
Grants Catalogue

2020

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

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Film Funding Doha Film Institute Grants Programme 2020

The Doha Film Institute's Grants Programme has served as a robust pillar in strengthening an ecosystem of opportunities for filmmakers, not only from the region but also across the world during the past ten years. As a financing initiative that supports films in various stages of production, it has further enhanced the reputation of Qatar among creative professionals for its focus on identifying new voices in cinema and contributing to the global collective of arthouse and independent films.

Going beyond the number of films that the Grants programme supports—already significant at over 600 projects from 70 nations—we are truly honoured to be associated with new and emerging talent from across the world, and to contribute to the diversity of global cinema by facilitating films from several regions and nations that are under-represented.

This programme builds on our belief that cinema is a powerful medium that can bring positive change as well as promote cultural understanding and dialogue. It underlines our commitment to supporting emerging film talent and lending them tangible support to realise their creative aspirations. It also reflects our focus on working with global film professionals whose fascinating ideas can spark lively conversations. In fact, international filmmakers joining our alumni encompass talents from 4 continents, including South and North America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and North Africa.

Our Grants programme in 2020 is even more significant as it seeks to lend continuity, especially to the film industry in the region, which was adversely impacted by the pandemic. Through the two cycles of the Grants Programme, Spring and Fall, we are extending support to an impressive slate of 78 film projects, representing close to 40 countries, apart from promoting cinema from Qatar itself. Highlighting the prominence of women talent in cinema from our region, 34 of these projects are helmed by female filmmakers. It gives me personal pride in the substantial strides that our women have taken to pursue their passion for cinema and bring our stories to the world.

All the projects by first- and second-time directors were chosen for their power to influence audiences across the world through captivating stories and creative narrative techniques. While staying true to their milieu, these films are universal in spirit, reminding us how we, as humanity, are united in our hopes and aspirations. Several films reflect the social, economic, political, and environmental realities of today, which make them compelling cinematic references of the times we live in—challenging yet inspiring, despairing yet hopeful.

Evolving with the times and trends, our funding initiative covers feature narratives, documentary, shorts as well as series, including two web series from Qatar. With the growing popularity of digital media, we are also supporting the first Virtual Reality film project, which masterfully explores a virtual return to Palestine and an aesthetic of land reclamation within the virtual space.

Beyond geography and not limited to the form or genres, our Grants programme has united filmmakers from around the world over the years. We are confident that the 2020 recipients will add not only to our pride but to the medium of cinema through their films, gaining both global recognition and admiration.

- Fatma Hassan Alremaihi
CEO, Doha Film Institute

Doha Film Institute
Grants Team

Hanaa Issa, Director of Strategy and Development, Qumra Deputy Director

Khalil Benkirane, Head of Grants

Meriem Mesraoua, Grants Senior Coordinator

Vanessa Paradis, Grants Coordinator

Yassine Ouahrani, Grants Coordinator

Feature Narrative

'Amparo' by Simon Mesa Soto

'Ashkal' by Youssef Chebbi

'Blacklight' by Karim Bensalah

'Body and Soul' by Ali Al-Sulaiti

'The Crown of Olives' by Muzna Almusafer

'El Gran Movimiento' by Kiro Russo

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'Freda' by Gessica Fabiola Généus

'Gaza Mon Amour' by Tarzan Nasser, Arab Nasser

'Ghosts' by Azra Deniz Okyay

'The Gravedigger's Wife' by Khadar Ayderus Ahmed

'Hounds' by Kamal Lazraq

'LABAN: The False Prophets of Johann Sebastian Bach' by Daniel Joseph

'My Dad Is Not Dead' by Adil El Fadili

'Neighbours' by Mano Khalil

'Night in a Glass of Water' by Carlos Chahine

'Orca' by Sahar Mossayebi

'Queens of Shadow' by Aida Senna

'Rehana Maryam Noor' by Abdullah Mohammad Saad

'The Storms' by Dania Reymond-Bouhenou

'Tug of War' by Amil Shivji

'Under Construction' by Nadim Tabet

'Whether the Weather is Fine' by Carlo Francisco Manatad

'White Building' by Kavich Neang

Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Simon Mesa Soto

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Juan Sarmiento G.

