

Qumra 2017 Master and Two Time Oscar® Winner Asghar Farhadi discusses how he brings realism to film

Doha, Qatar; March 7, 2017: Oscar®-winning filmmaker Asghar Farhadi delivered his Master Class at Qumra 2017 today, his first public speaking event since his Best Foreign Language Film victory at the recent Academy Awards®. In front of a packed house, of filmmakers, industry guests and delegates he shared his thoughts and insight on filmmaking, including techniques he borrows from his theatre background, that enable him to create films and stories reflecting the realities of everyday life.

The highly anticipated discussion, exemplified Farhadi's ability to master the ordinary, which has gained the filmmaker two Best Foreign Language Film Oscars® - his first for ***The Separation*** (2012) and the second, last month for ***The Salesman*** (2017) which was supported by the Doha Film Institute (DFI). The Oscar® wins are amongst numerous international awards and accolades he has received over the last few years.

Sharing details about how he sources inspiration, to stressing the importance of rhythm within dialogue, combined with the use of music, Farhadi underlined the fact that the key to presenting insightful storytelling is an eye for detail. Turning his attention to the realism in his films, Farhadi went on to discuss how the placement of the camera can hugely affect the audience's interpretation, and singular perspective, of a scene.

He elaborated on his belief that it is the director's responsibility to tell the whole story. "If your camera always follows one actor, you're creating a biased viewpoint. We give the audience all the information. It's up to them to make the judgement." He expanded on this, emphasizing it is not his characters that determine the story, it's often one initial thought or a scenario that drives the film forward.

On summing up his own unique way of working Farhadi ended by saying "My process for writing is usually in two parts: the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious is much like the password that can unlock the bank of your unconscious. This first idea sparks all those bits and pieces in the back of your mind."

Farhadi's films rely upon strikingly naturalistic performances. His characters are developed much later together with the actors, who come together for the initial rehearsals to develop a back story about their past and their relationships to each other.

Before shooting any footage, the actors act out scenes from their 'past', from the time they may have studied together or from early childhood. Farhadi says these details help the couples and cast form believable relationships, from subtleties such as the way they look at each other to the nuances in conversation, and the audience feels the connection and believes this is real life.

His latest film, ***The Salesman*** allowed Farhadi to return to his theatrical roots. The film tells the story of a couple who are acting together in Arthur Miller's play ***Death of a Salesman***. Farhadi chose specific scenes from Miller's play to explicitly convey the emotional journey each character goes through after

the wife is assaulted in her own apartment. Creating this play within a play blurs the lines of reality for the audience, making them question whether they are watching a film or real life.

Farhadi's fourth feature-length film ***About Elly*** (2009) employs the same respectful but unsettling examination of interpersonal relationships that characterizes his works. The film was screened at Qumra 2017 as part of the Modern Masters Screening.

Qumra hosts leading international filmmakers, producers, industry experts and professionals, for intense brainstorming, knowledge-sharing and nurturing sessions with talents associated with 34 films from 25 countries. Directors and producers attached to 18 narrative feature films, 7 feature documentaries and 9 short films are participating in the event being held until March 8 at Souq Al Waqif and the Museum of Islamic Arts.

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Note to Editors:

About Qumra

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

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

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

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

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

About Doha Film Institute:

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

~~Doha Film Institute~~

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