, London International Doc Fest, DocsDF, Taiwan International Doc Fest and Dox Box, and were all broadcast internationally. In 2015, he was named to the list of the "100 Most Powerful Arabs Under 40". He is currently based in Berlin.

Company Profile

Tondowski Films is an independent production company based in Berlin, Germany. Our films include 'Song from the Forest' (Winner IDFA 2011), 'Born in Evin' (Berlinale 2019) and 'Gods of Molenbeek' (Opening Film, Visions du Reel 2019).

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2019

Lea Najjar

Director / Screenwriter



Alia Haju

Co-screenwriter



Matthias Drescher, Max Brunner

Co-screenwriter



Contact

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Kashkash

Lebanon, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Traditions

In a region torn apart by conflicting traditions, rapid modernization, recurring wars, forced migration, and a myriad of political struggles, we have discovered an unusual link— the age-old Kash-Hamam game of the Levant. As a pastime, vocation, heritage, or addiction, the game spans a unique apolitical network from Syria to Lebanon, connecting people of all religious sects and political views.



In a region torn apart by tradition, modernity, war, geopolitical spheres of influence, migration, and religion, I have discovered an unusual link—the old traditional Kash Hamam game of the Levant. As a pastime, vocation, heritage or addiction, the game spans a unique apolitical network from Syria to Lebanon, connecting people of all religions and political views. Kash Hamam is a game of chance played with pigeons over the rooftops of cities. Each player holds his own flock of birds on the roof and lets his pigeons circle above his house, hoping to lure his neighbour's pigeons to his roof and thus to enlarge his own flock. The fate of the pigeons is to be gambled from one player to the next. So, the film embarks on a journey through Lebanon, from roof-to-roof we dive into the realities of the luck hunters and their contrasting parallel worlds. Starting with being smuggled from war to safe land, being collected, gambled and tortured but, despite all, loved and admired for being the extension of our freedom which we do not possess on the ground. The doves act as narrative links, lead us to different places and connect our protagonists—a documentary portrait of a region in search of the common denominator in a society defined by differences.

Director's Note

Not only does pigeon fancying weave a unique network through Lebanon, but it is also the utmost reflection of every owner and their area. With this film, I see the opportunity to use the politically unencumbered perspective of the doves to fan out the realities of life in Lebanon in a way that penetrates through prejudices and stereotypes and draws an emotional landscape of the region. The Kash Hamem game across the roofs helps leave the player's sorrows on the ground. This is a matter close to my heart, driven by my love-hate relationship with my homeland, and hoping to bridge divides by portraying an unexpected yet tragic tale of unity. Although there are so many tragic fates, I want this film to be a homage to the dark but almost humorous paths we find to deal with our everyday lives and survive in our chaotic and often deeply unfair realities. This stubborn, almost schizophrenic attitude and the talent of the Lebanese people to redirect their sorrows and enjoy their lives as much as possible under all circumstances is what inspires me personally.

Director's Biography

Lea Najjar was born in Vienna in 1994 and grew up in Beirut. She graduated from the City International School in Beirut and received her Freshman at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 2013. She has been studying documentary directing at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg since 2014, creating several short films that have premiered in numerous international festivals. Currently, she is in the production of her Diploma film, 'Kashkash' documentary feature film funded by the SWR Young Documentary and the Doha Film Institute.

Company Profile

The Film und Fernseh-Labor (FFL) is a production company from Ludwigsburg, Germany, which has been realizing various projects for cinema, TV or online for more than ten years. We are active in fiction, documentaries and advertising. In the past, we have worked with numerous representatives of the broadcasting industry in Germany and produced award-winning films from the critically acclaimed social drama 'Shifting the Blame', comedies like 'Schmidt's Nine Lives' or 'Help, My Mother is having my Baby' to the Emmy-winning documentary co-production 'War of Lies'. We are currently working on the documentary 'Kashkash' which is being produced in Lebanon.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Sonia Ben Slama

Director / Screenwriter



Tania El Khoury, Cécile Lestrade, Elise Hug

Producers



Machtat

Tunisia, France, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Music, Women's Issues, Family

The daily life chronicle of Fatma and her daughters Najeh and Waffeh, wedding musicians in a small town in Tunisia.



Fatma and her two daughters Najeh and Waffeh, live in the neighbourhood of Bir Beranek in Mahdia, Tunisia. They are "machtat", wedding musicians. During the summer they go from one wedding to another to celebrate and bless the union of young women. When this period is over, they return to their work in the fields. Every morning they have to carry crates of potatoes and weed or glean tomatoes and peppers. Money runs out, and work is tough. Najeh and Waffeh follow opposite paths. Najeh, divorced for 12 years, is looking for a new husband to escape the authority of her brothers. Waffeh wishes to divorce from her violent husband but doesn't know where to go with her four children. And Fatma navigates between the two, praying that things will get better and that she can retire one day. Above all, the "machtat" never stop singing. Music is what keeps them standing, what fills them with life and what gets them out of their social status, at least for the summer.

Contact

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Director's Note

I met Fatma and her band when I was shooting my first documentary, 'Maktoub'. My cousin had hired them for her wedding. They intrigued me; they were different from other women I knew in Mahdia. They looked more confident and comfortable with their bodies. Some time after this first film, I called Fatma and asked to meet them and get to know them better. I felt that with them I could go on exploring what it means to be a woman in Mahdia, what I could have been if my father didn't choose to go to France. Through this film project 'Machtat', I will try to capture the contours of these women's existence and their contradictions. They are constantly torn between their duties as women and their desires as musicians, between the freedom of summer and the monotony of winter, between their financial independence and the authority of men surrounding them. The film will follow their daily life, during the seasons that give rhythm to their year: the summer season with the weddings, the autumn season with olives picking, winter and spring with work in the fields.

Directors' Biography

Sonia Ben Slama is a Tunisian-French documentary filmmaker, born in 1985. She grew up in Paris where she studied Art and Cinema at University Paris 3-Sorbonne-Nouvelle. During her second master's degree, at University Panthéon-Sorbonne, she directed two short documentaries, produced by Serge Lalou for Les Films d'Ici and Catherine Derosier-Pouchou for the Louvre museum. In 2015, she directed her first feature documentary 'Maktoub', produced by Madeline Robert and Charlotte Grosse for Les films de la Caravane. 'Maktoub' was selected in numerous festivals, including États généraux du film documentaire of Lussas, Djerba Doc Days - Grand Jury Prize (Tunisia), Arab Film Festival (USA), Zagora Film Festival - Special Distinction from Jury (Morocco), International Documentary Festival of Khouribga - Grand Jury Prize (Morocco) 'Machtat' is her second feature documentary.

Company Profile

Khamsin Films was founded in 2017 by Tania El Khoury. The company has several ongoing projects from the region including 'The River', the newest feature fiction film of Ghassan Salhab, (in post-production) and co-produced with the Postoffice (Lebanon) and Unafilm (Germany), 'Machtat', the second feature documentary of Sonia Ben Slama, (in development), co-produced with Alter Ego Production (France) and 'Heim', a TV series by Mohammad Abou Laban and Liwaa Yazji (in development).

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Spring Grants 2019

Mladen Kovacevic

Director / Screenwriter



Iva Plemic Divjak, Ruth Reid

Producers



Contact

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Merry Christmas, Yiwu

Serbia, Sweden, Germany, France, Belgium, Qatar / Mandarin / 2019

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues

60% of all Christmas decorations in the world are made in the Chinese city of Yiwu, a place of eternal Christmas-time, but where no one celebrates Christmas. An intoxicatingly gripping, slow-paced portrait of Yiwu and its workers, which enhances the irony of the city where even Christmas is manufactured.



Communist ideals have long lost their value in Yiwu, a city with 600 Christmas factories, in which Christmas as we know it is produced for the entire world. With rising wages, the workers in Christmas factories can now afford the newest iPhones, but they still live in crowded dormitories. All migrants in their own country, nostalgic for someplace far away, some miss their families left in hometowns, others miss their friends and lovers from the factories when they go home for holidays. The young generation is already tired of long factory hours, chemical fumes and glitter particles, and they do not care for their parents' wishes to get educated. Stuck in between Chinese tradition and the newly discovered Chinese dream, they want their own businesses, to be rich, to be independent, to be in love. In this melancholic, observational documentary, the alluring visual aesthetic enhances the geopolitical twist and the irony of modern-day China.

Director's Note

With unique access to the Christmas factories of Yiwu, this story is brought to cinemas for the first time, giving the camera a virgin quality, a chance to approach the subject in a subtlest naturalistic manner, to offer a genuinely deep insight into a yet unexplored world. 'Merry Christmas, Yiwu' will delicately combine the form of direct observational cinema (where narrative spontaneously unfolds) and poetic cinema (where the atmosphere and visual compositions strongly complement the narrative elements in a subtle romantic manner). This was in a modern way revived in world cinema by Asian directors like Hou Hsiao-hsien, Jia Zhangke, Wang Bing, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. The essence of this film's underlying offbeat atmosphere, central to my style of documentary filmmaking, is a contradiction between the sentimentality of Christmas imagery and the harsh realities of Chinese workers. The absurdity of the modern globalized world has rarely been so cinematically explicit as in the everyday lives of Chinese workers inside the Yiwu Christmas factories. The film will not rely on concepts of "hot topics" that can be very effective, but short-lived. 'Merry Christmas, Yiwu' is fundamentally an intimate cinematic piece with the ambition to remain relevant as a piece of film art for many years.

Director's Biography

After studying fiction film directing in Belgrade, London, and Cape Town, in the past several years **Mladen Kovacević** has wholeheartedly dedicated himself to documentaries—becoming one of the most internationally acclaimed Serbian documentary filmmakers of his generation. He's made a few successful commissioned films before his auteur debut, the unpretentiously offbeat 'Unplugged' that brought him Grand Prix at the leading national documentary festival in Serbia - Beldocs, and a premiere at Visions du Réel competition, followed by Hot Docs, CPH:DOX, FIDMarseille, DOK Leipzig. His second film, 'Wall of Death and All That' also premiered at Visions du Réel, and also won the Grand Prix at Beldocs. His latest, '4 Years in 10 Minutes' was awarded Special Mentions of the Jury at Visions du Réel, ZagrebDox, Belgrade International Documentary Film Festival, and the Grand Prix at Beldocs, was in competitions at Hot Docs, RIDM Montreal, and was selected for IDFA Best of Fests 2018. He has just completed shooting of 'Merry Christmas, Yiwu' in China. Presently, he is in development of two features 'Beginnings', to be shot around the world, and 'Koryo' to be shot in North Korea.

Company Profile

For the past five years, Horopter Film Production has been developing and producing feature documentaries directed by its founder and CEO, Mladen Kovacevic. The company has a continuous presence at relevant pitching forums, film markets and training programs (Eurodoc, Pitching du Reel, WEMW Trieste, Leipzig Copro Market, DocuTalents at Karlovy Vary). Mladen's first and second films - 'Unplugged' (2013) and 'Wall of Death and All That' (2016), are both critically acclaimed and well-travelled in the international festival circuit (Hot Docs, Visions Du Réel, CPH:DOX, Dok Leipzig, Sarajevo Film Festival, FIDMarseille) and internationally awarded, broadcasted and distributed - regionally by Croatian distributor Restart and worldwide by Taskovski Films. In 2016, Iva Plemic Divjak joined Horopter as a producer, focusing on international financing and project development, adding to Horopter's track record of ten years of her professional experience in production and self-distribution. Most of Iva's experience was obtained while working closely with the acclaimed Serbian director, Mila Turajlic, as a producer and distributor of 'Cinema Komunisto' (100+ festivals, 16 awards and theatrical distribution in Serbia, France, Croatia, Slovenia, UK and Italy) and as executive producer of 'The Other Side of Everything' (winner of IDFA 2017).

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Asmae El Moudir

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Lucie Rego,

Pauline Tran Van Lieu

Producers



Contact

Asmae El Moudir

Insight Films

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The Mother of All Lies

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary

A family's web of lies and one young girl's search to find the truth. Through her own voice, Asmae, daughter and filmmaker, flits between national and personal history to tell of the 1981 "Bread Riots" in Morocco and shows how this event connects with contemporary Moroccan society.



Asmae, a 28-year-old Moroccan woman filmmaker, doesn't have any pictures of herself as a child. The only one her mother could provide is an old photograph damaged by time, where we can barely recognize a little girl in the background. It is the only visual evidence she has from her childhood. But Asmae knows it's not her and she will play with this incident of the strange photograph to tell other stories that she doesn't believe as well. This sensitive subject will be the starting point of an investigation that unfolds the secrets of a Casablanca family. Using different personal stories of each family member to ground historical political events, Asmae shows how each story of each character contains some lie within it. This will be the plot's leitmotiv that will expose bigger events and slowly focus on the 1981 "bread riots" by inserting the riots into the story's weave. Through the memories of her mother, father or grandmother, Asmae is not only drawing a portrait of her family but one of Moroccan society as well.

Director's Note

The film takes place in the El Moudir's house—my family home—located in the neighbourhood of Hay Mohammadi, in Casablanca. As a film director, I carry many unanswered questions with me to this day. Some are personal, some are political, and I have decided to ask them now. I decided to investigate my childhood stories, to put them into words and to make them contradict themselves. My film will be marked by my will to unravel the stories that I heard as a little girl, the ones that my parents and grandmother always told me. Little by little, this narrative choice will allow me to ask my parents about the 1981 "Bread Riots", and how they lived through this dark and little-known event of Moroccan history that the government decided to suppress. In this sense, my goal is not so much to try to document the real story but rather to make a film about the multiplicity of points of view and plurality of interpretations that coexist within the same intimate space, regarding family, national stories and history. My desire to associate our family stories with the context of the "Bread Riots" consists in highlighting the overall situation in Morocco. I want to understand how the 1981 "Bread Riots" can embody the fragility of the current regime and the resonance this event has with contemporary Morocco.

Director's Biography

Director, writer and producer, **Asmae El Moudir** has been working in the audiovisual landscape since 2010 and produced numerous documentaries for Arabic channels such as Al Jazeera. Her last short film produced at French school La Fémis, 'Thanks God It's Friday, Anachronic Memories or the Friday Noon Couscous' was awarded in many prestigious festivals such as Sao Paulo Mostra, Beirut Film Festival, Africa Movie Academy Awards, etc. Staging her family in a chronicle about the couscous and the story of her communist uncle, was a way of talking about the political repression under the regime of Hassan II.