Producer



Contact

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Amparo

Colombia, Sweden, Germany, Qatar / Spanish / 2021

Runtime: 95 mins

Genre: Women's Issues, Drama, Politics, War

A single mother struggles to keep her family together in 1990s Colombia after her son is drafted by the army and assigned to the front in the country's most dangerous war zone. To save him, she must embark on a journey against time in a society ruled by men, corruption and violence.



After a long night's shift, Amparo, a single mother of two, returns home to find her children are not there. Her eldest son Elias failed to pick up his little sister Karen from school. Elias is a troubled young man; he didn't study and doesn't work. While searching for him, Amparo soon finds out that he has been drafted as a "regular soldier" during an army raid and will be sent to the front in a feared war zone, far from the city. His fate is doomed. With only a single day left until his departure, Amparo manages to contact a man who offers to change his exam results and get him out— but the money he asks is well beyond her means. With nothing much on her side, Amparo decides to embark on a journey against time in a society ruled by corrupt and empathyless men, acutely aware that the task at hand is an almost impossible undertaking. In the end, she must decide how far she is willing to go to keep her family together and her son away from war.

Director's Note

This story is based on my own experience. When I was declared fit for the military, my mother visited a man to illegally change the result of my exams, but the money he demanded was too much. I was scared, and in a moment of despair, I reproached her for the life she had given me and for her lack of financial capacity to prevent me from going away. I still have the feeling of remorse when I did not appreciate the efforts of a single woman, responsible for two children. She spent 20 years married and endured the abuses of my father; a Colombian man, conservative and sexist. This film is a homage to my mother. Like her, Amparo is a working-class woman who faces the moment her son has been drafted and assigned to a conflict zone. The film does not narrate the war; it concentrates on the simple story of a woman, and the two days she has to save her son before he goes to war. We follow her throughout the film, and as she progresses in her task, we discover who she really is, including all her flaws but most of all her most internal motivation—keeping her family together.

Director's Biography

Simon Mesa Soto studied Audiovisual Communication at the Universidad de Antioquia. In 2014, he finished the MA in Filmmaking at the London Film School. His graduation film 'Leidi' won the short film Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival 2014 and the Gold Hugo at the Chicago International Film Festival 2015. His subsequent short film, 'Madre' was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival 2016 and went on to win many awards worldwide. 'Amparo' is his feature film debut.

Company Profile

Ocultimo is a new film production company founded in 2017 in Colombia by Simon Mesa Soto and Juan Sarmiento G. After our collaboration as a creative duo on our first two highly successful short films ('Leidi' and 'Madre', we wanted to work under a production scheme that gave us further necessary freedom and creative possibilities to realize our first feature film together. In the future, we aim to work on handpicked auteur projects, in which we can support, guide and further inspire the vision of filmmakers. We are interested in emotionally compelling, character-driven stories with mature and daring cinematographic approaches. In the coming years, Ocúltimo looks forward to building a strong portfolio of films by directors with which we can build a long-lasting creative and personal relationship.

Production

Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Youssef Chebbi

Director / Screenwriter



Farès Ladjimi

Producer



Contact

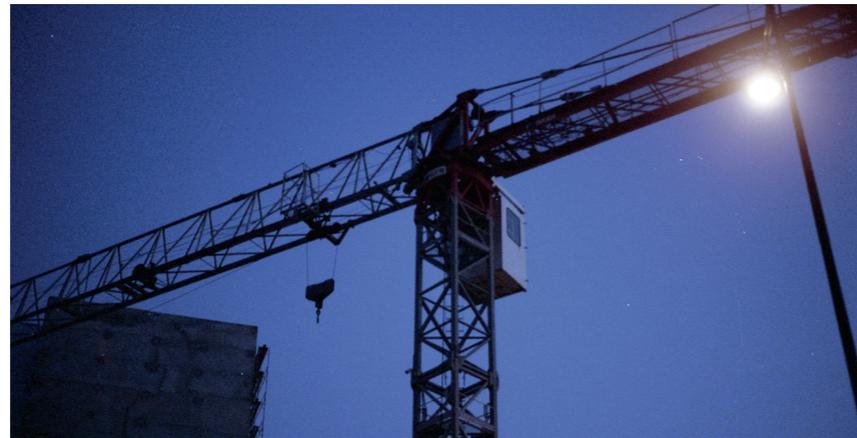
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Ashkal

Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Thriller, Politics

In the gardens of Carthage in Tunis—a new neighbourhood where modern constructions rub shoulders with abandoned construction sites and vacant scrubby lots—Batal and Fatma are investigating a strange case of immolation. The charred body of the caretaker of a vacant building has been discovered on the site. It is strange as usually, cases of self-immolation come with clear political statements and often take place in city centres and public spaces. The confusion grows when a new calcined body is found in the same neighbourhood



In the gardens of Carthage, a new district where modern buildings are juxtaposed with abandoned sites and wastelands, the body of a caretaker is found calcined in the middle of a construction site. Batal and Fatma are in charge of the investigation and begin by questioning the workers of the neighbouring yards. The police quickly conclude suicide by immolation, a gesture of despair. Batal and Fatma refute this thesis. Why choose a place so reclusive when usually one immolates oneself in the city centres, hoping to provoke a popular reaction? A few days later, in the same neighbourhood, a teenager is found dead in the middle of a wasteland, also calcined. Our investigators are far from imagining what will happen next...

Director's Note

In Tunisia, we talk of the person who sets fire to himself as a martyr; it's often someone who'll be canonised immediately, as a recognition of this solitary gesture that testifies to the hurt and injustice felt by others. In the majority of cases, religion condemns suicide. But in the context of immolation, it is dubbed and sanctified, with the aim of maintaining a sense of peace and framework that remains certainly salutary. This political act and its spiritual dimension have inspired me to draw the lines of the police investigation. A faith that starts by an act of desperation, of sacrifice, of self-destruction but that also contains the possibility of a new path.

Director's Biography

Youssef Chebbi is an author and director born in Tunisia in 1984. After studying art, he directed two short films, 'Vers le Nord' and 'Les Profondeurs'. Both were made with the support of the CNC and went on to feature in competition at Festival de Clermont Ferrand and several other international festivals. In 2012 he co-directed a feature documentary 'Babylon' which won the jury prize at the FID of Marseille and was presented at MoMA.

Company Profile

Supernova Films was founded to offer young filmmakers the means to express their vision of the world. The company keeps searching and supporting singular points of view and films. They have produced several fiction films and documentaries.

Production

Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Karim Bensalah
Director



Jamal Belmahi
Screenwriter

Oualid Baha
Producer



Contact

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Blacklight

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Drama, Coming-of-Age, Social Issues

After failing his exams, Sofiane, an Algerian student living in France, is threatened with deportation. To avoid this fate, he finds work in a funeral home and his life changes.



The son of a former Algerian diplomat, Sofiane has lived abroad all his life. He is now a student in Lyon, but an administrative decision threatens him with deportation. Hoping to resolve the situation, he finds temporary work in a Muslim funeral home. Struggling with his identity and uncomfortable in his own skin, spending time with the dead helps him find his way back into the light.

Director's Note

Born in Algeria to an Algerian father and a Brazilian mother, I grew up between Haiti, Senegal and later studied in France. There, I discovered a country grappling with its colonial past and identity issues, whilst I was also questioning mine. In my view, the notion of identity is in perpetual movement. It is a negotiation and renegotiation; it evolves through time and environment. Through Sofiane, I wanted to delve into these questions, bringing up the issue of inventing and reinventing the "self". His journey will be guided by death. A recurring theme in my work, death is a major motif in 'Blacklight'. This will be a character-driven film where emotion will be very important. With three parts, three aesthetic approaches, the film oscillates from light to darkness. Lyon is where his battle with darkness takes place. Valenciennes is the unexpected and the unknown. With grey and intermediate colours, the camera will move more. Finally, Nice is a promise of harmony. The camera will float. The overall look and feel will be bathed in bright light. In the end, Sofiane finds his way to the living by accepting his own identity.

Director's Biography

Born of an Algerian father and a Brazilian mother, **Karim Bensalah** is an award-winning director, writer, and actor, currently based in Paris. He spent his childhood in Algeria, Brazil, Haiti and Senegal and studied social sciences and philosophy before getting a degree from the London Film School. His previous short 'Fatima's Secret' was also shown in competition at Clermont Ferrand. Karim works between Europe, North America, South America, Africa and the Middle East and is currently preparing the feature film 'Blacklight'. Writer and script doctor / consultant for others, Karim also works as an actor. He has been working for more than ten years with cinema and education with adolescents and children. From this experience, he developed a method for directing non-professional actors and collective screenwriting.

