

## Qumra confirms film visionaries Claire Denis and Phedon Papamichael to join its 2020 Masters lineup

- *Claire Denis and Phedon Papamichael join James Gray, Jessica Hausner and Mark Mangini as 2020 Qumra Masters*
- *Qumra Masters to provide unique creative development and mentorship opportunities to filmmakers of 46 selected projects from 20 countries including 20 from Qatar*
- *Exciting new programme additions include focused sessions for series projects development from the Arab world*
- *Selected projects include 29 features, 11 shorts and 7 series; 6 Qatari features presented in development*

**Berlin, Germany/Doha, Qatar: February 23, 2020:** Legendary French auteur Claire Denis and BAFTA and Academy Award® nominated cinematographer Phedon Papamichael are confirmed to join the Qumra 2020 Masters lineup in the highly anticipated sixth edition of the Doha Film Institute's (DFI) annual film industry incubator for exceptional talents to be held March 20 to 25, 2020.

They join internationally celebrated director James Gray, Silver Lion winning film director and screenwriter Jessica Hausner and Mark Mangini Oscar® winning sound designer for the 2020 edition event dedicated to supporting important new voices from the Arab and world cinema.

Qumra Masters draw on decades of industry wisdom to provide invaluable insight on select projects through consultations and deep-dive discussions with participating filmmakers.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "We are extremely honoured to once again host five highly acclaimed masters of cinema in Qatar at Qumra 2020. With mentorship and guidance from these creative visionaries, participating filmmakers gain the unique opportunity to enrich their creative voices by learning the advanced skills necessary to take their projects to completion and out to global audiences."

Filmmaker and Doha Film Institute Artistic Advisor, Elia Suleiman, said: "The extraordinary contributions that Claire Denis and Phedon Papamichael have made to the art and craft of filmmaking have redefined approaches to aesthetic and narrative. Denis' daring portrayals of the human condition amidst complex social and cultural landscapes continues to embolden filmmakers to defy standard convention and embrace the poetry of storytelling. Papamichael has an exceptional ability to visually immerse audiences in performances with his extremely precise cinematic compositions."

This year's edition of Qumra will offer networking and development opportunities for 46 projects from 20 countries as part of Qumra's mission to accelerate the success of filmmakers from the region and beyond and prepare them to bring their projects to audiences around the world.

Continuing the Institute's commitment to support Arab talents in evolving forms of creativity and new possibilities, Qumra 2020 introduces for the first-time sessions dedicated to exploring and developing series format projects from the region. This follows the recent expansion of DFI's Grants programme and

various training and development labs dedicated to the creation of original and compelling TV and web content in Arabic.

Projects in development participate in group and individual sessions with Qumra Masters and industry mentors in script consulting, legal, sales, marketing and co-production advice, along with individual matchmaking projects in post-production, which are presented in a series of closed rough-cut screenings to leading festival programmers, broadcasters, market representatives, sales agents and distributors.

Qumra 2020 features 20 projects by Qatar-based talent, including 12 by Qatari nationals. 7 of the projects are in development, with others in the Qumra Series and Shorts programmes. Of 47 projects, 33 are recipients of the Doha Film Institute's Grants programme, 3 are supported through the Qatari Film Fund and 1 through the Institute's co-financing programme. In all, 16 feature projects are in development, 13 feature projects in post-production, 7 in Qumra Series, and 11 are in Qumra Shorts.

