

Qumra Master Claire Denis Encourages Emerging Filmmakers to Trust their Own Perspectives

Doha, Qatar; March 2, 2024: Illustrious French film director and writer, Claire Denis, who returns as a Qumra Master for the tenth edition of the talent incubator event by the Doha Film Institute, said in her Masterclass that as a filmmaker, her unwavering focus is to present her own point of view, a process that aligns herself with her characters.

She constantly relooks at her script from the many perspectives of the characters – what they wear, how they talk, how they feel – until she cracks what is missing for long in the scriptwriting process. Finding that link, Claire told Qumra delegates, is crucial to finding the core of the film.

Claire took the audience through her cinematic journey, defined by complex yet compelling works set in colonial and post-colonial West Africa and modern France. For her first feature, the Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or nominated *'Chocolat'* (1988), Claire looked deeper into her own experiences of growing up in West Africa.

"There was a strong fight for independence and without knowing too much about it then, as a child, I knew that we were reaching the end of something that existed. I knew the change was for the best and that the future looked brighter and better."

Claire's subsequent works were equally acclaimed, including *'US Go Home'* (1994), Locarno Golden Leopard winner, *'Nénette et Boni'* (1996), *'Beau Travail'* (1999), *'Trouble Every Day'* (2001), *'Vendredi Soir'* (2002) and *'35 Rhums'* (2009). Her 2022 films *'Both Sides of the Blade'* won the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and *'Stars at Noon'* was nominated for the Palme d'Or and awarded the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

She recalled seminal moments from the making of some of these films in her Masterclass, reiterating the importance of collaboration in filmmaking and the need to trust one's voice through persistent questioning. "I am a very pessimistic person and it is so good to be able to speak aloud with others. It is great to be able to laugh about the work and discuss the scenes, dialogues... that is the best part... [of filmmaking]."

Claire said she would never portray violence in a film gratuitously because "violence is like a volcano. You can lean on the green grass and look at the blue sky, and suddenly, it erupts. We are in this world where violence is exploding and hurting our feelings, but I don't think I want to do a movie on that. But there is always a moment when the script is taking shape and suddenly there is violence erupting. I cannot stop that."

On choosing actors, Claire said she refrains from doing screen tests "because I feel I am taking away something from them for free." Instead, she prefers to take a chance by "guessing and trusting – because there is always that moment when you feel the connection that you have made the right choice."

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