Company Profile

Insight Films is a production company created in 2014 by Asmae El Moudir. The company produced numerous documentaries for TV channels of the Middle East and Maghreb such as SNRT, Al Jazeera Documentary, BBC and Al Araby TV. The company has also produced Asmae El Moudir's short films.

Pauline Tran Van Lieu and Lucie Rego met in China in 2015 while they were working in Beijing. They decided to found Hutong Productions a few years later, to launch emerging artists, accompanying them over the long term. Since its founding, the company has received support from French Regional funds, the CNC's Video Innovation Fund, writing and music grants, Eurodoc, Marseille's FIDLab, Pitching du Réel and IDFA Bertha Fund.

Post-production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Myriam Bakir

Director / Screenwriter



Cécile Vacheret,

Jean David Lefebvre

Producers



Mothers

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic, Berber / 2020

Runtime: 70 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues, Women's Issues

A portrait of the daily life of Mahjouba Edbouche—founder of the association “Oum al Banine” (Mother of Children) which takes in and defends single mothers in Morocco.



Twenty years ago, Mahjouba Edbouche founded the association “Oum al Banine” (Mother of Children), which takes in and defends single mothers in Morocco. Giving a voice to this woman committed to women's rights and to the young women she welcomes, director Myriam Bakir takes us into their daily lives. She shows us the journey of these women, from their arrival at the association to the birth of their child and, sometimes, to reconciliation with their families.

Director's Note

The film is organized around Mahjouba's fights on all fronts to defend these mothers, from their first to their last day in the association. These young women embody the fear of punishment and the suffering of exclusion. Their trials reflect the weight of a heavy guilt as well as their desire for appeasement. The film turns upside down when Mahjouba receives Fatima, who eventually manages to reconcile with her family. One thing Mahjouba is sure of, forged on her commitment and experience: an attentive and non-judgmental listening, words put on the forbidden, and the truth revealed at the right time, can give back legitimacy, and joy of life, to these women who have been hidden in silence and solitude for too long. In counterpoint to the seriousness of the situations encountered, I want to use warm colours to convey to the film's image the softness and cheerfulness of the association's premises. The atmospheres shall reflect them as well: first through the choice of music, then thanks to the children's laughter and the nursery rhymes that we'll often hear in the background.

Director's Biography

Myriam Bakir, whose parents are Moroccan, was born and raised in Paris. After having directed two short films in France, she directed her first Moroccan short film, 'Samia' (1998). Her first feature film 'Agadir-Bombay' was released in 2011. With 'Mothers', Myriam Bakir makes her first documentary film. The director leaves the fiction and refers to the reality, that of the single mothers in Morocco supported by Mahjouba Edbouche. The film confronts the latter's action, the fate of these women and the law that condemns them.

Company Profile

Sedna Films is an independent production company, located in Paris and founded in 2004 by Cécile Vacheret. Sedna Films has produced and coproduced around 30 documentaries and fictions. Each one of them has been selected and awarded in several international festivals and have been broadcast on French TV channels, like France Télévisions, Arte, Canal+ and Ciné+. 'You and the Night' by Yann Gonzalez selected at the Semaine de la Critique in Cannes (2013), and more recently, 'Colo' by Teresa Villaverde, which had been selected at the official competition at the Berlinale (2017).

Contact

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Sedna Films

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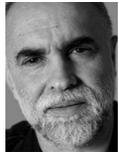
Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Karim Aïnouz

Director / Screenwriter



Marie-Pierre Macia

Producer



Contact

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Nardjes A.

Algeria, Brazil, France, Germany, Qatar / Amazigh, Arabic, French / 2020

Runtime: 85 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, History, Politics, Social Issues

On February 16th, ten days after Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his candidacy for a fifth presidential term, a popular pacifist insurgency erupted in Algeria. It swelled steadily into a revolution, the widest since independence in 1962. Nardjes, a young Algerian woman, joined the protests against the repression that has crippled the country.



March 8th, 2019, International Women's Day and the third consecutive Friday that the city of Algiers hosts a massive mobilization against the candidacy of Abdelaziz Bouteflika for his fifth presidential term. This date is also the starting point of this documentary film. It follows a day in the life of Nardjes, a young Algerian woman who finds in the protests demanding the resignation of their president also a space to claim what had been promised and stolen from her—her future. It is 65 years that separate the protests of 2019 from the struggles of independence of Algeria in which her own family has suffered so much. Wounds that Nardjes carries with her today. Underneath the vision of freedom and democracy, three generations are related in time. This film is an intimate portrait of the soul of the young, the betrayed generation. The generation that made president Abdelaziz Bouteflika resign after nearly 20 years in power. Nardjes is one voice backed by the hundreds of thousands, chanting in the streets. But she is also a female voice in a male society. This film follows her while her whole country is marching towards an uncertain, but yet their own future.

Director's Note

This was my first trip to Algeria; my father's country of origin, which I only knew by name and photos and always inhabited my imagination as a promise of belonging. I was there to develop a very personal project that aims to investigate this complex relationship between my parents' unlikely love story, the Algerian War of Independence and myself. Arriving in Algeria earlier this year was absolutely brutal – the city was electrifying around an atmosphere of struggle and hope. Suddenly filming 'Nardjes, A.' came over as something extremely vital. This is an urgent film. The chanting of the streets and the raw energy of hope in a city occupied by a feverish youth convinced me that for those 24 hours, there was nothing more important to be portrayed: Algiers was shouting.

Director's Biography

Karim Aïnouz is an award-winning film director, screenwriter and visual artist. His first feature, 'Madame Satã', premiered in Cannes Un Certain Regard in 2002. He also directed 'Love for Sale' (2006, Venice Orizzonti), 'I Travel Because I Have To, I Come Back Because I Love You' (2009, Venice Orizzonti), and 'The Silver Cliff' (2011, Cannes Directors' Fortnight). In 2014 'Futuro Beach' screened in the Berlinale Competition. The documentary 'Central Airport THF' premiered at the 68th Berlinale (Panorama) and won the Amnesty International Prize. 'The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão', his latest feature, won the Un Certain Regard Prize at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival.

Company Profile

Founded in 2007 by Marie-Pierre Macia, former Director of the Directors' Fortnight (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs) of the Cannes Film Festival, MPM Film has produced and co-produced internationally awarded films by established directors such as: 'The Turin Horse' by Béla Tarr (Silver Bear, Berlinale 2010), 'Xenia' by Panos H. Koutras (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2014), 'Zama' by Lucrecia Martel (Out of Competition, Venice 2017); and worked with young directors such as the Romanian Adrian Sitaru with 'Hooked' (Venice Days, Venice 2008) and the Kenyan Wanuri Kahiu with 'Rafiki' (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2018).

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Corine Shawi

Director / Screenwriter



Myriam Sassine

Producer



The Passion According to Andrew

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Biography, Family

When the director's father's body failed unexpectedly, two years ago, the hospital rooms became her family's new home. A place where they cook, live and sleep—a place where to observe the human condition and the power of faith, while daily struggle becomes an ordinary way of living.



“I can't believe this is happening”, I said to myself when my father's body failed unexpectedly, two years ago. Who would have known that he would end up being paraplegic after all this time? We were living a life we could call normal before it proved us wrong. The hospital rooms became our new home where we could cook, live, sleep and gather with the few remaining friends and the family members. My mother, a long-time believer, prays to God and the saints wishing desperately for a change in the situation. When nothing seems to go right, we try to call for a miracle. With my camera, I follow my mother in her perpetual prayers, by questioning her faith and what is keeping her going. I film to try to accept what life put us through, to understand the weakness of the body, its complexity and how it can affect the soul. If the body fails to move, does the soul cease as well? Will my father's strong hopes help him move again? Through my lens, I explore the human condition and the power of faith while observing a daily struggle become an ordinary way of living.

Contact

About Productions
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Director's Note

My relationship with my dad was vague. He wasn't thoroughly involved in our upbringing, and he had a bad temper. With time, I resigned to the possibility that our relationship will always be fraught with estrangement. When I started making films, I found myself gravitating towards the personal; be it friends or family. The 2007 short, Oxygen, which is about my brother, was a case in point. In getting a closer perspective of my brother, I developed a new-found empathy for my father. I started understanding where he came from. In September 2016, my dad became paraplegic, only four years after his retirement. He went to the hospital, on his feet, to do some exams. Two days later, he developed paraplegia. He received the news that nothing can be done to him at the hospital bed. This was the first time I saw him cry. He grabbed my hand and said, “I became a vegetable.” He then immediately wiped away his tears and apologized. This is where this project was born; not as a means of distraction, but more of a tool to cope with my dad's illness; a tool to fathom the new, unfathomable reality of my family.

Director's Biography

Born in Lebanon in 1981, **Corine Shawi** directed her first feature documentary ‘Les Femmes Bonnes’ from 2000 to 2006 observing the life of Sri Lankan women. She then directed several short documentaries. ‘Oxygen’ (2007) squeezes her family to discuss a taboo matter, ‘Affinity’ (2007) reflects on friendship's boundaries, ‘Film of Welcome and Farewells’ (2009) depicts loneliness and death in Copenhagen. In 2010, ‘Je t'aime Infiniment’ premiered in CPH: DOX 2010 and examines the fragility of human beings. In 2013, ‘E muet’, concerned with friendship, love and its expression, premiered in FID Marseille international competition and got screened in MK2 Beaubourg, KVIFF, JCC-Tunis among other international venues and festivals. Corine has been a consultant for the National Film School of Denmark, helping to implement an exchange program of filmmakers between Lebanon and Denmark. She has also been teaching documentary filmmaking since 2011 at Saint Joseph University, Lebanon.

Company Profile

About Productions produces feature films and documentaries with a distinctly Arab voice, expressing the identity of the region. Since 1998, the company has managed to bring together an important network of Arab and Lebanese artists, and produced award-winning films such as Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's ‘A Perfect Day’ (2005), ‘I Want to See’ (2008), and ‘The Lebanese Rocket Society’ (2012); Ghassan Salhab's ‘The Last Man’ (2006) and ‘The Valley’ (2014); Georges Hashem's ‘Stray Bullet’ (2010); Hany Tamba's ‘Melodrama Habibi’ (2007); Mohamad Malas's ‘Ladder to Damascus’ (2013); Vatche Boulghourjian's ‘Tramontane’ (2016); Rana Eid's ‘Panoptic’ (2017); Mohamed Siam's ‘Amal’ (2017); and Badih Massaad and Antoine Waked's ‘A Certain Nasser’ (2017). About Productions has a strong partnership with MC Distribution, a company dedicated to promoting new films from the Middle East along with direct and priority access to the sole art-house theatre in Lebanon, Metropolis Cinema. The company's main objective remains to help structure Lebanese and Arab cinema craft into a solid industry.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2019

Rahma Benhamou El Madani

Director / Screenwriter



Amina Haddad

Producer



Contact

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The People

Algeria, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Biography, History, Identity, Immigration, Women's Issues, Youth

Through a meeting with the elders of the ACT troupe, the atypical fate of Kateb Yacine is exposed while remaining anchored in the present with a picture of contemporary Algerian youth and its questions, mirroring those of Kateb Yacine.



Houssam, Koceila, Djura, Melha, Lhaj, and Yanis, all in their twenties, live in Kabylia in Bejaia. For the purposes of this film, they are re-actualizing selected pieces of Kateb Yacine's work. From the poem "Nedjma, the poem or the knife", to passages from the novel Nedjma, through excerpts from the "Encircled corpse" and some excerpts from "Mohamed take your suitcase". Kateb's work, like a starry polygon, takes shape thanks to the good humour of today's Algerian youth—in French, Algerian and Tamazight. Mahfoud Lakroune, Kateb Yacine's favourite comedian, supervises this updating work. After a rich exchange of views on the essential questions of today's Algeria caught up in the revolution, a new look at Algeria and the Maghreb is taking shape. The way in which the past and the present intertwine and how they nourish each other moves the narrative forward. As Algerians sing Harraga, sacrificed youth, the atypical destiny of playwright Kateb Yacine and Algeria is exposed.

Director's Note

A real transmission takes place through the theatre, the transmission of the work of a poet considered more as a myth because not read enough. Kateb Yacine fights segregation by talking about his own story and identity. He acts out his own origins, his tribe, and turns it into a main character of his work. Racism is part of his struggle. Yet the racism that he suffered in his own colonized country becomes a farce in his work. My point of view is that his work is alive. The observer of his identity and of his people is here revisited thanks to the updating of his play. Is this updating made possible by the theme of emigration as well as by the modernity of its articulation? This work is a challenge. Are the youth going to manage? Are the elders going to enable this continuity? This is what we ask the young comedians of the Bejaia theatre. A certain theme will prevail Amazigh language, the choice of this popular language, the representation of women in the play and in Kateb's work in general, while the essential theme is that of exile, through the character of Mohamed Zitoune, and of farce. Acting is a mix of improvisation and scenes written after these discussions.

Director's Biography

Rahma Benhamou El Madani

was born in Algeria to a Moroccan family and grew up in France. She is a graduate of linguistics, literature and cinema. Returning to her homeland, she created the documentary 'This is my Home', which was released in 2003. In 2012, she completed 'Tagnawittude', a musical documentary. Her fiction film 'Meilicheng' tells the tale of emigration and exile. In 2016, her first book 'Alone, Inked in the Ground' was adapted into a short film. Her latest work, 'United Towards Kateb', is a documentary that follows the troupe of A.C.T led by Kateb Yacine, and she is currently working on a documentary titled 'Oranie'.