## 2020 Qumra Projects:

### Development- Feature Narrative

- **Nezouh** (Syria, Lebanon, France, Germany, Qatar) by Soudade Kaadan is a story about a bomb falling on Zeina's house, only to open a window to a new life.
- **Omar La Fraise** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Elias Belkedar is Omar's story, a crook forced to be on the run in Algeria, who needs to quiet down to avoid prison. Deprived of adrenalin, he swings between his urges and strikes his own balance.
- **Queens** (Morocco, France, Belgium, Qatar) by Yasmine Benkiran follows 27-year-old Zineb, who escapes from prison in the hopes of giving her child a brighter future. On the road, she holds up a truck and takes the young Asma hostage while forcing her to ride them away from the police. From this road trip in a truck soon flourishes a deep friendship.
- **Vanishing** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Lucien Bourjeily tells the story of single mother Rita, who juggles her family and her work with the crucial help of Zofan, a domestic worker, whose mysterious disappearance draws Rita into an investigative journey with unexpected consequences.
- **81'** (Qatar) by Dawood Al-Anwari and Ali Al Ansari is based on a true story about the underdog Qatari youth teams' historic splash at the '81 FIFA Youth World Championships in Australia.
- **Behind Closed Doors** (Qatar) by Hend Fakhroo tells the story of six-year-old Leila, who wakes up one day and finds her mother gone with only her father to take care of her. After months, the small family finally settles into an emotional equilibrium, only to have the mother suddenly return.
- **Beirut 1931** (Palestine, Qatar) by Kamal Aljafari - A man arrives in his native Jaffa after the sudden death of his uncle, who was kept in a mental hospital for over 25 years. Like a lurking shadow, the man would only occasionally visit his family back home – but this trip quickly leads him into an oscillation between the present crisis and memories from the last 70 years.
- **Dowayha** (Qatar) by Mahdi Ali Ali follows a boy going through a psychological change process to discover the reason for the divorce of his parents.
- In **Sabah** (Qatar) by Ben Robinson a rebellious Qatari teenager directs her fellow drama students to broadcast their controversial performance live across social media after a conservative Twitter campaign shuts down a high school play for its satirical content.

- ***Down and Out in Doha*** (Qatar) by Waheed Khan and Fahad Al Kuwari is the story of a young, reckless Qatari man, who abandons his fortune in a challenge and learns that there is more to life than money.
- ***Arabnovela*** (Qatar) by A.J. Al-Thani is a satirical story about how society and family can crush dreams, including that of a young woman named Noor, who dreams of becoming a khaleeji telenovela actress.

#### Development - Feature Documentary

- ***Kashkash*** (Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) by Lea Najjar explores how the age-old Kash Hamam game of the Levant connects people of all religious sects and political views, in a region torn apart by conflicting traditions, rapid modernisation, recurring wars, forced migration, and a myriad of political struggles.
- ***The Flower Men*** (Yemen, USA, Qatar) by Yousra Ishaq tells the story of an ancient Yemeni tribe that is split by a bitter war threatening their homeland, in a country shrouded in complexities.
- ***Machtat*** (Tunisia, France, Lebanon, Qatar) by Sonia Ben Slama follows the lives of Fatma and her daughters Najeh and Waffeh; 'machtat' wedding musicians in the small Tunisian city of Mahdia, escape the hardship of their daily lives through performance.
- ***Searching for Kikhia (working title)*** (Libya, Lebanon, Qatar) by Jihan Kikhia follows a daughter unravelling the disappearance of her father, the peaceful opposition leader to Qaddafi, and pieces together her mother's 19-year search to find him.

#### Post-Production - Feature Narrative

- ***Streams*** (Tunisia, France, Luxembourg, Qatar) by Mehdi Hmili is a film about Amel, a young Tunisian mother seeking her son Moumen, who went missing after the scandal of her affair.
- ***The Maiden's Pond*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Bassem Breche is set in a small Lebanese town, where a mother struggles to lend support to her estranged and newly-divorced daughter, as both women come to terms with their unresolved wounds.
- ***Honey Cigar*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Kamir Aïnouz is the coming-of-age story of a teenage Algerian girl born and raised in France, set against the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria in the 1990s.
- ***The Translator*** (Syria, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Qatar) by Rana Kazkaz and Anas Khalaf is set at the start of the Syrian Revolution in March 2011, when a political refugee returns illegally to Syria and risks everything to free his brother from the Assad regime.
- ***The Winter Within*** (India, France, Qatar) by Aamir Bashir captures the romantic crossroads of Nargis who faces a new beginning with Yaseen just as her husband returns.
- ***Liborio*** (Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Qatar) by Fernando Martinez Sosa follows Liborio a Dominican peasant who disappears in a hurricane and returns as a prophet, only to witness the changes in his community as the country is invaded by the US Marines.
- ***Noche De Fuego*** (Mexico, Germany, Brazil, Qatar) by Tatian Huezo shines a light on life in a war-torn town, seen through the eyes of three young girls on the path to adolescence.