Company Profile

Tact Production produces fiction and documentary films. Our desire is to bring strong and unique works to the screen, from authors of all backgrounds. We pay particular attention to the relationship with our authors, whom we support at each stage of the filmmaking process. Internationally oriented, our company develops numerous projects driven by passion and high standards. The company is currently developing new projects, willing to give them a strong international resonance.

Development

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Ali Al-Sulaiti

Director / Screenwriter



Ala'a Hamash

Producer

Body and Soul

Qatar / English

Genre: Drama

After losing a kickboxing championship fight, Fahd's father, Rashid, tries to help him overcome the loss—by embarking together on a journey in search of the true meaning of serenity.

Fahd, a 23-year-old Qatari man, sees no meaning for his life. He is always pessimistic and has no peace of mind. After losing a kickboxing championship fight, his father, Rashid, tries to help him overcome the loss. He tells Fahd that he is working on a book that identifies the secrets to inner peace.

Together, they embark on a long journey in search of the true meaning of serenity. They meet the strongest, the smartest, the firmest, the most aware, and the most devout. In the end, the pair discover it's not only in the mastery of each one of these human-components, but in the way they function in harmony. Fahd finally achieves serenity, wins the kickboxing championships, and his father completes his book, which goes on to become a bestseller.

Director's Note

“When the five components of the human being (Body, Mind, Self, Heart, and Soul) are in harmony, serenity is attained.”
The embodiment of the body is movement and activity, which we can develop through exercising and working. Comprehension and thought of mind can be achieved with reading, thinking, and learning. The awareness of the heart comes with love and god consciousness. Willpower is self-attained with striving and self-restraint. Finally, developing the soul comes with connecting with god.

Director's Biography

Ali Al-Sulaiti is an architect, director, and animator who graduated from Woodbury University in Architecture and Animation in 2018. He appeared as a contestant on 'Stars of Science (Season 8)' in 2016, a television program about science and innovation with the idea of automatically turning 2D drawings into 3D models.

Contact

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Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Muzna Almusafir

Director / Screenwriter



Carlo Cresto-Dina

Producer



The Crown of Olives

Oman, Italy, Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Drama

Reem suffers from a past that is constantly chasing her. Hoping to save her friend Marwa from a similar dire fate, she gifts her a talisman—but the result becomes counterproductive.



Reem leaves her small Moroccan village, where producing olive oil is their only means of making a living, to escape to Muscat to start a new life. She works as a dancer, and within a few months, tired of the constant harassment from men, she leaves the job disappointed. The past haunts her with thoughts of a previous love relationship, breaking her peace of mind. She speaks to a friend and finds a job in a women's salon as a hairdresser. At the new job, she meets Marwa, an Omani girl who has her own quest. They become good friends, and Marwa invites Reem to her house where the pair share secrets. Marwa is eager to marry her boyfriend Ismael and secretly prepares for their marriage. Marwa feels it is her only sanctuary. Reem learns about Marwa's boyfriend Ismael, who continually finds excuses and lies to delay their wedding. Then Reem offers to put a spell on Ismael and gives Marwa a talisman on Valentine's Day. Marwa doesn't hesitate to accept the talisman, but it leads to a fork in both of their roads which will affect them drastically.

Director's Note

'The Crown of Olives' is a feature-length project, and it is the amalgamation of long days of psychological journeys that I experienced. Reem and Marwa transpose part of my tale and my best friend's story but in a different way, in their own magical way. Exposing details about their life in a thrilling order, they dream out loud about "The better". They are disappointed with the world around them, but they try to make the best of it. I would like to weave into this tale facts about Omani society and its traditions and opinions about love, magic—and how this society regards those who choose an unconventional road. Reem wants love and the freedom to be herself, while Marwa also yearns for love and acceptance within her own society. Marwa wants to escape her mother's cocoon, and Reem wants to live without the traditional boundaries. They share a new present together and suffer from their past, willing to have a novel future. It is their constant desire to live freely or to run away from things, following only the compass of their hearts.