Company Profile

Plein Cadres was created by Rahma El Madani and Stéphane Ittel in 1996 and has co-produced many documentaries. In 2006, Rahma decided to create Plein Cadres SARL, and the association sold her catalogue. The documentary musical 'Tagnawittude' was produced and distributed by Plein Cadres in, 2012, and toured several international festivals (Dubai, Montreal, Arizona, Chile, Tennessee, New York, etc.). Other notable projects include the documentary 'Je suis chez moi', the fictional feature film 'Meilicheng', and 'Belly Dance in Belleville'. In 2005, the company produced another short fiction film 'Stronger than all the rest' along with several dance videos and music videos. Currently in post-production is 'Oranie, Back to the Native Country', supported by the CNC, and the documentary 'Unis Vers Kateb'.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Mohamed El Aboudi

Director / Screenwriter



Pertti Veijalainen, Hind Saih, Lamia Chraibi

Producers



School of Hope

Morocco, Finland, France, USA, Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Politics, Environmental & Social Issues, Youth, Identity, Tradition

‘School of Hope’ tells the story of a nomad tribe struggling to get education for their children, and a young teacher trying to help them while suffering himself under the government’s indifference toward rural regions.



Climate change and overgrazing have brought poverty to the nomad tribes of the High Plateau of Atlas in Morocco. The Dehbi tribe is one of the oldest and last tribes left. Their ancestral way of life has been significantly tested by a decade-long drought and can no longer provide them with a living income. Now faced with the necessity to settle down, they feel more lost than when wandering with their cattle in the endless desert. Education becomes an essential struggle that also divides the community. To let a child go to school is to deprive oneself of a precious workforce. It might seem that there is not much hope for the children of the ‘School of Hope’, but the Dehbi are determined not to give up fighting.

Contact

Hind Saih

Bellota Films

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Director’s Note

While I was making my previous film, ‘Dance of Outlaws’ (Häätanssi), I realized how a lack of education is at the root of many problems in society. It makes people unaware of their rights, unable to deal with the bureaucracy—it blocks their chances of pursuing a better future. I wanted to explore this theme further, and so I travelled to see the life of the nomadic tribes, who occupy the arid highlands of Eastern Morocco, unfolding in an area of almost 26,000 square kilometres, lie people forgotten and ignored by society. For these nomads, building a private school is one small way to fight the powerful system that is trying to eliminate their voice. But the road to a better future is like the land where the nomads live, full of hard rocks and thorny bushes.

Director’s Biography

Mohamed El Aboudi was born and brought up in Morocco. He graduated from the University of Fes, Morocco with a BA in Theatre in 1991 and with an MA in Film & Television at Bond University, Australia in 1997. In his work, Mohamed has been interested in strong human stories. He has made documentaries about asylum seekers, mothers of immigrants, artists, and a girl with Down Syndrome. His latest films explore the theme of becoming an outsider in your own society. Mohamed’s documentaries have been shown at various film festivals all over the world.

Company Profile

Bellota Films is an independent production company, founded in 2009 by Hind Saih and Dominique Barneaud, both of whom have a strong desire to create. With 20 years of production experience in France and abroad, we place innovative writing and procedures at the heart of our activity. Our films are passionate and motivated by the desire to share unique and surprising insights into the contemporary world and reality. At the heart of our activity is a selection of projects for television and cinema, whose writing is sometimes combined with animation, graphic arts or multimedia. Our core business is documentary, but we also develop works of fiction and feature films.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Jihan Kikhia

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Mohamed Soueid

Producer



Searching for Kikhia (working title)

Libya, Lebanon, Qatar / English

Genre: Creative Documentary, Human Interest, Family, Human Rights, MENA, Politics, Identity

A daughter unravels the disappearance of her father, the peaceful opposition leader to Qaddafi, and pieces together her mother's 19-year search to find him.



When director Jihan Kikhia was six years old, her father disappeared. He flew to Cairo and never returned. As a result, her mother began the search for him, launching her family into a maze of complex emotions and international politics. This documentary takes the audience on a raw and reflective journey as Jihan pieces together a father she barely knew, while unravelling his politically motivated disappearance, which is shrouded in mystery until this day. Mansur Rashid Kikhia, was the former foreign minister of Libya, ambassador to the United Nations, and a human rights lawyer. In 1980, he defected from the Libyan government, becoming the peaceful opposition leader to Qaddafi's regime. Kikhia was widely supported and unofficially crowned the next leader of Libya, but his obsessive loyalty to his country and determination to reason with his "brother" Qaddafi led to his death. In 2012, Kikhia's body was found frozen and fully intact near Qaddafi's palace. As the director and main character, the film is navigated from Jihan's perspective, as she tries to understand the country that both created her father and also killed him. She approaches politics not as an external or distant subject, but as a lived experience that penetrates deeply into every human relationship—even between a little girl and her father.

Contact

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Director's Note

In my documentary film, 'Searching for Kikhia', I go through memories in real-time, trying to create a clearer picture of my father. The process of making this film is helping me understand the importance of a father figure and the impact of losing a father on a family, a community, and even a nation. As I tell the untold story of my father, I am also telling an untold story of Libya, a country still drowning in civil war and suffering from the aftermath of a 42-year long dictatorship. Some of the questions I ponder are, "How do I navigate my identity without my father and country?" and "How much of my personal experience reflects the overall Libyan dilemma today (especially in the Libyan diaspora)?" With an unwavering desire to seek truth, even uncomfortable and dark ones, I explore Qaddafi not only as a product of Libya, but as a harsh reflection of human nature. Aside from the meddling of other nations and the tendency of power to corrupt absolutely, I ponder questions such as, "What part of Libyan society and culture created Qaddafi's power?" and "What can be learned from the rise and fall of Qaddafi?" Using political stories to better understand our intrinsic and arcane humanity, I also explore

reconciling opposites in the film: my father is considered an undisputed hero and Qaddafi an undisputed monster. However, in my attempt to more deeply connect with my father and understand his fate, I choose to see my father and Qaddafi as equally complex and human.

Director's Biography

Jihan Kikhia is a director, producer, and writer. She holds a BA in International and Comparative Politics with a concentration in Human Rights, Development, Philosophy, and International Law from the American University of Paris, and an MA from NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study with a focus on art education, storytelling, and healing arts. Her body painting project & exhibit "Painted Stories, Spirited Bodies" was recognized in NYU's Confluence online magazine, and her article "Libya, my Father, and I" was published in Kalimat Magazine: Arab Thought and Culture, 2012. Jihan is committed to sharing and discovering how the creative process can be a vehicle for freedom and empowerment.

Company Profile

Desert Power LLC is an art and film production company owned and operated by Jihan Kikhia, director, visual artist, and academic consultant. The company is embarking on its first documentary film 'Searching for Kikhia' (working title). Desert Power has received grants from the Doha Film Institute, International Documentary Association, The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, Hot Docs Blue Ice Fund, and the Malmo Arab Film Festival. The company is committed to openly discovering and examining the complex realms of the MENA region's diaspora and identity through honest and introspective storytelling.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Lina Soualem

Director / Screenwriter



Marie Balducchi

Producer



Contact

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Their Algeria

'Leur Algérie' / France, Algeria, Switzerland, Qatar / Arabic, French / 2020

Runtime: 70 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary

The longstanding journey of exile of my grandparents Aïcha and Mabrouk: a couple of Algerian immigrants living in France for sixty years, whose lives were a succession of separations and silences.



After 62 years of living together, Aïcha and Mabrouk, my grandparents, are separating. They now live in two separate buildings, facing each other. I didn't understand their separation. No one explained it to me. I don't know their story. No one told it to me. Their silence troubled me. Aïcha and Mabrouk got married in 1952, in the village of Laouamer in Algeria, without knowing each other. Two years later, they settled in Thiers, a medieval French town where they have been living for over 60 years. Mabrouk worked his entire life as a polisher in a knife-making factory. Aïcha followed a husband she did not know and started a family with him. As I try to understand their separation, it leads me back to Algeria and to the silence that exile has imposed on two generations, my father's and mine. I discover the persistent suffering of their uprooting. An uprooting they can't describe. With them, and with the help of my father Zinedine, I'm off to search for this story of exile, of bonds that are unmade, of suffering and pride—which profoundly affected my grandparents and an entire generation of Algerians who immigrated to France.

Director's Note

I come from a generation that grew up in the deafening silence of the Algerian War, a generation born to grandparents who apparently had "no story". But in fact, to terribly silent grandparents. Their recent separation, after 62 years of marriage, was an electroshock and was the inciting moment that triggered my desire to make this film. I was submerged with fear when they separated; I realised they might disappear without passing on their story. I needed to understand where I come from and to understand my family's place in the history of Algeria and France. Through the intimate portrait of Aïcha and Mabrouk, this film shines a light on the distances we carry within ourselves and perpetuate with those we love, while unpicking and documenting the indelible suffering of a colonised mind. Their intimacy becomes a mirror of the collective history of the Algerian immigration in France.

Director's Biography

Lina Soualem is a French-Palestinian-Algerian filmmaker and actress. After studying History and Political Science at La Sorbonne University in Paris, she started working in journalism and as a programmer in film festivals, looking to combine her interests for cinema and the study of contemporary Arab societies. After working as a programmer at the International Human Rights Film Festival in Buenos Aires, Argentina, she moved back to Paris where she is now based. She worked as a programmer for the Palest'In&Out Contemporary Art festival in Paris. She acted in three feature films and currently works on film and documentary projects as a director, author and assistant director.

Company Profile

AGAT Films / EX NIHILO is a collective of 8 associate producers that combines the individual work of developing, producing and promoting the filmmakers' works with a collective approach based on financial, editorial and human unity between the producers. The company produces both cinema and television, fiction and documentary and is well-established thanks to great successes.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2019

Dalel Ziour

Director / Screenwriter



Yacine Laloui

Producer



Contact

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The Voice of the Wild

Algeria, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Immigration, Music, Politics, War

Tinariwen is the emblem of a revolutionary musical movement that emerged in the 1980s on the shared borders of Mali, Niger, Algeria and Libya. Their songs reflect the transformation of the culture of the Tuareg and echo their new socio-political messages. By mixing images of their lives in the Sahara, personal stories and exclusive recordings, 'Sawt el Wahuch' retraces the extraordinary journey of Abreybone, legendary artist and icon of the Tuareg people and the history of one of the most influential bands of Tuareg blues—Tinariwen.



In the heart of the Sahara live Abreybone and his pals Kiki, Akalaï, Diara, Japonais, and Abin-Abin, with whom he has shared years of exile, combat, and music. These men work, raise their children, and create songs, admired by the young Tuareg who became their “foster” children. The young Tuareg gather around the veterans and become privileged interlocutors. A dialogue begins then between those veterans and the new generation. Their stories resonate with the current context, highlighting historical facts that marked all those who witnessed them and explaining why history is repeating itself today. These veterans do not take part in the new Tuareg revolution. They witness the efforts of the next generation to face new challenges. They continue their lives on the margin of the fighting, each day a struggle for survival and lost freedom. They strive to fill the inner void left by the war during musical evenings between friends. Their songs are the original recordings of their wanderings, fighting, friendships, and the best way to ensure that their messages travel beyond their borders.

Director's Note

My point of view as an Algerian woman living within this community of ishumar is very peculiar and gives me a privileged position. My point of view reflects the relationship that I have established with Abreybone and his friends over four years and my understanding of these characters. I am the only woman among men in a region beset by war. The presence of an Algerian woman, equipped with a camera in this male universe and this forbidden territory, attracts the attention of the Algerian authorities and armed men patrolling on the Malian side of the borders. The framing of the movie is subjected to many constraints: filming alone, the unpredictability of situations and characters, the fact that some characters and places have to remain anonymous. Because of these constraints, I developed a different way to deliver the story than a frontal approach. I combine the reverse shots with the off-cameras to tell the story of these men differently. I want to get the viewer immersed in the life of this community as if my camera could be forgotten, though, it is precisely always present as a living being who tells the story of my encounter with these men.

Director's Biography

Born in Algiers in 1980, **Dalel Ziour** works as an assistant director, cinematographer and filmmaker. As a child, she discovered photography with her father during their travels through the Algerian Sahara. In 2003, she obtained her Masters in Documentary Production at the University of Saint-Denis in Paris. In her work, Dalel explores the themes of belonging, displacement, identity and migration. Music and travel are at the heart of her artistic process. For five years, she co-directed short films with young people from challenging backgrounds in several European countries. Since 2010, Dalel lives in the Algerian Sahara where she carries out documentary research on the assouf music of Tinariwen and Ishumar.

Company Profile

Laith Media was founded by film producer Yacine Laloui. The company has produced the feature films 'The Righteous Path', 'Operation Maillot', 'Zabana' and co-produced 'The Man of Oran', 'Masquerades', 'Délice Paloma', as well as fifteen short films and documentaries. These productions have been internationally broadcast, and several of them have won awards.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2019

Dea Gjinovci

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Sophie Faudel, Britta Rindelaub

Jasmin Basic, Heidi Fleisher

Producers



Contact

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Wake Up on Mars

'Réveil Sur Mars' / Switzerland, France, Qatar / Albanian, Swedish / 2020

Runtime: 74 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary

A Roma boy living in Sweden dreams of building a spaceship to escape the reality of his family's pending asylum request, and the mysterious coma-like illness that has befallen his siblings.



Furkan, the youngest member of a Roma family living in Sweden, attempts to come to terms with the mysterious illness of his two sisters. Ibadeta and Djeneta have been in a coma-like state for several years, victims of what has been named the "resignation syndrome." Traumatized by the thought of being sent back to Kosovo, their homeland, their minds and bodies have suddenly gone to sleep. In central Sweden, his family attempts to rebuild a normal life, but so far, their asylum applications have been refused one after the other. Furkan tries to escape his reality by building his own spaceship to fulfil his dream: to go live on Mars and save his two sisters. At the core of this film lies this one question: "What happens to human beings, and in particular children, when all hope is gone?"

Director's Note

I want my documentary to elevate the discourse around asylum-seekers and the way they are treated— particularly focusing on their mental health. The syndrome of resignation is one of the most extreme expressions of hopelessness. What is particular to this illness is that it only affects children. These are traumas that they will carry on to their adulthood. I want the audience to experience the narrative through children's understanding of migration; delving into their imagination to understand their inner life and how they cope with uncertainty and trauma.

