

## **Doha Film Institute expands its global reach with largest virtual edition of Qumra 2021**

*Film Visionaries Claire Denis, James Gray, Jessica Hausner, Mark Mangini and Phedon Papamichael, return for Doha Film Institute's annual industry incubator for exceptional talent*

- *Qumra Masters to provide unique creative development and mentorship opportunities online to filmmakers of 48 selected projects from 21 countries including 19 from Qatar*
- *Selected projects include 30 features, 6 series and 12 shorts; with Qatari projects represented across all formats*
- *Focused sessions for series projects development from the Arab world delivered online*

**Doha, Qatar: February 22, 2021:** Legendary French auteur Claire Denis, BAFTA and Academy Award® nominated cinematographer Phedon Papamichael, internationally celebrated director and Cannes veteran James Gray, Silver Lion winning film director and screenwriter Jessica Hausner and Academy Award® winning sound designer Mark Mangini re-confirmed their commitments as Qumra Masters for the 2021 online edition of Doha Film Institute's event dedicated to supporting important new voices from the Arab and world cinema.

Over the past seven years, Qumra has been a one-of-a-kind professional incubator crucial to the success of filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond. The Qumra 2021 programme, scheduled from March 12-17 will present 48 selected projects from 21 countries as part of DFI's mission to nurture the success of filmmakers from the region and beyond and prepare them to bring their projects to audiences around the world.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "Qumra is an extremely important event for our community and participants, and is crucial for the success of the selected projects who represent some of the most promising names in world cinema. The Institute is extremely grateful to our Qumra Masters, filmmakers and industry participants for their passion and contribution to our commitment to reshape the global storytelling landscape and empower emerging voices during this period of new challenges.

"With mentorship and guidance from these creative visionaries, participating filmmakers gain the unique opportunity to further enhance their craft and to transform inspired stories into award-winning masterpieces. Now in its biggest, most innovative new format that enables access from anywhere in the world, we look forward to supporting tomorrow's most promising talent and sharing their work with our continuously growing Qumra global community."

Doha Film Institute Artistic Advisor and filmmaker, Elia Suleiman, said: "In the midst of the adversity of the COVID-19 outbreak, it was of utmost importance for us to protect the promise of the outstanding projects in the previous edition of Qumra, regardless of the disruption that the pandemic caused to our 'normal'. A year on, we look forward to welcoming our Master's back to bring their immense value to an exciting new line-up of projects, on a more robust and interactive online platform. The true test of

powerful storytelling lies in its ability to transgress all limitations, and we are indebted to the Qumra Masters for the power of their vision to transcend physical boundaries and inspire this year's participants to boldly redefine global storytelling.”

Continuing the Institute’s commitment to support promising talent in evolving forms of creativity and new possibilities, Qumra 2021 includes sessions dedicated to exploring and developing fresh new projects from the region. This year’s event features 19 projects by Qatar-based talent, including 12 by Qatari nationals. A total of 48 projects, including Series Projects in various stages of development, will participate. Of these projects, 39 are recipients of the Doha Film Institute’s Grants programme and the Qatari Film Fund. In all, 15 feature projects are in the development stage, 15 feature projects in post-production, 6 TV and web Series Projects in Development, and 12 Shorts Projects (in Development and Post-Production).

