

Two World Premieres among Eight Films Supported by Doha Film Institute to screen at 2016 Toronto International Film Festival

- Supported by DFI, **The Salesman** screens in TIFF's Special Presentation segment
- **Blessed Benefit** by Mahmoud Al Massad and **Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory** by Mohanad Yaqubi to mark their world premiere at TIFF
- **By the Time it Gets Dark** by Anocha Suwichakornpong to screen in Wavelengths Programme at TIFF, which celebrates daring, visionary and autonomous voices that expand notions of cinema

Doha, Qatar, September 5, 2016: Continuing the international recognition gained by films supported by the Doha Film Institute, eight films have been selected to screen at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) to be held from September 8 to 18. Seven grant recipients along with *The Salesman*, will screen in key programming strands at the Festival's 41st edition.

Further, as part of the Institute's commitment to promoting filmmaking talents in Qatar and offering them platforms to strengthen their understanding of global cinema and foster international networking, the Doha Film Institute will host two Qatari filmmakers - Hafiz Ali Abdulla and Meriem Mesraoua – at TIFF who will participate in a series of targeted workshops, networking events and industry meetings.

Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "The significant showcase of eight films supported by the Doha Film Institute at TIFF 2016 is a matter of great pride for us. It underlines the quality of our selection process that supports new and established voices, from the Arab world and beyond.

"TIFF offers filmmakers a remarkable opportunity to reach a global audience of film lovers. The selection of two films from our region that will make their World Premiere at this esteemed event is a further testament to the evolution and appreciation of Arab cinema. We will continue to support stories that deserve to be told and celebrate the creative talent who are creating compelling content."

Two grant recipients mark their World Premiere at TIFF: **Blessed Benefit** (Jordan, Netherlands, Germany, UAE, Qatar/2016) by Mahmoud Al Massad; and **Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory** (Palestine, France, Qatar/2016) by Mohanad Yaqubi.

In another significant first, **By the Time it Gets Dark** (Thailand, Netherlands, France, Qatar/2016), directed by Anocha Suwichakornpong, has been chosen in the Wavelengths programme at TIFF, which celebrates daring, visionary and autonomous voices that expand the notions of cinema. The film had its World Premiere at Locarno. Also at TIFF is another DFI Grantee, **White Sun** (Nepal, Netherlands, USA, Qatar/2016) by Deepak Rauniyar, a TIFF Talent Lab alumnus.

Closely following their success at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, where they premiered, four films supported by the Doha Film Institute have made their cut at TIFF too. This includes ***The Salesman***, written and directed by Asghar Farhadi which won top honours at Cannes including the Best Screenplay and Best Actor awards in the official competition section.

The Salesman is produced by Memento Films Production and Asghar Farhadi Production and co-produced by Arte France Cinema in association with Memento Films Distribution and the Doha Film Institute.

The other films supported by the Doha Film Institute, which were screened at Cannes this year and are making their North American debut include: ***Apprentice*** (Singapore, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Qatar/2016), directed by Junfeng Boo; ***Mimosas*** (Spain, Morocco, France, Qatar/2016) directed by Oliver Laxe, winner of the 2016 Nespresso Grand Prize awarded by the Jury of the Cannes Critics Week, and ***Divines*** (Morocco, France, Qatar/2016), the debut feature by Houda Benyamina that scooped the coveted Camera d'Or prize at Cannes this year along with a special mention from SACD for debut film in the Directors Fortnight section.

Additionally, five films supported by Doha Film Institute are also being screened at the ongoing 73rd Venice Film Festival and include; ***White Sun*** (Nepal, Netherlands, USA, Qatar/2016) by Deepak Rauniyar screening in the Orizzonti section and ***The Last of Us*** (Tunisia, UAE, Lebanon, Qatar / 2016) by Ala Eddine Slim, selected to screen in the International Critics Week segment. The other three grantee projects; ***Poisonous Roses*** (Egypt, France, Qatar / 2016) by Fawzi Saleh, ***One of These Days*** (Lebanon, Qatar/2017) by Nadim Tabet and ***Ghost Hunting*** (Palestine, France, Switzerland, Qatar/2016) by Raed Andoni have been selected to screen as work in progress at the Final Cut in Venice.

The selection at TIFF follows the impressive win by Doha Film Institute supported films gaining top acclaim at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival and Sarajevo Film Festival. At Sarajevo, 15 films supported by the Doha Film Institute, including several films 'Made in Qatar' by local talents were screened in August this year.

Synopsis of DFI Supported Films at TIFF 2016:

- ***The Salesman*** by Asghar Farhadi: Forced out of their apartment due to dangerous works on a neighboring building, a young couple Emad and Rana move into a new flat in the center of Tehran. An incident linked to the previous tenant will dramatically change the young couple's life. The Salesman stars Shahab Hosseini (A Separation) and Taraneh Alidoosti (About Elly).
- ***Apprentice*** by Junfeng Boo is the story of Aiman, a 28-year-old Malay correctional officer, who lives with his older sister Suhaila in a modest housing estate. When he is transferred to the region's top prison, he soon takes an interest in a 65-year-old sergeant named Rahim, the prison's long-serving chief executioner. As Aiman's friendship with Rahim grows closer, however, his rapport with his sister deteriorates.
- ***Blessed Benefit*** by Mahmoud Al Massad is a dark comedy about Ahmad, a construction worker, who gets tangled up in an unfortunate business deal that lands him in prison. He meets Ibrahim, a fraudster who ruins his last hope of proving his innocence. Ahmad is awakened by the realisation that the life he has in prison might be better than the one he has on the outside.

- **White Sun** by Deepak Rauniyar narrates the story of Pooja, who lives with her grandfather. Her father Agni had joined the Maoist guerillas and left their village. The death of her grandfather brings Agni back to the village where he must look for help among police, rebel guerillas and neighbouring villagers for the burial rites, in turn presenting a portrait of post-conflict Nepal.
- **By the Time It Gets Dark** by Anocha Suwichakornpong tells the interwoven stories of several characters: a film director and her muse; a waitress who keeps changing jobs; an actor; and an actress. The narrative sheds its skin several times over the course of the film, to reveal layer upon layer of the complexities that make up our lives.
- **Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory** by Mohanad Yaqubi narrates the story of Palestinian revolutionary cinema by following the life of the Palestine Film Unit, a film group that was established in 1968 and that developed with the revolution until the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982.
- **Mimosas** by Oliver Laxe is a mountain odyssey with mystical elements that follows a caravan through the Moroccan Atlas escorting a sheikh to be buried near his loved ones, but the quest takes a turn when the elderly and ailing sheikh dies en route.
- **Divines** the debut feature from Houda Benyamina is a funny, often suspenseful and always emotionally involving drama about a tough but naïve teenager, Dounia, who sees getting rich or dying trying as her most viable option. Her slightly more cautious friend Maimouna is less immediately willing to embrace thug life, but easily swept along for the ride.

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About Doha Film Institute:

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

Doha Film Institute

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