

Be outrageous, daring and authentic, international film festival heads advise young talents at Qumra

- *Qumra's openness to the world is just what cinema needs, says Cameron Bailey, Artistic Director of Toronto International Film Festival*
- *With the qualitative strides achieved by Qumra, Qatari and Arab talents have real opportunity to make it to top echelons, says Christophe Leparc, Managing Director of Director's Fortnight, Festival de Cannes*
- *Be vulnerable, courageous and outspoken; what we seek are avant-garde and not middle-ground, says Bero Beyer, Festival Director of the International Film Festival Rotterdam*

Doha, Qatar; March 10, 2018: At the fourth Qumra, the annual industry event by the Doha Film Institute, senior leaders of some of the world's leading film festivals, had a concise advice for young filmmakers seeking recognition at international film fests: "Be courageous, be daring, be vulnerable and be authentic."

It was a sentiment shared by Cameron Bailey, Artistic Director of the Toronto International Film Festival; Christophe Leparc, Managing Director of the Director's Fortnight at Festival de Cannes; and Bero Beyer, Festival Director of the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

At the preparatory meetings at Qumra, which aims to nurture first and second-time filmmakers from around the world, the three industry representatives were unequivocal in their observation that Qumra has evolved significantly in the past three years.

"The taste of Qumra is outspoken and daring, and that is one thing special about here," said Bero Beyer. "The shift I am seeing in the quality of films at Qumra too has to do with it being outspoken and daring. Initially, here in the region, filmmakers were merely trying to make a good film that will connect to the audience, which resulted in middle-of-the-road films. They were trying to be too pleasing and that doesn't work. If you are true to yourself as a filmmaker and if your story is honest, it becomes relevant to people outside your region too."

Beyer said it is not easy to develop the courage and vulnerability to be honest as filmmakers. "Being rooted in your milieu and being honest about it, you make yourself vulnerable as a filmmaker. But then, your film becomes interesting. At Rotterdam, we focus on the avant-garde and never on anything that is middle-ground. If you want to be a filmmaker, if you want to get into festivals, be vulnerable, be outspoken."

Christophe Leparc, now in his fourth visit to Qumra, said he sees "projects here that deal with subjects that I am looking for. These young filmmakers are very talented, and thanks to Qumra, I know of their works right from the ideation stage to how they finally take shape. I follow their projects from script-to-screen."

He said the quality of the films evolving from Qumra "is improving; these young talents here are not immature anymore – and it is great to see the Doha Film Institute help them make 'real' films." Leparc

too said that young talents must focus not on being ‘too exotic’ with their stories but to explore the ‘deep roots. The universality of cinema always comes from local roots.”

With the qualitative shifts seen, Qatari and Arab cinema can scale the top echelons, he said, “but you must remember that it is very competitive out there; so, focus on telling your story with honesty.”

Cameron Bailey said being at Qumra is helpful in learning about the changing landscape of cinema in the region, adding that the openness of Qumra to the world is “what cinema really needs.” He said the opportunity for young talents to access resources as well as networking opportunities make the event relevant and important.

Bailey emphasised the need for young filmmakers to tell stories rooted in their milieu because that is what people want to see – real stories of real people. “In today’s interconnected world, where ideas and information move fast,” it is important more than ever to tell your stories.

The fourth edition of Qumra brings together more than 150 acclaimed filmmakers, industry professionals and experts to nurture 34 films – the Qumra Projects – by first and second-time filmmakers from 25 countries that are in various stages of development. The six-day event is held through March 14, at Souq Waqif and the Museum of Islamic Art, and features Qumra Masterclasses, Qumra Talks and screenings in the Modern Masters and New Voices in Cinema segments.

Visit www.dohafilminstitute.com for online and in-person ticketing details. Tickets are priced QAR 35.

-ENDS-

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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