#### Post-Production - Feature Documentary

- ***The Earth Doesn't Move*** (Tunisia, France, Italy, Qatar) by Yosr Gasmi and Mauro Mazzocchi, follows three protagonists' lives while at a reception centre for asylum seekers at the France-Italy border.

- ***After A Revolution*** (Italy, Libya, United Kingdom, United States of America, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Qatar) by Giovanni Buccomino documents a brother and sister's epic, challenging, yet intimate story of love and rebellion over six years in post-revolution Libya.
- ***School of Hope*** (Morocco, Finland, France, USA, Qatar) Mohamed El Aboudi fuses the story of a nomad tribe struggling to obtain education for their children, a young teacher and the government's indifference towards rural regions.
- ***Their Algeria*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Lina Soualem recounts the longstanding journey of exile of the filmmaker's grandparents Aïcha and Mabrouk, a couple of Algerian immigrants who have lived in France for sixty years and whose lives were a succession of separations and silences.
- ***Wake Up on Mars*** (Switzerland, France, Qatar) by Dea Gjinovci follows a ten-year-old Roma boy living in Sweden who struggles to come to terms with the mysterious Resignation Syndrome that has put his two sisters into a coma.
- ***The Labudovic Reels*** (Serbia, Qatar) by Mila Turajlić is an archival road trip with Stevan Labudovic investigating the role of cinema in the liberation struggles of the Third World and reconstructing the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement.

#### Qumra Series

- In ***The Source*** (Tunisia, Switzerland, Qatar) by Erige Sehiri, five childhood friends come together to investigate the mysterious death of Hicham, an older student, and end up on the frontline of the Arab Spring.
- ***The Closet Sessions*** (Jordan, Qatar,) by Ahmad Satti Ibrahim is a musical web series set in a walk-in closet which serves as a platform for alternative Arab artists to showcase their talent.
- ***Faraya*** (Lebanon, Qatar), by Nadim Tabet and Mounia Akl tells the story of an inexperienced police officer investigating the death of a maid at the high-end Faraya ski resort in Lebanon.
- ***Heim*** (Syria, Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) by Liwaa Yazji and Mohammad Abou Laban explores the psychological impact of escaping war when a murder in a refugee centre in Berlin turns old scars into fresh wounds.
- ***Meskoun*** (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Qatar) by Hicham Lasri is the mysterious story of Lotfi, who shortly after losing his fiancé drowns during an illegal emigration attempt only to reappear a month later, buoyed by the souls of the seven people that drowned alongside him.
- ***Al Zubara*** (Qatar) by Hamad Al Mansouri is a futuristic take on Qatar where Jassim Mohammed sets out to avenge his brother's murder.
- ***The Life of Abdulla (working title)*** (Qatar) by Abdulla Al Abdulla follows Abdulla through to the highs and lows of developing a high-end fragrance line that can compete with the best boutique brands in the world.

#### Qumra Shorts

- ***Olayan*** (Qatar) by Khalifa Al Marri follows the epic journey of 6-year old Hamad's quest to rescue his best friend – a baby camel calf – from an unfortunate fate.
- ***Al-Sit*** (Sudan, Qatar) by Suzannah Mirghani is set in a Sudanese cotton-farming village, where 15-year-old Nafisa's parents have arranged her marriage to Nadir, a young Sudanese businessman living abroad. However, before any wedding can take place, Nafisa's grandmother and powerful village matriarch Al-Sit must first give her blessing.
- ***J'ai Le Cafard*** (Kuwait, Egypt, Sudan, Qatar) by Maysaa Al Mumin is the story of a woman in her forties, who struggles to make sense of her downhearted mood until she encounters a cockroach in the office toilets.

