

35 projects by promising Qatari and global talents chosen for Doha Film Institute's 2017 Fall Grants

- 7 projects helmed by Qatari directors and 18 films by women directors
- 15 countries represented with 22 films from the Arab world
- Over 380 projects from 63 countries, including 310 from the MENA region, supported to date by the Doha Film Institute Grants programme

Doha, Qatar; January 2, 2018: An impressive range of 35 projects by first, second-time and established MENA filmmakers from across the world including eight from Qatar have been selected by the Doha Film Institute for its Fall 2017 Grants programme that aims to nurture the new generation of film talents. Underlining the important role of women in filmmaking, 18 of the chosen projects are by talented female directors.

Announcing the Fall Grants 2017 recipients, Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "Identifying and supporting emerging talents from across the world, and particularly voices from the Arab World, is central to our commitment to nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and contributing to the culture of storytelling. We support filmmakers from Qatar and the wider Arab region, to highlight our distinct voices and cultural identity, and celebrate our values and our shared commonalities.

"The diversity of submissions for this cycle has been exceptional, and we chose the 35 projects for their ability to engage with audiences anywhere in the world. Through our grants programme, we are empowering talented young filmmakers, especially from our region, to help fulfill their creative aspirations. We are proud to be developing the next generation of Arab film talents, and we are delighted to see their numbers continue to grow every year."

To date, the Doha Film Institute has supported over 380 film projects from more than 63 countries including 310 from the MENA region, offering development, production and post-production resources through the Grants programme. Of these, 26 films are by Qatari filmmakers, in addition to the 23 films supported through the Qatari Film Fund.

In addition to Qatari directors, this year's Fall Grantees include projects from Algeria, Argentina, Chile, Egypt, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, and the UK.

The Doha Film Institute's Grants programme promotes the original voices of emerging talents in film by encouraging creative interaction and establishing a filmmaking community. In addition to new talent, the programme also supports established names from the MENA region who are recognized for their creative vision and compelling content to set new benchmarks. Two acclaimed directors - Mohamed Zineddaine for *The Healer* (Morocco, Italy, Qatar) and Merzak Allouache for *Divine Wind* (Algeria, France, Qatar) – are this year's Grantees.

Seven projects from the MENA region, including feature narratives, feature documentaries and short narratives have been awarded development grants. They are:

Feature Narratives:

- ***Beneath the Dunes*** (Qatar) by Mohammed Al Ibrahim, narrates the story of two cousins who venture the landscape of the Inland Sea to escape the city, and come across a car echoing screams from the inside. The rescue mission changes their lives.
- ***Saffron's Land*** (Morocco, Qatar) by Yassine El Idrissi is set in Saffrana, an isolated village in the Atlas Mountains, where people believe the flower of saffron is a curse, but one man is trying to prove the contrary.

Feature Documentary:

- Under the working title ***Corner Boy*** (Palestine, UK, Qatar) by Omar El-Khairi reflects on the life and times of British Yemeni boxer Prince Naseem Hamed, a sporting icon of the 1990s.
- ***My English Cousin*** (Algeria, Switzerland, France, Qatar) by Karim Sayad is about Fahed, who left Algeria to settle in England. Finally 'regularised', he is torn between his new life abroad or a return home.

Feature Experimental or Essay:

- ***I, Hummus*** (Lebanon, Canada, Qatar) by Rawane Nassif is a film about the geopolitics of food, culture appropriation and immigration presented as a personal reflection, and mixed together in one famous dish: Hummus.

Short Narrative:

- ***Split-Screen*** (Qatar) by Nadia Al-Khater and Fahad Al-Khater is about two acquaintances who are forced into a death match by a faceless conspiracy to win the only antidote after unwittingly drinking poisoned coffee.
- ***The Mute*** (Qatar) by Thamer Al-Thani is set in the 1960s in Qatar, where a mute old lady defies discrimination from her society and pursues her dream of going to space.

The following fifteen MENA films have been awarded production grants:

Feature Narratives:

- Under the working title ***Dead Dog*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Sarah Francis, the film narrates the story of Farid, a 60-year-old man living abroad. When he visits his wife, he learns that his beloved dog had died. Tensions arise and Farid confesses he is returning home for good.
- ***Noura In Wonderland*** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Hinde Boujemaa depicts the story of Noura, who struggles to raise her three children alone while her husband is in jail, until she meets Lassaad. Their plans to be together are however jeopardised by the impending release of her husband.
- ***The Unknown Saint*** (Morocco, Qatar) by Alaa Eddine Aljem is about a thief who tries to get back the stolen money he had stashed at a site where a mausoleum now stands.

Feature Documentary:

- ***Chaos*** (Syria, Austria, Lebanon, Qatar) by Sara Fattahi is the story of three Syrian women, each living in a different time and place, separated by the very things that unite them – fear and trauma.
- ***Displaced in Heaven*** (Palestine, Germany, Qatar) by Khaled Jarrar has the Palestinian director following a family through the Balkan route, to plunge into the horror of exile in a desperate need to recover his lost memories.