Director's Biography

Muzna Almusafir's first film 'Niqab', was the winner of a student competition at the Gulf Film Festival in 2010. Her second short 'Cholo' won Best Script at Abu Dhabi Film Festival and had a special screening at the Smithsonian Institute in the National Museum of African Arts, Washington D.C, Eye Film Museum in Amsterdam, Institute de Monde Arabe in Paris, and aired in TV5 Monde, Voice of America Persia. She was a board member of the Oman Film Society and worked with Muscat International Film Festival as a deputy artistic director in 2018, and served as a jury member for Kuwait Film Festival in 2019.

Company Profile

Founded in 2009 by Carlo Cresto-Dina, Tempesta has quickly gained a reputation for discovering and nourishing European film talents. Based in Bologna (Italy) and London, Tempesta produced all of Alice Rohrwacher's features and shorts, including 'Corpo Celeste' (Cannes 2011), 'The Wonders', (Jury Grand Prix Cannes 2014) and 'Happy as Lazzaro' (Best Script at Cannes 2018, and 4 nominations including Best Film at EFA 2018). Tempesta's productions include Leonardo Di Costanzo's 'L'intervallo' (Venice 2012) and 'The Intruder' (Quinzaine Cannes 2017), 'Ordinary Justice' (Berlinale 2020), plus a string of successful features by young European directors. Tempesta's London company produced with Cowboy Films, 'Wildfire Cathy' Brady's debut feature in 2019. TV projects include 'Gaia's Guardians' by Tommaso Renzoni and Tommaso Triolo, and 'Firefly' based on Henry Porter's "John Samson" franchise.

Contact

Tempesta

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Kiro Russo

Director / Screenwriter



Kiro Russo, Pablo Paniagua,

Alexa Rivero

Producers



Contact

Socavón

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El Gran Movimiento

Bolivia, France, Qatar, Switzerland / Spanish / 2021

Runtime: 85 mins

Genre: Drama

A worker falls ill upon his arrival to the city of La Paz, and his godmother attempts to save him through a healer.



After a seven-day walk with his companions, young Elder arrives in the big city seeking to be reinstated in his work at the mine. The city is overwhelming, and Elder begins to feel sick. But quickly the drinks make him forget his pain and, together with his friends, he decides to stay and take a chance. Thanks to the old woman Mama Pancha, they get a job in the market. But Elder starts to get worse, choking and struggling for breath. His friends chip in to help him, but the doctor says there is no cure. Mama Pancha, very worried about the dying Elder, connects him to Max—a witch doctor, hermit, and clown—who will try to bring the young man back to life.

Director's Note

La Paz is the least western capital of the Americas. Located at more than 3,600 meters above sea level, the city spreads like a sea of bricks, stones and concrete in the canyons that precede the Altiplano. The strong indigenous presence gives the city a unique character where different ways of seeing and understanding the world meet. I wanted to make a film about La Paz in the style of the urban symphonies of the 1920s, with characters who could provide singular points of view upon the city. I found these characters in Elder Mamani, a young miner from Huanuni who came to La Paz after losing his job in the mine, and in Max, a tramp whose peculiar position in the society allowed me to observe the city, to see its systems, its architecture and its developments. I've known Elder and Max for many years. Max is a celestial tramp who spends his life between the heights of La Paz and the central market, where he is known for his tricks but also his healing skills. With 'El Gran Movimiento', I wanted to explore new territories in the mise en scène, blending different kinds of materials. A plurality of approach to provide several prisms to represent the diversity of Bolivian reality.

Director's Biography

Born in La Paz, **Kiro Russo** is a director and producer. Trained at FUC Buenos Aires, he directed and produced three short films which got significant exposure on the festivals circuit. In 2016, Kiro completed his first feature, 'Dark Skull', selected at 80 festivals and winning 23 awards, including at Locarno FF. Developed with the support of writing residencies (Tabakalera, Moulin d'Andé), film markets and labs (LoboLab, Ciné Latino, BRLab, Fabrique des Cinémas, Artist with bright future), his second feature, 'El Gran Movimiento', was shot in La Paz and is currently in post-production. It will be completed in the first semester of 2021.