## 2021 QUMRA PROJECTS:

### FEATURE PROJECTS

#### Development- Feature Narrative

- ***A Road to Damascus*** (Lebanon, France, Qatar) by Meedo Taha is about an ambitious policewoman who conducts a murder investigation that threatens to turn her own hometown against her.
- ***Ashkal*** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Youssef Chebbi follows Batal and Fatma carrying out an investigation on a strange case of self-immolation. The mystery grows when a new calcined body is found in the same neighbourhood.
- ***Cotton Queen*** (Sudan, Qatar) by Suzannah Mirghani is set in a cotton-farming village in Sudan, where 15-year-old Nafisa must stand up for the idea of love and stand up to her greatest obstacle: her grandmother, the foreboding Al-Sit.
- ***Hounds*** (Morocco, France, Belgium, Qatar) by Kamal Lazraq is set in the working-class suburbs of Casablanca, father and son Hassan and Issam, survive from day to day by doing small-time deals and running errands for local gangs, when, one night they are asked to carry out an abduction.
- ***In a Dream You Saw A Way to Survive and You Were Full of Joy*** (Lebanon, UK, Qatar) by Remi Itani, faced with an unintended pregnancy, a young Lebanese woman’s shame, fear and denial turns into a ghostly veil that haunts her, forcing her to redefine her relationship with men, her city and her oblivious mother.
- ***My Classmate Ali for Supreme Leader*** (Qatar) by Nadia Al-Khater- a tenth grader’s humble campaign for student council secretary is overshadowed by her older brother’s sensational run for president.
- ***The Pearl*** (Qatar) by Noor Al-Nasser - when a tech-obsessed Qatari teen who is disconnected from his family travels back to a time before technology existed and pearl diving was the main source of income, he is forced to learn how to communicate face-to-face to reconnect with his family.
- ***Under Construction*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Nadim Tabet -When Syrian workers mysteriously start disappearing from a construction site located near a Lebanese village, Tarek, a 30-year-old worker is haunted by the ghost of a woman who was allegedly murdered by a soldier when the village was under Syrian military occupation.

## Development-Feature Documentary

- ***Companions of The White Arc*** (Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Romania, Norway) by Elia Youssef and Mohammed Al-Thani - Moe Al Thani attempts his last climb solo in an effort to become the first Qatari to achieve mountaineering's coveted "Grand Slam" title. His North Pole expedition pushes him far beyond his comfort zone, allowing him to truly discover his inner voice and deep connection with nature.
- ***Handala, The Boy Without a Face*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Mahmoud Kaabour depicts a treasure hunt, emanating from a sketch of a young refugee that has been circulating around the world for over fifty years.
- ***Jodari Meno*** (Qatar, Italy, Zanzibar) by Jamal Al-Khanji and David Ochoa- A Qatari spearfisherman embarks on a journey of self-exploration by chasing his dream of catching a once in a lifetime fish in this story of how passion helps shape his world and the life of those around him in ways he never thought possible.
- ***My Father's House*** (Denmark, UK, Palestine, Qatar) by Mahdi Fleifel - A personal story about memory, exile, and a father and his son.
- ***The Camera Never Cries*** (Sudan, Qatar) by Abuzar Adam, Elsadig Abdelgayoum- Driven by their passion for change, two filmmakers document the 2019 Sudanese revolution. A year later during the Covid-19 lockdown, they reunite to explore the story of the revolution and their growing friendship.
- ***Theft of Fire*** (Canada, Palestine, Qatar) by Amer Shomali- A lonely Palestinian artist hatches a daring plot to break into a secret Israeli prison and steal back a trove of looted antiquities from a legendary general. A hybrid documentary based on a true story.
- ***Wall of Death*** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Amine Sabir- Hassan and Khadra have been performing the motorcycle acrobatics Wall of Death show for four decades but refuse to let their 27-year-old daughter Zahra take over. Zahra finds herself torn between solidarity with family and the desire to choose another path.

## Post-Production- Feature Narrative

### Work-in-Progress

- ***Costa Brava Lebanon*** (Lebanon, France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Qatar) by Mounia Akl -The Badri family lives in isolation in Lebanon's mountains. When the government inaugurates a landfill outside their fence, everything they escaped catches up with them.

### Picture Lock

- ***El Gran Movimiento*** (Bolivia, France, Switzerland, Qatar) by Kiro Russo - A worker falls ill upon his arrival to the city of La Paz, and his godmother attempts to save him through a healer.
- ***Orca*** (Qatar, Iran) by Sahar Mossayebi -The dark waters you fear to enter hold the salvation that you seek.