- ***Suspended Wives*** (Morocco, Qatar) by Merieme Addou follows three women, who were abandoned by their husbands, and their lengthy battle to obtain divorces.
- ***The Disappeared*** (Lebanon, UK, Qatar) by Yasmin Fedda is about Bassel, a hacker and Paolo, a priest, who were both active in the Syrian revolution and both forcibly 'disappeared.'
- ***Underdown*** (Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) by Sarah Kaskas is the pulsating journey of three unbreakable characters struggling to live below the poverty line in the chaos of Beirut.

Feature Experimental or Essay:

- ***The Fifth Resurrection of Farid*** (Egypt, Qatar) by Khalid Youssef is set in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, where a new life is awarded to Olympic champion, pilot, Hollywood actor, war hero, and all-around professional hell-raiser Farid Semeka.

Short Narrative:

- ***Hope*** (Syria, Iraq, France, Qatar) by Mohammad Shaikhow depicts the journey of a man and woman, strangers up to a few hours back, as they walk together in a snowy environment; the short is a portrayal of humanity reduced to its very essence.
- ***Beit Byoot*** (Jordan, Qatar) by Mayar Hamdan is set in a dystopian women's world, where little Jameela wants to fit in with two mean girls. When she meets odd Yasmine, she must choose between being odd or fitting in
- ***If You'll Remember*** (Qatar, France) by Sara Al-Thani narrates the story of a young girl, who has regained a lost memory. Her life catapults into danger as she tries to escape her demented stepfather and face her inner turmoil to find herself.
- ***Tainted*** (Qatar, France) by Meriem Mesraoua is about a young teen forbidden from biting her nails, who must now ignore her urge and abide by a new set of rules, to ensure she does not damage her newly acquired, yet imposed fake nails.
- ***The Time Tree*** (Lebanon, UK, Qatar) by Celine Cotran is set in 1596, wherein a bullied deaf girl comes across a magical tree. It is a portal to the present, where she meets two girls who help her grow in ways she never imagined.

Short Experimental or Essay:

- ***Ceuta's Gate*** (Morocco, France, Lebanon, Qatar) by Randa Maroufi is an experimental film inspired by the tension felt at the border of Ceuta.

Thirteen projects are also recipients of post-production grants. Of these, six are from the MENA region:

Feature Narratives:

- ***Divine Wind*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Merzak Allouache revolves around Nour and Amine, who plan to launch an attack on an oil refinery in the Algerian Sahara, but things do not turn out as they expected.
- ***Late to Die Young*** (Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Netherlands, Qatar) by Dominga Sotomayor is set in an isolated community, where Sofia, Clara and Lucas prepare for New Year's Eve. They may live far from the dangers of the city, but not those of nature.
- ***The Day I Lost My Shadow*** (Syria, France, Qatar) by Soudade Kaadan is set in 2012 Syria, when Sana, who takes a day off from her job to search for a gas cylinder, is swept away in the war for two days and when she returns home, discovers she has lost something of herself due to the scars of war.

- ***The Healer*** (Morocco, Italy, Qatar) by Mohamed Zineddaine is the story of Abdou, who lives with his adoptive mother and traditional healer, Mbarka, in a small mining town. He meets a cynical pickpocket, who suffers from a skin disease, and convinces him to seek treatment from his mother, only to find their three lives become irreversibly interwoven.
- ***The Load*** (Serbia, France, Croatia, Qatar) by Ognjen Glavonic is about Vlada who drives a refrigerated truck during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. He does not know what the load is, but his cargo slowly becomes his burden.

Feature Documentary:

- ***5 Seasons of Revolution*** (Syria, Germany, Norway, Qatar) by Layla Abyad takes viewers on a journey into the experience of four young women swept up in the excitement in the wake of the 2011 uprising in Syria, who later begin to rebuild their relationships with their country and the ensuing conflict.
- ***Constructions*** (Argentina, Qatar) by Fernando Martin Restelli is about a 60-year-old watchman of buildings under construction, who gets a second chance in life to become a father.
- ***Nine Months War*** (Hungary, Qatar) by Laszlo Csujá is about 24-year-old Jani, who has left his family to serve in the Ukrainian Army for nine months. His mother wants her son back. Jani just wants independence.
- ***Of Fathers and Sons*** (Syria, Germany, Qatar) by Talal Derki, an affecting and disturbing documentary which demonstrates that jihadism is a learned behaviour – one that in some arenas is being handed down with paternal authority to vulnerable minds.
- ***The Invented Biography*** (Chile, France, Qatar) by Nicolás Lasnibat is a search for Roberto Arturo Belano, a Chilean poet who has become a myth since he disappeared in Mexico in 1999.
- ***The Man Who Stole Banksy*** (Italy, Qatar) by Marco Proserpio is about internationally-acclaimed artist Banksy, who slips into Palestine to paint on walls in 2007. What follows is a story of clashing cultures, art, identity, theft and the black market.

Feature Experimental or Essay:

- ***The Wind Blew On*** (Iceland, Qatar) by Katrin Olafsdottir, has a little boy wondering to himself that "Perhaps, I am already dead?" But these words are spoken in an unsettling world where no one can confirm this to be true or false for him.

Short Narrative:

- ***The Black Veil*** (Qatar) by A.J. Al Thani is about a woman who attempts to finally escape from the oppression she has been living under.

There are two submission cycles for the Grants programme annually. The next cycle opens January 10, 2018, and closes at midnight (GMT+3) on January 22, 2018. For details, please log on to: www.dohafilminstitute.com

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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.



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