Director's Biography

Dea Gjinovci is a Swiss-Albanian director/producer with a background in Economics and Anthropology; she splits her time between Paris, London and Geneva. She is a 2019 Sundance Talent Forum alum and 2019 Film Independent Fellow. Her award-winning documentary short 'Sans le Kosovo' screened at several international festivals and won Best National Film at Dokufest International Film. Her debut feature-length documentary 'Wake Up on Mars' received support from the Sundance Film Institute and Ford Foundation JustFilms, and won the "Perspectives d'un doc" pitch award at Visions du Réel 2018. It has been selected as part of the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. In June 2018, she co-founded Amok Films with fellow filmmaker Antoine Goldet in Paris. Her work has been described as "a pure embodiment of human dignity" with a sense of "beauty, poetry, sensitivity and wonder".

Company Profile

Mélisande Films is an independent film production company documentary created in 2009 by Sophie Faudel in Paris. We are focused on documentaries and storytelling that approaches historical, society and cultural issues from a challenging and yet creative point of view. Our aim is to explore and question our contemporary society and bring important issues to the public eye. We work with confirmed filmmakers such as Jérôme Prieur, Véronique Lagoarde Ségot or Samuel Lajus as well as emerging talent currently working on their first feature documentaries or web series.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Mohammad Shawky Hassan

Director / Screenwriter



Nadine Khan

Co-screenwriter

Maximilian Haslberger

Producer



Contact

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Watch Before Deletion

Egypt, Germany, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Docufiction, History, Politics, Social Issues, Women's Issues

An episode of a radio show revisiting the life of an Arab music icon takes an unexpected turn, when one caller refers to a sensational yet untraceable film that she had allegedly starred in. The subsequent debates reveal the complex social and political fabric that shaped a society's notions of gender and censorship.



An episode of a radio show revisiting the life of an Arab music icon takes an unexpected turn when one of the callers refers to an “adult film” that she has allegedly starred in thirty years ago. While some claim to have seen the film, popularly known as “El Kotchina”, providing detailed descriptions of some of its scenes, others strongly believe that it was entirely constructed in the collective imagination of the Egyptian public through networks of rumour, gossip and hearsay. The subsequent conversations about the alleged film and the research journey they prompted reveal the complex political, social and cultural fabric that has shaped an entire society's notions of sexuality, masculinity and censorship.

Director's Note

My film practice is dedicated to exploring the critical role sound and language play in shaping social and political identities in Egypt. Using various forms of sounds and experimenting with them against images and texts, I attempt to highlight the significance of the intangible aural and linguistic forces in defining everyday experiences, shaping popular culture and manufacturing collective memory. Whether by deconstructing the language of Egyptian folktales in ‘It Was Related to Me’ (2011) or using the fascist rhetoric of Egyptian political talk shows in ‘And on a Different Note’ (2015), my goal has never been to simply analyze these forms of cultural production as such, but rather to explore possibilities for destabilizing the sonic and linguistic systems upon which they were built and create narratives significantly different from the ones they were originally intended for. In ‘Watch Before Deletion’, which will be my first feature-length film, I am highlighting a particular sonic form which plays a pivotal role in the construction of social relationships in Egypt and the Arab world: The very act of “talking” and the circulation of rumour. The film is revealing how the construction and circulation of El-Kotchina through gossip networks cannot be

separated from the sociopolitical context within which it emerged, particularly in the absence of transparent media outlets and with the infiltration of state-backed neoliberal narratives into every aspect of life from the 1960s up until today.

Director's Biography

Mohammad Shawky Hassan is a filmmaker living and working in Cairo, Egypt. He studied philosophy, film directing and cinema studies at the American University in Cairo and Columbia University. His films include ‘It Was Related to Me’, ‘On a Day like Today’ and ‘And on a Different Note’, which premiered at the Berlinale Forum Expanded, and was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). A recipient of the Fulbright Fine & Applied Arts Grant and Open Society's Civil Society Leadership Award, his work has been supported by AFAC, Fonds Sud Cinema, YATF, and Al Mawred among others.

Company Profile

Founded in 2010 by Maxi Haslberger, Amerikafilm produces national and international auteur cinema and video art. Exploratory ventures are the primary concern of Amerikafilm, to support and discover new, avant-garde filmmakers as well as artists aspiring to innovative moments in the language of cinema. The Film ‘Asta Upset’ (2014, Director: Max Linz) premiered in the Forum of the Berlinale 2014 and was distributed in German cinemas by arsenal-distribution in January 2015. ‘The Humanitarians’ (2014, Director: Maximilian Haslberger), a co-production with the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, won the First Steps Award – Best Documentary and was screened in numerous festivals, among others at the Berlinale 2015. Again with ‘Weitermachen Sanssouci’ (Director: Max Linz), Amerikafilm was present at the Berlinale in 2019. The film will be distributed in German cinemas in late 2019. Currently, the feature films ‘Uchronia’ (Director: Azin Feizabadi) and ‘Golden Twenties’ (Director: Sophie Kluge) are in post-production and are set to premier 2019. Further projects are in development, financing and production.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2019

Angie Obeid

Director / Screenwriter



Bart Van Langendonck

Producer



Contact

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Yalla, Baba!

Lebanon, Belgium, Qatar / Arabic, English, French

Genre: Creative Documentary, Immigration, Politics, Road Trip, Social Issues, War

In their newly bought car from Belgium, Angie takes her father Mansour on the same road trip he had made 39 years ago, from Brussels to Beirut. The path once taken, is no longer the same, and neither will be their relationship.



In 1980, 32-year-old Mansour travelled to Belgium with his friends, bought cars, and set off on a long road trip fuelled by a love of adventure and discovery back to Lebanon, a country already tired from five years of an eventual 15-year civil war. Today, after 40 years, Mansour (70) is a retired geohistorian that still lives in Beirut and has not travelled ever since. It was only after his daughter Angie (30) left for Belgium to study that potent memories of this most adventurous time of his life have suddenly reawakened. Angie invites her father to Brussels to look for a new car and go on the same journey. The path, previously taken by Mansour, is no longer the same. On the 4,000 kilometres once crossed, countries have disappeared, and others were born. Some borders have faded, while others have emerged. Dictatorships have risen and fallen. Wars were extinguished, and others broke out, causing deaths, destruction and immense displacement along those same roads he once drove across. And Lebanon, caught between the sea and two conflicts, is no longer accessible by land. The journey of rediscovering the distance between Europe and Lebanon becomes an intimate discovery of the new father/daughter relationship beyond the borders of the traditional family context they are usually framed in.

Director's Note

I have always found documentary filmmaking as a way to confront matters of my life that I otherwise avoid. The camera somehow allows me to engage in the harder questions and have a dialogue. Today, having chosen to live in Brussels, at a safe distance from home, Lebanon, I find myself wanting to shift feelings of mutual disappointment between my father and I, to feelings of mutual acceptance, understanding, and peace. My father has always shown signs of longing for travelling beyond the familiar. He often romanticizes and recalls his experience driving from Brussels to Beirut, in 1980. In 'Yalla, Baba!', I will embark on a road trip with Mansour, my father, similar to the journey he made 39 years ago. By taking this path—that is no longer the same—I see an opportunity to reach out for the young Mansour and understand the decisions he had made when he was my age. What I hope for is to have the much-needed conversations to find a parallel between us or even just, to agree to disagree.

Director's Biography

Born in Beirut in 1988, **Angie Obeid** obtained a Bachelor's degree in Film Directing and Scriptwriting from Notre Dame University—Lebanon (2010) and a Master's degree in Documentary Filmmaking, DOC NOMADS—Portugal, Hungary and Belgium (2018). She has been working, since 2009, as a producer, director, assistant director and editor on numerous documentaries for Al-Jazeera Documentary Channel, in addition to several independent documentaries. Her first feature documentary 'I Used to Sleep on the Rooftop' (2017) won the special mention award at FIDMarseille 2017 and has been screened at several festivals in Europe. Her short documentary 'Pacific' (2019) was selected for Visions du Réel and Hot Docs 2019. Angie is currently preparing for her second feature-length documentary 'Yalla, Baba!'.

Company Profile

Savage Film is a film production company founded in 2007 by Bart Van Langendonck and operating from Brussels in association with Eyeworks Film & TV Drama (Warner Bros. group). The company established itself internationally with Michaël R. Roskam's film 'Bullhead' (Rundskop), a box office hit in Belgium as well as a César and Oscar® nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. The film sold to over twenty territories and was awarded at numerous festivals. More recently Robin Pront's debut 'The Ardennes', another "Belgian noir", became a box office and festival success as well, while the astonishing docu-fiction 'The Land of the Enlightened' by first-time director Pieter-Jan De Pue conquers the world out of its world premiere at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. In 2017 Michaël R. Roskam's third film 'Le Fidèle' (aka Racer and the Jailbird) was launched at the Venice and Toronto film festivals. Savage Film produces fiction films and documentaries with subjects just as versatile as its directors' backgrounds. Daring or controversial, Savage Film projects often balance on the boundaries of genres, be it fiction, documentary or art.

Development

Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2019

Djamel Kerkar

Director / Screenwriter



Narimane Mari

Producer



Contact

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Firefly in The Darkness of Time

Algeria, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: History, Politics, Social Issues

'Firefly in The Darkness of Time' explores national myths and heroes, and how they evolved throughout the history of Algeria.



'Firefly in The Darkness of Time' is a documentary essay that draws its substance from historian Mohammed Harbi's life trajectories. These intrinsically refer to the history of a complex country, Algeria, and its post-independence chimerical utopias. To film Mohammed Harbi is to be naturally bound to him in a form of attachment, bound to a structured and unstructured expanse. By expanse, I in no case mean "The Fatherland" or "The Nation", but rather a time sequence in the history of a given world, a history that belongs to us all. A world that hovers over us, like would a celestial body. What I call structured expanse is that which is linked to his activity as a historian. Harbi is one of the foremost historians on Algeria. He has taught and extensively published on the subject. It would, therefore, be close to impossible to aspire to a film that would push aside these facts. However, confining oneself to this space alone would also negate the magic of cinema.

Director's Note

I deal with the survival of memory and utopias, the ghosts of history that constantly reappear. I offer them a space to unfold and a body of incarnation, that of a man: Mohamed Harbi, his environment, his intellectual activity and his trajectory. Coming from, and having lived in, a country and a culture where transmission is in the form of resourcefulness, and where the historical memory guarantor has been lost; as a being who has lost his shadow. Our protagonist's particularity is to have lived history as a leading actor but also to have thought of it as a historian. At a very young age, he became involved in the struggle for Algerian independence, but, as he said, was it a choice or an obvious one? Very quickly, however, in the fight for independence, the project of another possible revolutionary society was imposed on itself. This desire for a film emanates as a survival linked to a collective anguish, with which I personally want to confront myself—to at least draw the contours of the shadow.

Director's Biography

Djamel Kerkar was born in 1987 in Algiers. After studying economics, and having been an animator and programmer at the Chrysalis Film Club; he studied cinema at ESAV Marrakech. Kerkar directed two short films, 'Earth is full of ghosts', and 'Archipel'. 'Atlal' his first feature film received the First Prize at FID Marseille 2016, as well as two special mentions from GNCR and international online critics and was selected in more than 40 Festivals. He works and develops several projects in hybrid forms and explores the idea of memory mapping.

Company Profile

Allers Retours Films is committed to producing engaging and creative cinema. It selects and works with the projects of artists who involve themselves in contemporary history through film and the visual arts.

Post-Production

Feature Essay

Spring Grants 2019

Reham Alkassar

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Temporarily

Syria, Germany, Qatar / Arabic, German

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Biography, Immigration, Social Issues, War

Reham, a Syrian student living in Berlin, is kicked out of her room because she could not pay the rent on time. As a long journey to find her new apartment begins, she goes from one encounter to the next, discovering new parts of herself in the process.



Reham is a 24-year-old Syrian girl who studied acting in Syria. Because of the war there, she moved to Germany in 2014 to study at the University of Arts. After a period of stay in Berlin, she faces financial difficulties forcing her out of her home because of her inability to pay the rent. When she leaves the house, she calls one of her acquaintances in Berlin and asks if she can stay in his house until she finds a place. After several days, the police stop Sharif from working because he works without regular papers. Sharif asks her to leave the house because he had to rent her room to someone else who was able to pay the expenses. Thus, Reham starts looking for accommodation in Berlin where she meets different kinds of people. But no one is willing to give her room, so she spends most of her time roaming the streets aimlessly. At the end of the film, we see Reham sitting on the street by night for a rest. As she falls asleep, someone approaches her and steals her bag and runs away.

Director's Note

By the year 2014, I left Syria to Germany to continue my study there, and since then, I have lived the experience of continuous transition. I moved to several cities, houses, rooms, without any moment stopping, and my life had changed to a permanent searching journey for a place of stability, at that time I became a recurring scene in the street when I was picking up my suitcase. And this experience is the one that generated the first idea for the film. I conducted research for several months then I arrived at the end to choose the main characters (non-professional actors) to be in the film. The output options had naturally grown out from the idea itself where the camera tried to play a documentary role without direct interference in the scene, I kept a distance between the camera and the actors and I let the long scenes flow inside houses without cutting through long still shots, I also opened a field to improvise the text at the moment of shooting. In lots of film's scenes, we can see the main character Reham is walking in Berlin's streets without a clear goal, which reveals the sensory meaning to her instability.

Director's Biography

Reham Alkassar is an actress who was born in Damascus. After graduating from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, acting department in Syria, she travelled to Berlin to continue her masters' study in special art strategies at Weissensee University, Berlin. She participated in a wide range of works, both on stage and on camera. Her work in cinema includes 'The Day I Lost my Shadow' directed by Soudad Kaadan (Beirut 2017) and 'Strahinja' directed by Stefan Arsenijavic (Belgrade 2018). Reham also directed her first short film 'Toi Toi Toi' (Berlin 2015).

Company Profile

Crystalfilm offers corporate video production services as a video production company and agency. Initially set up in 2007 to produce the award-winning feature film 'Rubicon or: let's talk about hell', a major focus has become to provide corporate video production in London for Europe or wherever they can help to create an impact, grow businesses and audiences. Through its wide range of experience and rooted in a passion for film, Crystalfilm provides fresh and imaginative visual solutions for all budgets. Company founder, Frank Gelmeroda, interest is film whether it is feature film, short film or videos for corporate video productions services. He is excited about film/video as a visual form to communicate, to entertain or to teach.