- ***The Exam*** (Iraq, Germany, Qatar) by Shawkat Amin Korki - Rojin and her sister Shilan know that starting university is Rojin's only way to avoid a forced marriage. So, they plan to cheat on the admission exam by buying the correct answers.
- ***The Sea Ahead*** (Lebanon, France, Belgium, USA, Qatar) by Ely Dagher - After a long absence, a young woman suddenly returns home and finds herself reconnecting with the familiar, yet strange life she had once left.
- ***Tug of War*** (Tanzania, South Africa, Germany, Qatar) by Amil Shivji -A runaway Indian-Zanzibari bride forms a strong bond with a young communist in the winding alleyways of 1950s British colonial Zanzibar. Love and resistance escalate.
- ***Whether the Weather is Fine*** (Philippines, France, Singapore, Germany, Indonesia, Qatar) by Carlo Francisco Manatad follows Miguel after he wakes up in the chaos of Typhoon Haiyan, which destroyed Tacloban—a coastal city in the Philippines, in November 2013.
- ***White Building*** (Cambodia, France, China, Qatar) by Kavich Neang - Samnang faces the demolition of his lifelong home in Phnom Penh coupled with pressures from family, friends, and neighbours, which all arise and intersect at this moment of sudden change.

#### Post-Production- Feature Documentary

#### Work-in-Progress

- ***The Miracle of Almería*** (Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, Qatar) by Moon Blaisse - The legal and illegal inhabitants of Almería, the biggest vegetable garden in Europe, cooperate to reveal the system of violence behind their tomatoes.
- ***5 Seasons of Revolution*** (Syria, Germany, Norway, Qatar) by LINA - Lina wanted to become simply a camera woman. But after the uprising in Syria, it didn't take long until events escalated, and arrests, torture, and potentially life-threatening situations became a reality for Lina to negotiate as a new norm.
- ***Fragments from Heaven*** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Adnane Baraka - The story of nomad Mohamed, scientist Abderrahmane, and other Bedouins searching the Moroccan desert for the same celestial stone that could change the finder's life forever, each for their own reasons. Their search merges into an inherent quest that resonates with that of all the others.

#### Picture Lock

- ***Atlantide*** (Italy, France, Qatar) by Yuri Ancarani - Among the gondolas, canals, and palaces of the Venetian lagoon—tourists have replaced inhabitants. At the heart of an alternative society rebelling against this reality is a group of teenagers seeking their way to adulthood on their powerboats called "Barchini".
- ***Children of the Enemy*** (Sweden, Denmark, Qatar) by Gorki Glaser-Müller- He lost his daughter to Islamic State. Can he save his grandchildren?
- ***Les Enfants Terribles*** (France, Germany, Turkey, Qatar) by Ahmet Necdet Cupur - In a village near the Syrian border of Turkey, a young man, Mahmut, and his adolescent sister Zeynep are regarded as sinners when they make unconventional life choices, and an impossible battle begins.

- ***Our Little Palestine*** (Lebanon, France, Syria, Qatar) by Abdullah Al Khateeb - A group of Palestinian civilian activists from the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus decide to respond to the chaos that has turned their small community into a besieged ghetto by doing civil work, practicing agriculture, studying and spreading music, theatre, love and joy.

## SHORTS PROJECTS

### Development - Short Narrative

- ***Al Fanar*** (Qatar) by Aisha Al Muhannadi – A young woman left alone in her friendly neighborhood after her father ventured to the sea, turned her life into a tragedy.
- ***Kinship*** (Qatar) by Ali Alhajri– When a shadow emerges with the birth of his newborn, Khalid must come face to face with his past in order to live his future.
- ***The Experiment*** (Qatar) by Abdullah Alhor – Set in a prison in a Middle Eastern city, the film is about a bullied 30-year-old researcher who must win a challenge to prove that his rehab experiment works, before he loses his job - and his face - to his nemesis.
- ***A Simple Cut*** (Qatar) by Maha Al Jefairi - A young girl goes to ridiculous lengths to hide her haircut from her overbearing mother.

### Work-in-Progress – Short Animation

- ***Revenge Knows Nothing*** (Qatar) by Abdulla Al Janahi & Abdulaziz Khashabi - merges two stories to showcase the horrific effects of human injustice and selfish actions on its victims—human or otherwise.

