

Persevere and follow one's passion, say Brigitte Lacombe and Yasmine Hamdan in insightful Qumra Talks

- *Pioneering singer-songwriter Yasmine Hamdan and influential photographer Brigitte Lacombe share their work experiences and personal outlook about their careers in the creative industry*

Doha, Qatar; March 17, 2021: Qumra Talks - a key element of Qumra, the Doha Film Institute's annual talent incubator for Arab cinema presented two inspiring personalities, pioneering singer-songwriter Yasmine Hamdan, and the influential photographer Brigitte Lacombe. While their area of creative work is different, they share a common key message that they conveyed to aspiring filmmakers: the power of perseverance and the need to pursue one's passion, irrespective of formal training in the field of choice.

The deeply inspiring sessions discussed the creative life of the two professionals by taking audiences through their works – songs, in the case of Hamdan, and the captivating photographs that document some of the iconic faces of Hollywood by Lacombe.

On her inspiration, Hamdan said she draws from the challenges that Lebanon faces: "Even though you are living abroad for so many years, you can never forget that you came from here. You carry the drama and the joy of the place." As an artist, what matters for her is "how and what you do with this despair in you [looking at the current situation]. This fuels creation, but there is the reality, which is very painful. You have to play with that, with your own feelings and find a way to access them and transform them into something that gives you some joy and serenity."

Hamdan said working with a number of professionals during her career has defined the power of collaboration. "Every time you work, you evolve. Your interest, psyche, desires... you do not want to repeat yourself to do the same record every time. It is like tango. You react to the things that life offers you and when you collaborate with people, you add this energy or fuel to what you already have." She said that seeing how others work, do music and perform is "something very nourishing."

Looking back on her career, Hamdan said when she started doing music, she was "very fragile. I started with a lot of insecurity as I was not academically or classically trained. I wanted to do something but didn't know what or how. But I am quite perseverant. We grew up in an environment that did not allow us to promote ourselves or know how the music business works. But [learning all that] was fun; it was really experimental."

The Qumra Talk by Brigitte Lacombe was a journey through the history of cinema of sorts, as she discussed the 'art of groundbreaking photography' with moderator E Nina Rothe. Talking about her early days in cinema as a photographer, Lacombe said "I was a bad student and was thrown out from school. I really just wanted to start my life and I had no idea how or what to do. But soon, photography became my entire life; it brought purpose to my life and that is what I do exclusive of everything else."

She discussed at length her meetings with legendary directors and actors, and how being part of the core team, such as of Martin Scorsese, gave her the unchallenged access to do her work. Working with masters such as Federico Fellini to Steven Spielberg exposed her to different styles of working. "With Fellini, it was

like this great Italian master, where everything was almost like extraordinary theatre,’ and then working in Hollywood – those were two different worlds.”

Lacombe also discussed her project of working with the world’s leading scientists, explaining that “It is extremely interesting to photograph people who are not performing for you and are not even so interested.” She said that while it was initially upsetting that her photographs were cropped for posters, now she has come to “completely understand that. The fact is you accept, embrace and go on; what is important is the moment you are living, the images you have taken – they exist.”

She described her project for the Doha Film Institute, which led to the large-size displays of Arab talents on the billboards of the city as another extraordinary experience. “Watching them on the opening night of the film festival and driving through these long series of gigantic photographs was a pleasant and amazing experience.”

Public can access Qumra online by purchasing a Qumra Pass that offers the full Qumra Screenings and Qumra Talks programmes. Qumra Pass is open to all citizens and residents of Qatar and the MENA region, and applications will be processed on a first-come first-serve basis. The Qumra Pass is priced at QAR 500; students and Culture Pass by Qatar Museums holders can purchase it for a discounted price of QAR 350.

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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 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 48 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.