Contact

Crystalfilm

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Post-Production

Feature Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2019

Kamal Aljafari

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



An Unusual Summer

Palestine, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 80 mins

Genre: Docufiction

Without human interference or awareness in the making of the image, my father's camera captures an absurd choreography of characters and events. By repetition and routine of their daily lives, the passersby make themselves the actors of this film.



My father installed a surveillance camera and recorded the scenes in front of the house, continuously. Without human interference or awareness in the making of the image, my father's camera captures an absurd choreography of characters and events in the so-called "Arab Ghetto" of Ramle in today's Israel.

Director's Note

Without human interference or awareness in the making of the image, my father's camera captures an impossible choreography of characters and events; their feelings, thoughts, wonders, and who we have become. There is a system. The neighbours going to work, their children going to school. A young couple in-love passes by holding hands. People arguing about a parking space. Municipal workers. Cats and dogs looking for food. Two horses. Birds flying. Plastic bags blowing in the wind. A man riding a bike. The night. A crime. A chase. A mystery. Cars passing, people walking, time and actions repeating, sometimes freezing and fading. The way in which a kid stands, that lets you know he is worried. A woman is unsure of which way to go. You can see it in her steps. The way my father smokes a cigarette, tells me he is exhausted. In 2015, my father passed away. In one scene, he is captured as a shadow standing at the balcony. His shadow is growing and covering the entire scene. The tapes were found left in the backyard, next to the washing machine. I am touched by what is, in reality, banal. I am captivated by what my father's camera recorded.

Director's Biography

Kamal Aljafari works with moving and still images, interweaving between fiction, non-fiction, and art. Kamal's past films include 'Unusual Summer' (2020), 'Recollection' (2015), 'Port of Memory' (2009), and 'The Roof' (2006). He was a featured artist at the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar (NYC) and was a Fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute and Film Study Center.

Company Profile

Kamal Aljafari Studio is an artist-based film practice company.

Contact

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Short Narrative

A Young Girl at a Window

Boussa

Hope

J'ai Le Cafard

Just Like Boys!

The Present

Sixteen

This is Not a Drill

The Unlucky Hamster

Short Experimental or Essay

The Air and The Worlds

The Dragon Blood Island

Children and War in Yemen: Child Soldiers

In the Middle

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Mahdi Ali Ali

Director / Producer



Clara Monier

Screenwriter

Elise Petrovic

Producer



A Young Girl at a Window

Qatar / French

Genre: Drama

A fledgling French actress dreams of her first big break amidst a challenging professional environment and the political unrest of the “yellow vest” demonstrations.



Clara is a young French actress who decides to leave the overcast sky and the aggressiveness of Paris. She leaves to go back and live with her parents in the South of France in Sainte Maxime city. The city is really peaceful, but she doesn't lose sight of her professional goal, becoming an actress. She goes back and forth between Paris and St Maxime to audition. Clara's journey swings between hopes and disappointments, dreams and truth, contemplation and dynamism. She is surrounded by various characters who will guide her, some indirectly and others more directly.

Contact

Mahdi Ali Ali

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Director's Note

Poverty is one of the reasons for suicide, alongside with losing hope for living. But, if you have an ambition, you should fight for it till the end. Seldom do animals commit suicide because of poverty. In 2010, I directed 'The Gulf Habibi', in which I forecasted the international financial crisis, especially in France. Through my observation of the Parisian life, I had an intuition that life in Paris will be too harsh in the future. Nowadays, we see in the news the yellow vest movement in Paris. The people fight against the state and tax laws. Through the script of the 'A Young Girl at a Window', we can see through the perspective of a French actress how life is difficult for her profession and the challenges that she must face. This film is a continuation of 'The Gulf Habibi' and this is what has excited me about it. It is forecasting that the young generation of Paris will live outside even though

their life and careers are in Paris.

However, I would like through this film to say that we shouldn't lose our ambitions that drive us to live. The moments of this script describe the feelings for what is happening in France, which is one of G20. We know there is more difficult and ruthless life in the other regions of our world. By a wide-angle shot, we travel to Clara's grey world through her little window. Also, with a close-up angle, we venture to her deep uncomfortable feelings through the atmosphere around her. Her inner journey is similar to her outer journey but with a little hope when she sees the life of a cat.

Director's Biography

Mahdi Ali Ali is a Qatari filmmaker and a manager in the Training and Education Department at the Doha Film Institute. Through the years, he has successfully worked with major industry players in providing filmmakers in Qatar with comprehensive learning initiatives. Mahdi has contributed as Executive Producer and supervisor on more than 30 short films produced by the Institute. He holds an MFA from EICAR, the International Film School of Paris, and has made short films including 'Champs Elysées, I Love You' (2009), 'The Gulf Habibi' (2011), as well as other shorts for Al Jazeera Documentary and Al Jazeera Children's Channels.

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Azedine Kasri

Director / Screenwriter



Simon Serna,

Médéric De Watteville

Co-screenwriters

Sylvain De Zangroniz

Producer



Contact

Laetitia Stoffel

Bien Ou Bien Productions

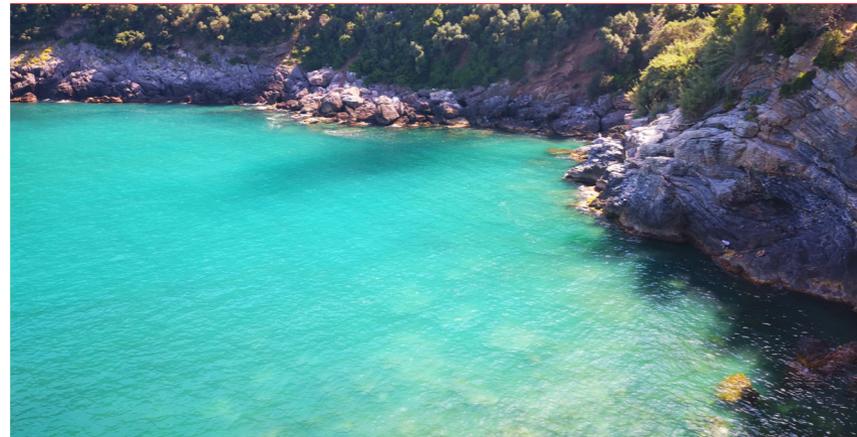
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Boussa

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Comedy, Social Issues

‘Boussa (The Kiss)’ is a social comedy, much like the great Italian comedies. It’s colourful and told at a steady pace with especially funny and touching situations, staging the absurd that can sometimes prevail in Eastern societies.



Meriem and Reda are two young Algerian lovers, who have still not managed to exchange their first kiss. This simple desire will turn into a real obstacle course for them. Reda despairs, but Meriem has an idea; they’re going to register for a first aid class. Will they finally get to kiss each other during the mouth-to-mouth exercise?

Director’s Note

One could easily believe that the difficulties of dating in public are simply a religious problem in Algeria, but it cuts much deeper than that. It’s a profoundly cultural problem. There is a very special modesty deeply rooted in Arab societies. Though desire, naturally, is just as strong as anywhere else. I also grew up in the rural Ardennes region of North-Eastern France, where it was also at times quite complicated to kiss... But the difference, in Algeria, is the law. It strictly forbids any intimate gestures in public, especially if you’re not married... And it is this transgression of the law that I want to talk about here. It was when I returned to Algeria to present my second short film Timoura, that I had the idea for Boussa. I observed my 20-year-old cousin accomplish a real obstacle course to exchange a simple kiss with his girlfriend. I found the whole situation funny, touching, and revolting at the same time. A few days later, on Facebook, an Algerian friend shared an official statement from his university in Béjaïa. It stipulated that couples would not have the right to meet and celebrate Valentine’s Day within campus limits. I could

not believe my eyes. The idea of Boussa was born. I believe it is high time to shake things up in order to change attitudes and I hope that my film, which also speaks of revolt, a romantic revolt, will participate in accompanying this popular momentum. This kiss is much more than two lips touching. It is a people’s right to exist. It is a people’s right to express themselves.

Director’s Biography

Azedine Kasri is a French and Algerian filmmaker. He began his career as an actor and performed in several feature films. In 2017, he directed his first self-produced short film ‘507 hours’, and then attended La Fémis—where he directed ‘Timoura’, his second short film.

Company Profile

Founded by director Zangro in 2011, Bien ou Bien Productions considers his production work as a craftsman making stories with powerful feelings, for film and television. We desire to highlight creations from our social realities by highlighting diversity. A diversity which resurrects the universality of feelings and human passions. With this aim, we have built our entire catalogue with a true density of content but also a plurality of styles and tones. Supported by many private and public partners, our films stand out in festivals around the world and reflect our production desire: to promote, to measure, filmmakers to whom we recognize a singular eye on the world in which we live. Bien ou Bien Productions received the Young Producer Award 2018 from France Télévisions, which rewards the first six years of a production company for the excellence of its creations and is one of the top ten producers to follow in the world according to the American magazine Variety in 2019.

Development / Production

Short Narrative

Spring / Fall Grants 2019

Abdulla Al Janahi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Hope

Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation, Action, Comedy

Unhappy with the disability he is born with, a newborn baby sea turtle leaves the nest and starts his journey to the sea.



The short film 'Hope' is about a newborn baby sea turtle named Aqua, born with a disability of having one fin smaller than the other. Unhappy with the disability, he leaves the nest and starts his journey to the sea. After overcoming several obstacles from both human pollution and predators by using his mind and witnessing a life-changing scene, he finally arrives at the end of his journey and enters the sea grateful with what God gave him. The story of Aqua aims to teach its viewers two things; never look at what you don't have, but at what you have, and also to never give up.

Director's Note

Ever since growing up, my best friend was the Disney channel. Watching the animation movies and cartoons made me enter into a different world—the idea of creating a character and making it move and interact with other things always interested me. Owning over 30 animals and turtles being more than half of them, I decided to combine my love for animation and animals together, and I came up with 'Hope'. The short will have its comedic, action and drama scenes as well as act as a conservation awareness message. Unfortunately, many people don't consider any consequence that arises from their actions as long as it does not affect them personally. And we can see from the short movie that human pollution affects the lives of the beautiful newborn turtles. Either by misleading them or hurting them or even killing them. They already have many obstacles to overcome the second they are born; they don't need anything extra.

Director's Biography

Abdulla Mohammed Al Janahi

graduated from Nottingham University in the UK with a bachelor's degree in Finance Accounting and Management. He has a passion for animation and recently entered into its beautiful world. He has written several scripts for feature films and has worked on a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes. He is currently writing two new short films.

Company Profile

GreenTree Production is an animation company based in Doha, Qatar. Founded in 2017 by Abdulaziz Khashabi and Abdulla Al Janahi, GreenTree currently specializes in creative animation pre-production. The company worked previously on several projects including a feature film, several short films and a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes. The company is currently working on a new short film which is due for release in 2020.

Contact

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Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Maysaa Almumin

Director / Screenwriter



Eiman Mirghani

Producer



J'ai Le Cafard

Kuwait, Egypt, Sudan, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 14 mins

Genre: Depression, Friendship, Change

A woman in her forties struggles to make sense of her downhearted mood until she encounters a cockroach in the office toilets.



A woman in her forties struggles with keeping up appearances in a highly driven corporate office. When she develops a friendship with a cockroach she meets in the office toilet, it becomes both her saving grace and cause for angst.

Contact

Maysaa Almumin

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Eiman Mirghani

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Director's Note

At one point in my life, I had nothing to complain about. I had a wonderful husband, great children, a fantastic career, everything I could ever want and need, yet still, for two years I endured sleepless nights, low energy, lack of self-worth and self-loathing. When a doctor diagnosed me with clinical depression, it was a profound moment of realization for me of something that I was unable to recognize. With the false general impression that depression is only triggered by tragic events, it becomes hard for some to understand that seemingly picture-perfect lives may hide depression, so much so that even the one that suffers depression may equally be as dismissive of all the symptoms they feel. Furthermore, many have become so adept at coping with struggle; they become incapable of identifying it and therefore, unable to address it. This film is about that moment of realization, refusing to accept a giant emotional intruder in one's life, taking off that shoe and having a go at getting it out of your life by giving it a whack! "J'ai le Cafard" is a French expression; it translates as "I have the cockroach" and also means "I am depressed".

Director's Biography

Maysaa Almumin is currently living and working as an Assistant Professor in design in Qatar. She grew up in London where she was trained and practiced in architecture after which she moved to Kuwait and then Qatar where she started, acting and scriptwriting since 2011. She has had acting training with Scandar Copti and Daniel Suissa and has been involved in film projects in Kuwait, Italy, Egypt and Qatar. Maysaa wrote, directed and performed in short film-based artwork 'Rites of Passage' and 'Calling of the Congress' as explorations of the role and character of design/set/objects within narrative film, which were exhibited at the Voice of Feminism exhibition in October of 2018. Maysaa is currently in post-production on her AFAC and DFI granted short film due for completion in early 2020.

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Amel Guellaty

Director / Screenwriter



Asma Chiboub

Producer



Just Like Boys!

Tunisia, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Coming of Age, Social Issues, Women, Youth

Eya and Sofia, ten and twelve, are sent to the local grocery store by their mother. They seize the chance to have an adventure in the nearby forest where, usually, they're not allowed to go.



Eya and Sofia, two sisters of ten and twelve years old, are sent to the local grocery store by their mother. They seize the chance to have an adventure in the nearby forest where, usually, they're not allowed to go. The woodland, both stunning and terrifying, becomes a setting for their games. They go deep inside it, full of enthusiasm, because, for the first time ever, they're free to do whatever they want, with no one to watch them, just like boys! But freedom comes with a cost. Sofia loses her younger sister in the vast forest. When night falls, the only thing she can do is return home without Eya.

Director's Note

In a lot of countries, girls, since a young age, do not enjoy the same freedom nor carry the same duties as boys. They don't grow up in the same space. Whereas boys can enjoy the public sphere, girls are confined to the private area of the house, helping their mothers in daily chores. 'Just Like Boys!' Tells the story of two young sisters who have one dream: to spend a day just like boys, in other words, to spend a day free to do whatever they want. Here, Eya and Sofia are getting lost in the forest next to their house. This forest is a character in its own right in the film. With its chiaroscuro lighting, green and brown as its only colours, the forest is stunning yet terrifying. It establishes a kind of tension with which I like to play. But this is not a horror film or a thriller: in fact, this is more like a tale. Freedom comes with a cost. This is what the girls will find out quickly. But no matter the dangers, they will have spent an exceptional day when they lived fully, just like boys.