### Work-in-Progress- Short Documentary

- ***Let's Play Soldiers*** (Yemen, Qatar) by Mariam Al-Dhubhani - The story of Nasser, Adham, and Ahmed -three generations of child soldiers lost in the cycle of war in Yemen.

### Short Documentary Lab with Rithy Panh

- ***And I Was Left Behind*** (Qatar, Kuwait) by Maysaa Almumin – Long after her passing, my grandmother's words told to me as a child, finally make sense to me decades later.
- ***And Then They Burn the Sea (Qatar) by Majid Al Remaihi*** – is an elegy to the filmmaker's mother. Weaving through images, personal archives, and cultural motifs, the film is a meditation on ambiguous loss, the sea, and dreams.
- ***Fever Dream*** (Qatar, USA, Poland) by Ania Hendryx Wójtowicz – When dreams overtake waking life and reality masquerades as fiction – “Do Not Leave the House.”
- ***Ode to Loneliness*** (Qatar, Lebanon) by Rawane Nassif – A woman lives alone in a cubical hotel room with a view to the city. She films herself, the city, and her dreams for a month.
- ***Virtual Voice*** (Qatar, Sudan) by Suzannah Mirghani – Suzi is the voice of her generation...the virtual voice of her generation.

## Picture Lock Creative Short Documentary

- ***Don't Get Too Comfortable*** (Yemen, UAE, Kenya, USA, Netherlands, Qatar) by Shaima Al Tamimi - More than fifty years after his death, this heartfelt multimedia letter addressed to Shaima's paternal grandfather reflects on the intergenerational journey of migration and resettlement and examines the burden of relocation that impacts Yemeni migrants across generations.

## SERIES PROJECTS

- ***Locals. Qatar.*** (Qatar) Directed by Saud Al Thani, written by Stephen Ochsner, produced by Fahad Al Attiya, Julia Shaginurova, Galina Bott  
A hyper-inclusive look into what responsibility and sense of belonging mean in a place where 90% of the population are guests.
- ***Mornings in Jenin*** (Palestine, USA, UK, Qatar) Directed by Annemarie Jacir, Produced by Alison Sterling, Screenwriters: Ismail Khalidi, Naomi Wallace  
Mornings in Jenin is a deeply human chronicle of the intertwining lives of three siblings who make starkly different choices in the face of turmoil and conflict. Beginning in Palestine in 1947, it is a searing exploration of friendship, love, courage, and hope.
- ***Oddity Tales from a Strange Land*** (Jordan, Qatar) Directed and written by Ahmad Samara, Produced and co-written by Alaa Alhussan, co-writer: Alaadin Qaraqish  
A coming-of-age story, following a girl named Aya, through which we explore a collection of stories that share with us the diverse ancient historical tales and mythologies spread throughout the Arab world.
- ***Rise of the Mad Cat*** (Qatar)- Directed, written and produced by Meshaal Al Abdulla and Ibrahim Al Abdulla  
CHIMBIR is a stray cat He meets CASPER the fish. With the help of their new creation GEMII. They team up to face various challenges, and build relations in order to establish an advanced empire.
- ***TCA186: The Tarmac Year*** (Lebanon, Qatar)- Directed & Written by Mohamed Berro, Co-Written by Fuad Halwani, Producer: Mohamed Berro, Fuad Halwani  
In the time of the Cold War in 1980's, two Lebanese cousins hijacking a plane to demand the release of political prisoners get tangled up with cold war politics, and the hijackers and passengers find themselves attempting to survive the longest hijacking in history.
- ***Jet Set Arabia*** (Qatar) by Abdulla Al Abdulla, Exec. Producers: Abdulla Al-Abdulla, Basel Owies  
A glimpse into the glamorous exploits of celebrity Khaleeji social media influencers Fatima Al Momen, Ascia Farraj, Abdulla Al Abdulla, Reem Al Sanea and Rawan Bin Hussain, who juggle their unconventional modern lifestyles under the microscopes of their families and traditional cultures of the Middle East.

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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 *Let The 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 selected projects in development and post-production are invited 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.