- ***Woman of Steel (Okht Rjal)*** (Jordan, Qatar) by Obada Yousef Jarbi is a story about three unusual Jordanian women who capitalise on their skills to provide for their families in the absence of their husbands.
- In ***Under Her Skin*** (Qatar, Algeria, France) by Meriem Mesraoua when her mother prohibits her from biting her nails, Sarah has to abide by new rules that she does not fully understand. By regaining control over her movements and projected image, Sarah slowly redefines her attitude towards herself and others.
- ***Ander*** (Qatar, Kazakhstan) by Alina Mustafina is a short documentary about the world of an energetic 5-year-old-boy who enjoys his childhood, despite his asthma and a rare dairy allergy.
- ***Emily*** (Greece, Qatar) by Anna Prokou follows a Filipina singer in Doha as she opens her 'box of trauma' and confronts a painful past in her only chance to break free.
- In ***Ghareeb (Stranger)*** (Qatar, France) by Yasser Mustafa and Christophe Buffet the security guard of an abandoned elementary school explores the remains of the neighbourhood's former residents, weaving their mysteries into his own narrative.
- ***Under the Lemon Tree*** (Qatar, Palestine) by Noor Alasswad chronicles how an exiled Palestinian woman partakes in a humble fireside repast under a lemon tree that takes her back through the decades to her homeland.
- ***Ode to Loneliness*** (Qatar, Lebanon) by Rawane Nassif introduces audiences to a woman, who lives alone in a cubical hotel room with a view of the city where she films herself, the city, and her dreams over a one-month period.
- ***And Then They Burn the Sea*** (Qatar) by Majid Al-Remaihi is a reflection on the memories of a mother with dementia, the film threads through a history of images, personal archives, cultural motifs as an ode to the fragility of memory.

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### Notes to Editors

#### Master Bios:

#### Claire Denis

Born in Paris, Claire Denis wrote and directed her first feature film, ***Chocolat***, in 1988. A semi-autobiographical story of racial tension in colonial Africa in the 1950s, the film was screened at Cannes Film Festival. In 1996, she won the Golden Leopard Locarno for ***Nenette and Boni***. Denis' other notable films ***Trouble Every Day*** (2001), ***35 Shots of Rum*** (2008), ***White Material*** (2009) and ***Bastards*** (2013) were presented at Un Certain Regard at Cannes Film Festival in 2013. In 2017, Claire Denis returned to Cannes with ***Bright Sunshine In***, screened as the opening film in Directors' Fortnight and winner of the SACD prize.

#### James Gray

New York City native, James Gray, is a film director and screenwriter. He went on to study at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts before making his feature directorial debut with the crime drama ***Little Odessa*** (1994) at the age of twenty-five, which won the Silver Lion award at the 51<sup>st</sup> Venice International Film Festival. He has made six other features, four of which competed for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. His body of work includes ***The Yards*** (2000), ***We Own the Night*** (2007) starring Joaquin Phoenix, ***Two Lovers*** (2008), ***The Immigrant*** (2013), ***The Lost City of Z*** (2016) and the sci-fi adventure ***Ad Astra*** (2019).

### Jessica Hausner

Born in Vienna, Austria in 1972, Jessica Hausner studied directing at the Film Academy of Vienna where she made the award-winning short films **Flora** (1996) and **Inter-View** (1999), which won the Jury Prize of the Cannes Cinéfondation. Her body of work includes the Cannes nominated feature films **Lovely Rita** (2001) and **Hotel** (2004) selected to the Festival's Un Certain Regard segment. Her feature **Lourdes** (2009), won the FIPRESCI Prize at the 66<sup>th</sup> Venice Film Festival. In 1999, Hausner founded the Viennese film production company coop99. She was appointed a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 2017. Her fifth feature film, **Little Joe** (2019), premiered in competition at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival where its lead actress won the award for Best Actress.