Director's Biography

Amel Guellaty is a Tunisian director and photographer. After studying law at the Sorbonne, she began working in film as an assistant on several feature films such as 'Après Mai' by Olivier Assayas, 'Foreign Body' by Raja Amari, and 'La Blessure' by Abdellatif Kechiche. Between 2009 and 2017, she directed two short documentaries 'Born in the Spring', and 'Les éboueurs de la mer'. In 2017, she directed her first short fiction 'Black Mamba', produced by Atlas Vision. The film was selected at more than 60 international festivals and won 15 awards.

Company Profile

Atlas Vision is a Tunisian-based production company. It produced several short films like the award-winning Amine Chiboub's 'Why me?', and Amel Guellaty's 'Black Mamba'. Equipped with an editing room and a mixing and recording studio, it performs post-production services. The company also produces commercials and TV content and provides line production services. Atlas Vision is currently developing emergent directors' features, like Amel Guellaty's 'Tunis-Djerba'.

Contact

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Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Farah Nabulsi

Director / Screenwriter



Hind Shoufdani

Co-screenwriter

Ossama Bawardi

Producer



Contact

Ossama Bawardi

Philistine Films

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The Present

Palestine, Jordan, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama

On his wedding anniversary, Yusef and his daughter, Yasmine, set out in the West Bank to buy his wife a gift. Between the soldiers, segregated roads, checkpoints, queues and guns—how easy would it be to simply go shopping?



Yusef is a family man from the West Bank, battling enormous queues at dawn to get to work every day, exacerbated by severe back pain and surrounded by military checkpoints. On his day off, to celebrate his wedding anniversary with his wife Noor, he takes their daughter Yasmine on a trip to buy a surprise gift. The celebratory plan starts off well, but eventually, Yusef has to grapple between parenting and the humiliating realities of the checkpoints they become entangled with. Along the way, they meet many others enduring similar setbacks and daily indignities. Yusef overcomes the small but brutal realities, withstands the pain in his back and tries to motivate Yasmine to cultivate hope. However, by nightfall, as their patience shatters into fatigue and cold, the gift that was intended as a surprise is under threat of not making it home, and they find themselves in danger. Can Yusef suppress the mortification he endures and the debilitating pain in his back to overcome the limitations forced on them? Will little Yasmine succumb to the trauma of the degradation of her father, or will her courage help them triumph in the face of barriers colluding to destroy their day?

Director's Note

'The Present' is a short film about the importance of human dignity. I wrote the story based on my own experiences as well as observing others at checkpoints and from discussions with Palestinians living these frustrations. My aim is to define a pure and loving relationship between Yusef and his young daughter, while trying desperately to maintain normality in a very abnormal situation. I want to invite audiences to reflect on the human dynamics required to cope with such perverse and stressful circumstances. We will film completely in Palestine, allowing for an unparalleled authentic experience and representation with the right set backdrops, actors, accents and atmosphere. Saleh Bakri, the well-known and talented actor, felt drawn by the story and script, and is already committed to play the role of our protagonist, Yusef. We are going to create high definition, gritty, high-contrast and saturated cinema. Mostly handheld, using the ARRI ALEXA, we will shoot in 2K. As a first-time director, I want to make sure the audience is emotionally focused on the arc of the characters and the trajectory of the plot, and not distracted by excessively artsy angles or camera tricks.

Director's Biography

Farah Nabulsi is a Palestinian filmmaker and first-time director. She left the corporate world in 2015 to start working in the Palestinian film industry as a writer and producer of short fiction films, exploring Palestine related topics that matter to her. This includes 'Today They Took My Son', endorsed by renowned Director Ken Loach, screened at the United Nations and officially selected to top international film festivals. She co-wrote 'The Present' in 2018 and with a deep desire to pursue the art of film directing, she is currently in pre-production and fundraising to make this film a reality.

Company Profile

Founded in 1997, Philistine Films is an independent production company based in Jordan and Palestine. The company is known for its interest in challenging, thought-provoking and original films from directors with distinctive visions, and has established itself at the forefront of independent cinema in the region, producing films for both big and small screens. Philistine Films was created to support new voices and to offer a platform for the emerging independent Arab film scene. The company's goal is to focus on the development and co-production of independent feature and documentary films, and to find unconventional stories and fresh narratives. We hope to challenge the creative, financial and practical obstacles that confront filmmakers working outside the mainstream. Philistine's productions have been selected for the Festival de Cannes twice, screened in the Berlin, Toronto and Venice International Film Festivals and the Tribeca Film Festival, among more than 300 other festivals. Philistine-produced films have won numerous awards, and one was a finalist for an Academy Award.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Sameh Morsy

Director / Screenwriter



Mohamed Fawzy

Co-screenwriter

Muhamed Taymour

Producer



Contact

Muhamed Taymour

Fig Leaf Studios

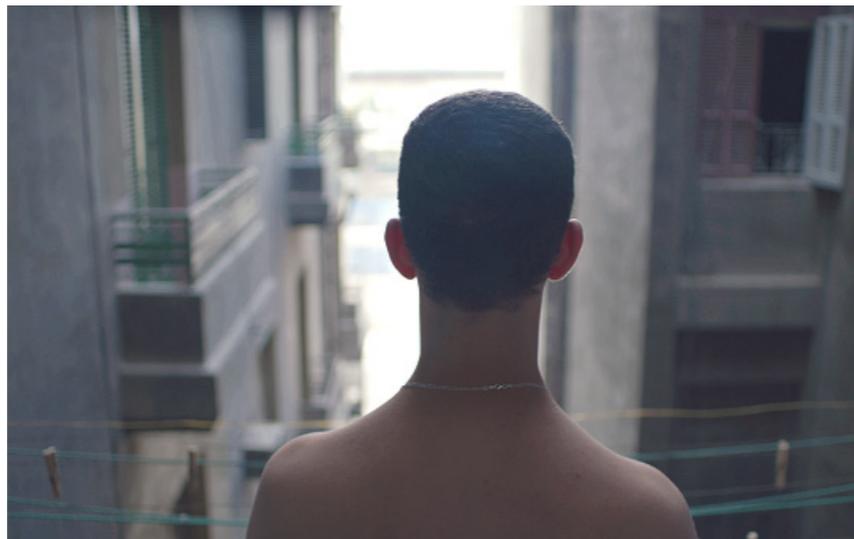
m.taymour@hotmail.com

Sixteen

Egypt, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Coming of Age, Social Issues, Youth

Sixteen-year-old Adam must hide behind a burqa before going out into the streets of Cairo, for a reason only he knows.



In order to say his last goodbye, Adam hides behind a Burqa and goes out into the streets of Cairo.

Director's Note

After the revolution, a lot of young people became depressed because they lost all hope for change. Most of them are on anti-depressants, if not doing drugs. From time to time, we read, or hear from friends, about young people committing suicide. I want to explore the feelings of loss that my society has experienced in recent years, especially around the unexpected death of younger people. In the story, we follow Adam very closely, exploring his inner emotions as he struggles to say a final goodbye to his dead girlfriend, and to resolve how to remember her. I believe I should make this film have a hypnotic rhythm, fear creeping into the protagonist and the audience very slowly and stealthily. I think the story exposes the fears and hopes in Adam, who lost the most precious thing in his life: Aya. But it also suggests the fears and hopes of an Egyptian youth mourning freedom.

Director's Biography

Sameh Morsy is an Egyptian filmmaker based in Cairo and Brussels. He has a bachelor's degree in German Literature. He also worked as an AD on various commercials and feature films before moving to Europe. In 2012, Sameh moved to Prague, the Czech Republic to study Directing at FAMU where he earned his diploma in one year. He later went on to do his master's degree in EICAR Film School in Paris. His last short film 'Fifteen' premiered at Toronto Film Festival 2017, and several other festivals around the world.

Company Profile

Fig Leaf Studios is a full service, professional production company based in Alexandria since 2005 that produces award-winning and officially selected feature films, short films, documentaries and visual art. Their work features at prominent film festivals such as Venice, Berlin, Dubai, London, Karlovy Vary and Sao Paulo, with projects including 'Dream Away' (2018), 'I Have a Picture' (2017), 'The Visit' (2016) and 'Mice Room' (2013) among others.

Production / Post-Production

Short Narrative

Spring / Fall Grants 2019

Nadia Al Khater

Director / Screenwriter



Justin Kramer

Producer



This is Not a Drill

Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Psychological

In the wake of a radioactive blast, a young pregnant couple faced with almost certain death are torn by a decision that will decide their fate.



In the wake of a radioactive blast, a young and pregnant couple Maya and Malik follow instructions from the president's subsequent announcement—Stay inside and seal all potential passageways from toxic air. However, they soon find contradictory information online, pointing out the possibility that the presidential statement was just a fake video from the terrorists themselves. Instead, in order to survive the radioactive blast, they must immediately drive away from the epicentre of the attack. Trust issues boil over as Malik and Maya are torn by the decision that will determine their fate. Should they stay, or should they go?

Director's Note

In the morning of January 13, 2018 residents of Hawaii received the worst news of their lives. On their mobile phones, an emergency alert read: "BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL." Shock, horror, and panic ensued for thousands of people. Family and friends called each other to say their last words. Reports of what those texts looked like read: "Honey take shelter... I love you". It took 45 minutes for it to come out via another alert that it was, in fact, just a false alarm. Simply, an employee had "pushed the wrong button" and mistakenly alerted the island of a nonexistent threat. Also in the early 2018, better "deep fake" technologies emerged. Departing from earlier attempts, new algorithms made them significantly more convincing in simulating "digital humans". These technologies use artificial intelligence neural networks to accurately animate videos of individuals in a variety of ways. In other words, it became possible to create fake videos of anybody- famous actors, politicians, or even your friends. I intend to dramatize the intersection of these separate developments. The first representing changes in communication that have allowed

for the ultra-fast transmission of information, and its consequences on society. The second demonstrates the frightening and staggering capability to convincingly manipulate such information. This is not a story about the future. This is the story about our world as it is today, and the underestimated ramifications of current technologies. Never before has it been so easy to manipulate millions of people into believing untruths. This is the story of relationships, under pressure, knowing not what they can trust.

Director's Biography

Nadia Al-Khater is a young Qatari woman passionate about stories. After graduating from Georgetown University, she began a career in the dealing room at HSBC. Her lifetime love for filmmaking inspired her to write and direct her debut short film 'This Is Not A Drill', tackling the consequences of fake news on an information-saturated society.

Company Profile

Made up of talented, experienced and creative storytellers, producers, documentarians, animators, photographers and filmmakers, The Film House is an award-winning Doha based film, video, and multi-media production company unlike any other in the region. With a wealth of local knowledge and with Qatar's community in mind, the company is primed to foster local talent and to redefine visual storytelling in the region. The Film House is home for high-calibre international and local productions.

Contact

Nadia Al Khater

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Post-Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2019

Abdulaziz Khashabi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Abdulla Al Jananhi

Producer

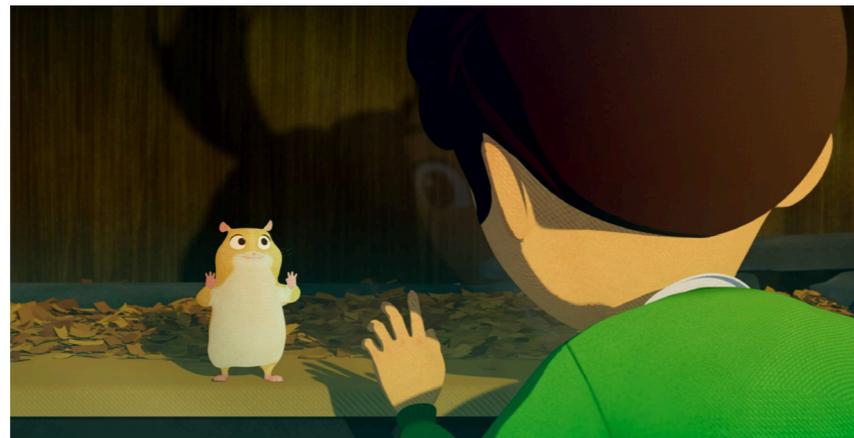


The Unlucky Hamster

Qatar, Indonesia / No Dialogue

Genre: Animation

Fluffy is a cute little hamster who just can't catch a break! Every day he patiently waits in his cage at the pet store for someone to pick him.



Fluffy is a cute little hamster who just can't catch a break! Every day he patiently waits in his cage at the pet store for someone to pick him. Dreaming of a new home, he thinks he has finally been rescued when a mysterious man approaches. But poor Fluffy's dream soon turns into a living nightmare, as his new owner has ulterior motives for the purchase.

Director's Note

As I grew up watching Disney and Pixar films, I was fascinated with their wonderful colours and appealing characters. Moreover, I was inspired by the creativity of delivering an idea or a lesson through comedic animated storytelling. A style that brings laughter and entertainment to viewers of all ages, while at the same time, an experience which they can learn from. In 'The Unlucky Hamster', my goal is to show that no matter what you do, you won't escape from what you are destined for.

Director's Biography

Abdulaziz Khashabi is a Qatari engineer and filmmaker. He graduated from the University of Portsmouth in the UK and holds a bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering. He has a passion for animation films, ever since he grew up watching cartoons and Disney classics. Abdulaziz aims to become one of the best-known animation filmmakers in the region. He has written numerous scripts including a feature film, several short films, and a 15-episode traditional Qatari series. He has directed one short film and produced another one.

Company Profile

GreenTree Production is an animation company based in Doha, Qatar. Founded in 2017 by Abdulaziz Khashabi and Abdulla Al Janahi, GreenTree currently specializes in creative animation pre-production. The company worked previously on several projects including a feature film, several short films and a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes. The company is currently working on a new short film which is due for release in 2020.

Contact

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Production

Short Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2019

Rana Ashraf

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Ghada Fikri

Producer

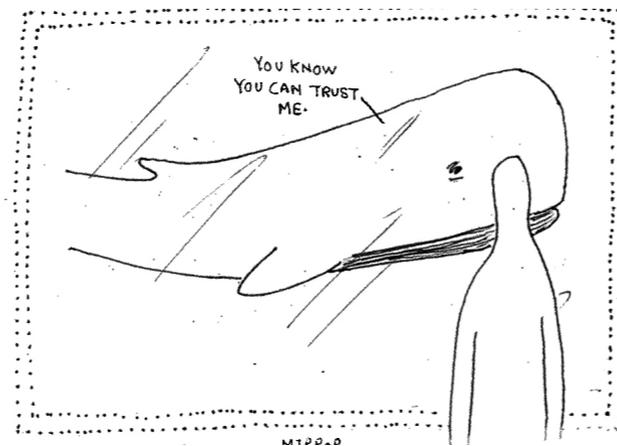


The Air and The Worlds

Egypt, Qatar / English

Genre: Animation, Psychological

A contemplative journey of three parts that follow a mute poet named "This Person". In a dreamy stream, lightly illustrating wonderings This Person has on notions of familiarity, language, impermanence and the strangeness of everything.



'The Air and the Worlds' is a conceptual animation guided by a witty and sleepy character named "This Person", who happens to be a mute poet. The first part starts with a storyline that articulates the character's loss of familiarity and language. The story later dissolves, taking us through different contemplative illustrations of the strangeness of everything. Through abrupt waves of poetry, the film is a quiet dialogue with the strangeness of pain, remembrance, healing and the everything-ness of everything in between. It all then slows down in part three; a calmer representation of exhaustion, the search for grace, anchors, intimacy and sleep. The film is an attempt to compose and compact particular intimate complexities in fluid and accessible ease (and accessible strangeness).

Contact

Rana Ashraf
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Director's Note

This film is a manifestation of my own processing journey of very altering personal shifts, losses and healing, over years in which I ventured in and out of many worlds and realities. I write now from a layered place somewhere near all of that. This project is the kindest embodiment I could wish for, that very tenderly and playfully speaks to many of my own personal transformations through these recent years. It started in 2015, then I recreated it in 2017 when I was invited to exhibit at the Dakar biennale, while preparing for its second exhibition in Cairo, I realized how this piece needs to come to life, through motion and sound design that fits its style and flow. I started envisioning its transformation into a short animation. I drafted a storyboard, then later experimented through animating some illustrations with a friend of mine to test and further develop my vision for it. Now I feel it's more than ready to be properly brought to life in its entirety. I believe that in today's world of saturated expression, it takes quite the work on oneself to truly access a place of one's own pure expression, away from the crowdedness and constant dizziness of the engaged, surviving self. The self that is completely overwhelmed and

occupied by the state of the world. A space where true quietness and sobriety from the world is reached, the space where we can, even for a moment, claim our own clear beingness, honor our complicated innerness and truly listen, see and receive. Each sketch and frame of this film carry a significant story of how and why it says exactly what it says. The film seeks to capture this delicate rare sobriety of sensitive expression, through simple and engaging compositions and flow. Which I don't believe is seen enough in animation productions especially in our region. With whispering voice overs and crafted sound design, I hope this project serves as an inviting gesture to many of the invisible worlds many people are carrying around, that are lost in the great loud saturation of everything. It's a film about the true pure expression of being that we are all always trying to go home to.

Director's Biography

Rana Ashraf is a self-taught visual artist, born and based in Cairo. Her work moves between illustration, text-work and analogue photography. She has had two international exhibitions, one in Dakar Biennale, Senegal and another in Cairo's international OFF Biennale in 2018. Rana is also an amateur poet, a performer and an aspiring filmmaker and writer. She formally studied public governance and is currently working in a community development project for refugees in Egypt. She has participated in numerous workshops, projects, creative labs and performances in Cairo.

Production

Short Documentary
Fall Grants 2019

Sufian Abulohom

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



The Dragon Blood Island

Yemen, USA, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Coming of Age, Politics, Youth

In the face of the Yemeni war, Socotra, a remote Yemeni Island is indirectly affected by the conflict.



'The Dragon Blood Island' is a short documentary that focuses on the beauty of what has been described as the most alien-looking place on Earth. With a lot of political tension regarding the Island, this documentary focuses on the lives of the Yemeni people. Through different generations, we're introduced to what makes Socotra a special place.

Director's Note

There is nothing more I want than to give a platform for my people. The Dragon Blood Island is a remote and isolated part of Yemen that no one gets to see. Full of life, joy and hardship I want to capture the Yemeni lifestyle. I got tired of watching documentaries that victimize and objectifies Yemenis to only hardships. With everything going on in the world right now and how Muslims and Yemenis are viewed, I want the mainstream media to get a real representation of what it's like to be Yemeni. With a non-existent Yemeni film industry, I strongly feel like I'm the perfect person to tell a story about a unique island that has unique people. While this might be a very expensive documentary short, it's one worth telling. I've seen USC thesis short films with more than 100K budgets that aren't as crucial to this moment in time. Yemen is worth being represented authentically and that is what I will fight for.

Director's Biography

Sufian Abulohom is an independent Yemeni filmmaker based in Los Angeles, California. He grew up in Sana'a, Yemen until he was about 15 years old. He then moved to Falls Church, Virginia where he attended high school. After graduating from the American University in Washington, D.C., Sufian went to shoot a short documentary about Yemeni refugees titled, 'Yemen: The Silent War'. He is currently in his final year at the University of Southern California getting an MFA in Film Production. Being one of a few Yemeni filmmakers in the world, Sufian aspires to shed light and focus on Yemeni stories.

Contact

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Production

Short Documentary
Fall Grants 2019

Mariam Al-Dhubhani
Director / Screenwriter



Mohammed Al-Jaberi
Producer



Children and War in Yemen: Child Soldiers

Yemen, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Children, Social Issues, War

Fourteen-year-old Azmi and sixteen-year-old Saleh are siblings recruited as child-soldiers due to the financial status of their family in Lahij, South of Yemen. Age is what limits their other two brothers from following their footsteps being younger than 10-years-old. In their long deployment far from home, Azmi and Saleh come face-to-face with other child-soldiers from the Houthi forces in the North.



Within the Yemeni conflict, child-soldiers have become an integral part of the fighting forces. Children as young as ten-years-old carry guns and stand in checkpoints daily. While the causes of this phenomenon are part of the philosophy of the warring sides, poverty drives many families to send their children not only to checkpoints but also to the frontlines. This documentary aims to follow two child-soldiers, Azmi and Saleh, and document their daily routine, family, surroundings, thoughts, hopes, and dreams. It will focus on the family as a unit and the differences between the two older boys and the younger ones who are not recruited yet. The film also aims to show the perception of the two siblings knowing that their perceived “enemy” is another child of their age who happens to be in the wrong place like them.

Contact

Mariam Al-Dhubhani
maa6294@u.northwestern.edu

Director's Note

My husband, Mohammed Al-Jaberi, (the producer) and I are Yemenis from both sides of Yemen. I am from the North the occupied capital Sana'a, where I was born and raised. And Mohammed is from the South, the current capital Aden where he was born and raised. As storytellers, this gives us unique access to stories from both sides. We have recently made two documentaries one shot in Aden and one in Old Sana'a City that is the first 360-documentary to be made on Samsarat Al-Nuhas, Copper Brokerage. To tell more stories from home is what we aim to do. Children are the most vulnerable to war and the most neglected. I have a little brother back home, and I fear for him every day. That is why tackling this subject of child-soldiers is personal to me, and I firmly believe that it is crucial to have the child's perspective within the chaos of it all. I want to tell their story with them, and I know they will let me. My approach is understanding and no judgment. To humanize and not demonize. Wars are man-made, and these children are forced to live with it.

Director's Biography

Mariam Al-Dhubhani is a Yemeni-Russian award-winning journalist and filmmaker. Al-Dhubhani is currently doing an MA in Museum and Gallery Practice at UCL Qatar. She first pursued her passion for media during the 2011 Arab uprisings and co-founded her first media production. Al-Dhubhani's films have been screened globally in festivals such as Carthage, Interfilm, and Oaxaca. She also utilizes Virtual Reality in highlighting stories from Yemen.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2019

Mariam Al-Dhubhani

Director / Screenwriter



Mohammed Al-Jaberi,

Noor Abunabaa

Producers



In the Middle

Yemen, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Social Issues, War, Youth

Forced to pick up arms, young soldiers are stuck in the middle of the ongoing war in Yemen.



In a rarely seen perspective of war, we follow Ali—a Yemeni soldier on tour in the temporary capital of Aden. Leaving his hopes, dreams, and education behind to join the military, Ali dutifully sits at his checkpoint, performing a mundane task that he is clearly overqualified to do. His story represents the majority of youth in the country, people who are unable to just ‘live’, but instead are forced to continually struggle to survive.

Director's Note

The current war in Yemen is one of the most underreported conflicts. As the Middle East region is going through many unstable developments, the Yemeni narrative gets lost in the clutter. A majority of the stories that manage to come out from Yemen are all of famine, cholera, destruction, and despair. None of which are told by Yemenis. It is usually a parachuting reporter who briefs the world in, like a news strap that passes through television screens; momentary and not very impactful. Documenting stories from Yemen by Yemenis is crucial at this time. My husband, Mohammed Al-Jaberi, and I are equipped to provide Ali with a platform and tell his story with him. Ali represents a vast majority of youth who are unable to just ‘live,’ but instead, they need to continually struggle to survive.

Director's Biography

Mariam Al-Dhubhani is a Yemeni-Russian award-winning journalist and filmmaker. Al-Dhubhani is currently doing an MA in Museum and Gallery Practice at UCL Qatar. She first pursued her passion for media during the 2011 Arab uprisings and co-founded her first media production. Al-Dhubhani's films have been screened globally in festivals such as Carthage, Interfilm, and Oaxaca. She also utilizes Virtual Reality in highlighting stories from Yemen.

Contact

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TV and Web Series

Al Zubara

Faraya

Heim

Kawkabani

The Life of Abdulla (working title)

Meskoun

Development

TV Series

Fall Grants 2019

Hamad Al Mansouri

Director



Dana Al Meer

Screenwriter



Contact

Hamad Al Mansouri

MHK Art Production

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Al Zubara

Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 20 mins

Genre: Animation

A futuristic take on Qatar, where Jassim Mohammed sets out to avenge his brother's murder.



Taking place in Qatar 150 years into the future, Jassim Mohammed, driven by revenge since the age of 12 for the murder of his brother, joins the police force to find the killer and get the justice he deserves. The killer is known as "Sinan", but no one knows who he really is, to the point where he is considered a myth in the force. In Jassim's pursuit of the killer, he is blinded by vengeance and makes a mistake that could have cost his squad their lives and damages his career. Jassim is now forced to join a team that's headed by the first female detective in Qatar's history, Fatima Jassim. Since both Fatima and Jassim need to prove their worth, they pursue the case of the mysterious ancient killer with the help of another mysterious hacker, Qnix. Eventually, they encounter Sinan and realize they need a bigger team with a unique set of skills in order to destroy Sinan once and for all.

Director's Note

In the early 1990s, every day at around 3:30 pm we were glued to the TVs watching the latest anime show dubbed into classical Arabic by the best voice actors in the region's history. For us specifically, it has encouraged us, for more than two decades, to create something. For the Director, Hamad Al Mansouri and the artist Mohammed Al Mansouri it remained our passion to tell stories, and the idea that we Qataris can create and produce an animation that is by Qatar for Qatar. 'Al Zubara' is a story that has a piece from each of us. This story can only be told through our favourite medium, and that is animation. Through animation, we can write our love letter to the era of animated series that shaped who we are today.

Director's Biography

Hamad Al Mansouri is an ambitious Qatari director whose dream it is to create, with his artist brother, the very first full animation series that is based on Qatar, its people, and culture.

Development

TV Series

Spring Grants 2019

Nadim Tabet, Mounia Akl

Directors / Screenwriters



Monsieur Untel, Wadih Safieddine

Co-screenwriters



Wadih Safieddine

Producer



Contact

Wadih Safieddine
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Faraya

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 52 mins

Genre: Drama, Crime, Social Issues, Thriller

When the lifeless body of an Ethiopian housemaid is discovered in the luxurious Lebanese ski resort of Faraya—Said, a local policeman decides to conduct his investigation against all the odds. Will he be able to pursue his quest for truth until the end, at the risk of disrupting the entire community?



In its attempt to overcome a long-lasting economic crisis, the town hall of the luxurious Faraya resort relinquishes several acres of land to the real estate project “Faraya 2030” and a ski competition is held to celebrate the launch of construction. But on the first day of competition, the corpse of an Ethiopian housemaid employed by one of Faraya’s bourgeois families is found at the bottom of the tracks and brings the festivities to a halt. Said and his chief are immediately subject to hierarchical pressure, urging them to bring their investigation to a close in order to be able to resume the festivities. The chief of police soon concludes that the housekeeper fell by accident. Uncomfortable with this hasty conclusion, Said decides to pursue his investigation in secret, relying on the help of people from his entourage who are as inexperienced as he is. He will bravely continue to poke his nose where it does not belong, and soon he comes face-to-face with his fellow villagers, who fear that his revelations could jeopardize the work opportunities offered by Faraya 2030. Confronted with this unexpected opposition from his own social milieu, Said is faced with a dilemma—whether to end his investigation or pursue his quest for the truth, at the risk of finding himself alone against the community.

Director’s Note

Should truth buried under the snow be uncovered at the risk of destabilizing the community? This is the challenge that innocent Said will constantly face throughout the five episodes of ‘Faraya’. This existential question holds a very particular connotation in a country still traumatized by its turbulent past, where multiple communities are still struggling to write an official history. In order to reflect the complexity of this society, the second theme central to the series is the relationship with the “other”. And what better way to tackle this relationship than to set the police investigation in the heart of Faraya, the posh ski resort that represents a microcosm of Lebanese society. It brings together high bourgeoisie, politicians, popular classes, outcasts, Syrian refugees, as well as local and foreign workers like Indra, the Ethiopian maid who is found dead at the beginning of the series. Indra is at the lowest rung of the social ladder, yet the discovery of her body will destabilize the entire community and allow the series to reveal the convulsions of human nature in times of major crisis—a human nature that would rather bury the truth in the snow than face it.