### Mark Mangini

Born in 1956 in Boston, Massachusetts, Mark Mangini grew up as a musician and attended Holy Cross College as a foreign language major. His passion for filmmaking and music prompted a move to Los Angeles in 1976, where he launched his career in sound department working for children's cartoons before founding Weddington Productions – a successful post-production sound company that he ran for 25 years. His extensive body of work as a supervising sound editor, sound designer, and recording mixer earned him five Oscar® nominations for **Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home** (1986), **Aladdin** (1992), **The Fifth Element** (1997), and **Blade Runner 2049** (2017). He won the award in 2015 for his work on **Mad Max: Fury Road** (2015).

### Phedon Papamichael

Phedon Papamichael, an Academy Award® nominated cinematographer was born in Athens, Greece and moved with his family to Germany where in 1982 he completed his education in Fine Arts in Munich. He is widely regarded for his collaborations with directors James Mangold, Alexander Payne and Wim Wenders. Working as a photojournalist brought Papamichael to NYC in 1983, where he started crossing over into cinematography. Papamichael now counts over 45 features to his credit as Director of Photography, including the early blockbusters, **While You Were Sleeping** (1995), **Cool Runnings** (1993) and **Phenomenon** (1996), all directed by Jon Turteltaub. He was nominated for both the Academy Award® and BAFTA Award for Best Cinematography for Payne's 2013 film **Nebraska**. Papamichael's recent works include Mangold's **Ford V Ferrari** (2019), which earned him a BAFTA nomination.

**Previous Qumra Masters:** Previous Qumra Masters include Oscar® winning actor Tilda Swinton (**Isle of Dogs**, **Michael Clayton**, **We Need to Talk about Kevin**); Oscar® winning British costume designer Sandy Powell, OBE (**The Young Victoria**, **The Aviator**, **Shakespeare in Love**); Oscar® nominated director Bennett Miller (**Capote**, **Moneyball**, **Foxcatcher**); Academy Award® winning production designer Eugenio Caballero; Italian writer and director Alice Rohrwacher; Japanese director, writer, film critic, and Professor Kiyoshi Kurosawa; Academy Award® winning Polish filmmaker Pawel Pawlikowski; Venice Golden Lion winning Russian director and writer Andrey Zvyagintsev (**Leviathan**, **Loveless**); Cannes Palme d'Or winning Thai filmmaker and visual artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul (**Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives**); Berlinale Golden Bear winner Italian documentary director Gianfranco Rosi (**Fire at Sea**); Argentinian director Lucrecia Martel (**The Swamp**, **The Holy Girl/ The Headless Woman**); Portuguese producer Paulo Branco; Best Foreign Language Film Oscar® winning Iranian director Asghar Farhadi (**A Separation/ The Salesman**); French director Bruno Dumont (**P'tit Quinquin**); Cambodian

documentarian Rithy Panh (**The Missing Picture**); Mexican actor/ director/ producer Gael Garcia Bernal (**Amores Perros/ No/ Deficit**), Best Foreign Language Film Oscar® nominated Mauritanian director Abderrahmane Sissako (**Timbuktu**); Romanian Palme d'Or winning director Cristian Mungiu (**4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days/ Beyond the Hills**); Best Foreign Language Film Oscar® winning Bosnian writer/director Danis Tanović (**An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker/ Tigers, No Man's Land**); Palme d'Or winning Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan (**Once Upon a Time in Anatolia, Winter Sleep**); Cannes Grand Prix winning Japanese filmmaker Naomi Kawase (**The Mourning Forest**); Oscar® nominated documentary director Joshua Oppenheimer (**The Act of Killing / The Look of Silence**); Cannes Best Screenplay winning writer James Schamus (**The Ice Storm**); Aleksandr Sokurov (**Russian Ark/ Francofonia**).

#### 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.

#### About Qumra

Directors and Producers attached to 34 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.