Director’s Biography

Born in Beirut, **Nadim Tabet** was interested in cinema since his early teen years, first by watching a lot of films and then by shooting short fictions on video. In 1999, he travelled to France to study History, Philosophy and Cinema. Parallel to his studies, he directed several short films and cinematographic essays. In 2001, Nadim Tabet was a founding member of the Lebanese Film Festival, and later responsible for the selection and programming in several festivals. In 2017, he released his first feature film ‘One of These Days’ and is currently preparing his second feature film ‘Under Construction’.

Mounia Akl is a Lebanese filmmaker with a master’s degree in directing and screenwriting from Columbia University (New York). In 2016, her short film ‘Submarine’ was presented in the official selection at the Cannes Film Festival (Cinéfondation) and was selected to compete at the festivals of Toronto and Dubai. She also directed an episode of the series ‘Do Not Disturb’ produced by Jude Law. Her first feature film, ‘Costa Brava Lebanon’, produced by About Productions and Cinema Defacto, was selected for Cinéfondation in Cannes 2018, Torino Film Lab 2018 (Pitch Award) and for the Sundance Lab 2019.

Company Profile

Since Deja Vu first opened its doors in Dubai in 2007, we have constantly made films we could be proud of. We have produced some of the most iconic commercials in the region and have won awards at every major advertising show around the world. We have also expanded our network of offices in Beirut and Mumbai, and recently started developing original TV series and films aimed at the global market.

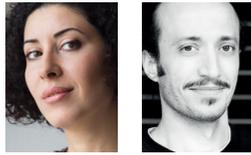
Development

TV Series

Spring Grants 2019

Liwaa Yazji,
Mohammad Abou Laban

Directors / Screenwriters



Tania El Khoury

Producer



Contact

Tania El Khoury

Khamsin Films

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Heim

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, English, German

Runtime: 45 - 60 mins

Genre: Drama, Immigration

You can never escape a war. You take it with you wherever you go. All it takes is a handful of secrets and a terrible murder for old scars to turn into fresh wounds, and what at first appears to be Islamist terrorism turns out to be very much worse.



'Heim' takes place in a refugee centre in Berlin-Tempelhof airport, which though technically out of service is still "welcoming" different departing and arriving sort of people. They're not the fancy passersby travelling to their own ends—they're now deemed refugees whose life practically stopped here, paused on standby mode. The airport is thus a limbo they are stuck in. Not only their destiny is what we see here, but also that of the German characters accompanying them. As the German employees living through this experience are not better off; they are no longer the smartly dressed captains and crews, nothing more than exhausted overworn employees, obsessed with the duty of "protecting" a-la carte this modern Tower of Babel they found themselves part of. It's a testing ground for different identities and clashing worlds, where people come to the realisation that however much we understand about each other, it'll never outweigh how much we don't understand. No one can witness nor come close to this absurdity hoping to stay the same. No one enters this limbo and leaves the same; lives here change completely, once and for all.

Director's Note

'Heim' tackles the enormity of human suffering by showing up its absurdity. The microcosm of the contemporary refugee centre is an ideal representation of the Tower of Babel. Many languages are spoken, but few are understood. The message 'Heim' wants to get across is that if we can't live together here, we can't live together anywhere. The time when it was possible to shut your door, pull the blinds, and only look after yourself, is over. It is a luxury lost in the global age, where space is running out, and we must live together or die together. Ultimately, 'Heim' cannot hope to offer a definitive answer to the colossal question it asks, and neither does it need to. Within the scope of a well-wrought, multi-faceted drama, 'Heim' can only show that whatever attitude its characters bring to the table at the beginning of their journey, at the end they come to the realisation that however much we understand about each other, it will never outweigh how much we don't understand, and that this realisation results in a sense of humility that allows us to meet each other with goodwill instead of suspicion.

Director's Biography

Liwaa Yazji is a filmmaker, poet, playwright and scenarist. She was educated in both English Literature and Theater Studies.

Her first documentary 'Haunted' (2014) premiered at FID Marseille. She has worked as a script doctor at several pan-Arab companies and wrote the script of the pan-Arab series 'The Brothers' (2014). She was an actress in Abdullatif Abdulhamid's film 'September Rain' (2009) and was assistant director on his film 'Windows of the soul' (2011). Her play 'Goats' premiered in The London Royal Court in November 2017, and her play 'Q&Q' premiered at the Birth Festival at The Royal Exchange Theatre in London (2016). A jury member in Freistadt International Film Festival 2016 - feature documentary competition, she was selected for "Arbeitsstipendien nicht deutschsprachige Literatur" (2018, Berlin), to work on her next project 'Trash'. She is now working on her new feature documentary 'Hostage' and co-writing 'Heim', a TV series to be produced in Germany.

Mohammad Abou Laban is a screenwriter, poet, playwright and journalist, who was educated in both Philosophy and Theater Studies in Syria. He worked on several TV projects in the Arab World including TV short films, adaptations and a soap opera, among them 'The Brothers', 114 episodes in 2014. In addition to collaborating on several documentary films including 'Haunted' (2014). He worked as

well in Radio Nacional de España / Arabic section as a journalist, broadcaster, and editor. He has published several poetry collections such as 'Exercises in Meaningfulness' (2016), 'A Passerby Turns' (2009), 'Paradox' (2008), 'In a While' (2005), and the theatre work 'The Last Lover' (2008). He is also co-founder and editor in the magazine "A Syrious Look", and the artistic director of the Syrian Mobile Film Festival. He is now co-writing 'Heim', a TV series to be produced in Germany.

Company Profile

Khamsin Films was founded in 2017 with the aim of facilitating the production of films from the Arab World by supporting both emerging talents and established filmmakers with a strong artistic, visual and cinematographic language—to tell their stories in films aimed for local and international audiences. The company has several ongoing projects from the region including 'The River', the newest feature fiction film of Ghassan Salhab, (in post-production) and co-produced with the Postoffice (Lebanon) and Unafilm (Germany), 'Machtat', the second feature documentary of Sonia Ben Slama, (in development), co-produced with Alter Ego Production (France) and 'Heim', a TV series by Mohammad Abou Laban and Liwaa Yazji (in development).

Production

Web Series

Spring Grants 2019

Hossein Heydar

Director / Producer



Amal Alshammari

Director / Screenwriter

Kawkabani

Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 15 x 10 mins

Genre: Animation

An animation series that tells the story of an alien who never misses a World Cup.



'Kawkabani' is an entertaining animation series that tells stories from Qatar's local culture to a global audience. The series is about an alien who has never missed the World Cup. His spaceship crashes in Qatar while he was on his way to Russia for the 2018 tournament. Three Qatari guys find him in the Sealine Desert, and they end up showing him around Qatar.

Director's Note

Animation has proved its significant impact in the way that it can be multicultural in both content and audience. Since Qatar is hosting a huge event in the upcoming years, we created 'Kawkabani'—an animation series that shines a light on the preparation for the big event while showcasing Qatari culture. I want to highlight in this series the local hospitality and give an induction of the Qatari culture for and international audience.

Director's Biography

Hossein Heydar is a passionate animator who holds a BFA in Film & Animation. He is also the co-founder and managing director of Nefash animation studio.

Amal Al Shammari is a cultural consultant who holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Qatar University. She is currently working as a head of business planning in the oil and gas industry. She is the founder of Embrace Doha, co-founder & creative director of Nefash Animation studio, and a member of the Qatar Leadership Centre.

Company Profile

Nefash is a creative animation studio specialized in producing high-quality animations inspired by Qatari Culture. They deliver messages in a meaningful and innovative way through stories, and no story can reach and affect people without proper execution. At Nefash, they combine your message with their creative experience to tell your story.

Contact

Hossein Heydar

Nefash Animation

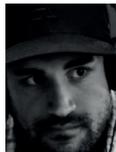
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Development
TV Series
Fall Grants 2019

Abdulla Al-Abdulla
Director / Screenwriter



Basel Owies
Producer



Contact
Basel Owies
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The Life of Abdulla (working title)

Qatar / Arabic, English

Runtime: 25 mins

Genre: Unscripted TV Series

A glimpse into the private lives and exploits of Khaleeji Social Media influencers Fatima Al Momen, Ascia Farraj, Abdulla Al Abdulla, Reem Al Sanea and Hala Abdullah, who juggle their glitzy, fast-paced international lifestyles with the demands of their families and traditions.



In these ten 25-minute episodes, we'll take a journey through the life of Abdulla and other renowned social media influencers from the Middle East. Join as each of the ensemble cast gives exclusive access into their high-end lifestyles, entrepreneurial ventures, management teams and personal lives. In this competitive and cut-throat influencer industry, we'll tag along as they each put their finances, reputations and cultural integrity on the line to burst onto the world stage in style. We'll see high-end magazine photoshoots, international fashion shows, clothing and brands being produced, friendships and relationships being formed (and breaking), all the while the cast is trying to avoid being wrapped up into the haters on social media and the demands of a conservative culture and family. In 'The Life of Abdulla', audiences will join our high-profile influencers as they challenge stereotypes, modernize Middle Eastern fashion and take their influences global despite the preconceived notions of the region.

Director's Note

In a world filled with stereotypes and clichés about the Middle East, I wanted to bring the reality of this society into the mainstream global consciousness. I wanted to authentically portray the real Arabia and the real people within. People that are playing a major role in shaping the modern-day world: Influencers. We are young, well-educated socialites from families of means and much like in the West, we use social media as a tool to build our personal brands and promote our lifestyles. This unscripted series seeks to tear down these distorted notions by giving an exclusive all-access pass into the lives of the next generation of fashionable Middle Eastern youth. But unlike other reality shows, we don't want to create a low-brow forced drama type of experience. Instead, we want to showcase the power of friendships across borders, the desire to be ambitious, driven and business oriented, and to share our microcosm with the world at large. I want to paint this journey through my life, along with the lives of my closest friends who are making an impact with social media, fashion and self-expression. We are the new faces of Arabia.

Director's Biography

As the son of an ambassador, **Abdulla Al-Abdulla** grew up travelling the globe and developed a keen interest in the fashion industry. As a Qatari native, Abdulla's style has a quintessential Middle Eastern touch, but still incorporates a vast Western flare. He's a regular at the London, Paris, New York and Milan Fashion Weeks, and has been featured in various publications like Harper's Bazaar, Grazia, Ahlan Magazine and Glam. As a high-profile influencer, Abdulla has collaborated with countless brands such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Balmain, Etro and Chaumet—where he stands at the crossroads between Middle Eastern and Western culture.

Development

TV Series

Fall Grants 2019

Hicham Lasri

Director / Producer



Lamia Chraibi

Producer



Contact

Lamia Chraibi

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Sophia Menni

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Meskoun

Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 60 mins

Genre: Fantasy

Lotfi loses his fiancée and his mind. Deciding to emigrate illegally, he ends up drowning with seven other strangers. A month later, he reappears, buoyed by the souls of the seven drowned people who are now living within him.



While attempting to enter Europe, Lotfi Meskini drowns with seven other unfortunate illegal immigrants from seven different nationalities. A month later, he is thrown back by the sea, with no trace of the others. He begins to realize that he shoulders within him the souls of the other seven passengers who are longing to be released. Lotfi flirts with madness by carrying this heptad of other personalities, each asking him to fulfil their last wish. With seven different “hosts” seeking to see their family, homeland, and children, one last time, Lotfi sets off on an epic adventure to the four corners of the Arab and African worlds to grant each their dying wish.

Director's Note

Ten years ago, I filmed a documentary in Italy about migration between Morocco—specifically in Beni Mellal—and Italy—especially in Turin. Among the six characters that we filmed was a brilliant young man who was in Telquel magazine’s 2008 Power List of “personalities who will make the Morocco of tomorrow”. It was with a cold sadness that I followed him for a few days in his concealed daily life in Italy, trying to survive by dodging the police and the traps set up by Italian authorities to neutralize illegal migrants. This young man has been swallowed by the modern world; his precariousness emptied him of his ambitions and his dreams as an activist in an NGO. A young man who can no longer find his place at home or the material comfort to campaign in his own country. This story marked me, because the main character is also looking for a place somewhere else, when there are no more chairs at home in his own country, the land of his ancestors. What I admired the most in this young man is his lucidness about the failure of his choice, and also the inevitable side. A kind of Soft Suicide, a way to relocate the pain of failure and decay by drowning it in a dreary daily routine made of meaningless details, deprivation, stress and paranoia. There is truth

in this tragic character, in my Lotfi. His desire to abandon himself to a land of exile in order to drown his sorrow, to take great stride in distancing himself, the poem that tears him from the living, putting him on the sidelines with other outcasts, the unsuited for life, the modern time zombies who are chained to their telephone screens.

Director's Biography

Hicham Lasri is a Moroccan filmmaker and part of the new generation of Moroccan cinema. Born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1977, he studied economy and law then wrote theatre plays, novels and screenplays before turning to film. His debut feature ‘The End’ (2011), about the last days of King Hassan, was acclaimed by critics. In ‘They Are the Dogs’ (2013), he drew parallels between the 2011 Arab Spring and the 1981 “bread riots” in Morocco. The film travelled well through the festivals and received numerous writings from critics. His previous films include ‘The Sea is Behind’ (2014), ‘Starve Your Dog’ (2015), ‘Headbang Lullaby’ (2017), which screened in the Berlinale Panorama section, and ‘Jahilya’ (2018), selected in the Berlinale Forum section.

Company Profile

La Prod develops fiction in its broadest sense by combining imagination and rigour without compromise or self-censorship. La Prod accompanies directors in the creative process, including Hicham Lasri, Narjiss Nejjar, Ismail Ferroukhi, and Mohcine Besri. The company co-produced Oliver Laxe’s ‘Mimosas’ (Grand Prize of the Critics’ Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016) as well as Balint Kenyeres’ ‘Tegnap/Hier’ and has produced various feature film projects and television programs.

A full list of projects funded by the Doha Film Institute is available at
www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/projects/grants

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