Company Profile

Socavón was established in 2009 in La Paz by a community of filmmakers interested in supporting fresh looks, new narrative forms and experimental cinema in Bolivia. In recent years Socavón has supported the most celebrated productions of Bolivia, including 'New Life' (2015) and 'Dark Skull' (2016) by Kiro Russo, both award-winning films at Locarno Film Festival and San Sebastian Film Festival, the documentary by Miguel Hilari 'The Corral and the Wind' presented at Cinéma du Réel in 2014, and 'Sirena' by Carlos Piñeiro premiered at Mar del Plata Film Festival in 2019.

Altamar Films was founded by Alexa Rivero after nearly two decades of work experience in distribution, sales and production. The Paris-based film production company focuses on discovering and supporting international directors with a strong signature whose films can connect with audiences and film critics on the festival circuit and among independent distributors.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Shawkat Amin Korki

Director / Screenwriter

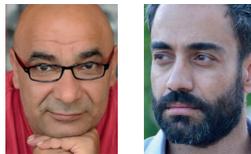


Mohamed Reza Gohari

Co-screenwriter

Mehmet Aktas, Danar Omer Faris

Producers



Contact

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Sales / Festivals:

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The Exam

Iraq, Germany, Qatar / Arabic, Kurdish / 2021

Runtime: 89 mins

Genre: Drama, Emancipation, Corruption, Social Issues, Women's Rights

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.



Rojin is about to sit her university entrance exam. If she fails, her father will force her to marry. Rojin's older sister Shilan knows what's at stake since she is married to Sardar who has broken his promise to let her continue her studies after their marriage. Rojin, with the support of Shilan, decides to put all her effort into the exam. However, this decision only drags both sisters into new difficulties and even illegality. Rojin and Shilan find themselves entangled in a vast network of corruption, facing financial hardships and moral concerns. What seems to be a minor situation at first holds direct consequences that will determine the future of both women.

Director's Note

'The Exam' is a suspenseful drama displaying the reality of two young women living in today's Iraqi Kurdistan. The region has long suffered from tragic wars, misery, and constant crisis in seeking to become an independent state. The repercussions from these events are beginning to unfold further threats within the society. Conflicts arise when the questions of what a successful democratic way of living together looks like and how it can be accomplished. I have intended to focus on two female protagonists to address the certain kinds of pressures that young women in Kurdistan experience. The balance between marriage and motherhood on one side and education on the other, is a constant battle and sacrifice for women, especially in this region. Frustrated by her own life situation, Shilan fights for a better life for her younger sister Rojin. Shilan herself experiences a sense of empowerment facing her unlucky marriage and her lost dreams. The title 'The Exam' is hence figuratively referring to Shilan's personal examination of her own life situation.

Director's Biography

Shawkat Amin Korki is a Kurdish director and producer living and working in Iraqi Kurdistan. Korki gained international recognition in 2006 with his debut feature film 'Crossing the Dust'. 'Memories on Stone' has been Korki's greatest success to date, being the official Oscar entry from Iraq. The film was awarded the UNESCO Prize at Asia Pacific Screen Awards and Best Film of the Arab World at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival.

Company Profile

mîtosfilm is an independent production company based in Berlin and Duhok (Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq), which aims to support authentic storytelling and produces thought-provoking features and documentary films. Through our international co-productions, we strive to reach audiences around the world, as well as develop local Kurdish cinema in cooperation with the Cultural Ministry of Kurdistan. It's our aim to build an artistic and cultural bridge and therefore raise an understanding of the cultural past, present and future.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Gessica Fabiola Génés

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Faissol Fahad Gnonlonfin, Jean-Marie Gigon

Producers



Freda

Haiti, Benin, France, Qatar / Creole, English, French / 2021

Runtime: 93 mins

Genre: Based on a True Story, Drama

The compassionate story of a Haitian family, mostly women, in the context of the socio-political crisis in Haiti.



Freda lives with her mother, sister and little brother in a popular neighbourhood of Haiti. They survive with their little street food shop. The precariousness and violence of their daily life pushes them to do everything they can to escape their situation in the hope of finding a better life.

Director's Note

Haiti is the land from which I am made. I can neither deny it nor judge it. But this land is heavy to carry. This ambivalence can be summed up in one question—leaving or staying? How to believe in the future when only tragedies remain? What does hope mean in a country that has been independent for two centuries, but remains enslaved to the corruption of its leaders? Suspended for economic and humanitarian aid from the outside? Haunted by the ghosts of colonization? A country that could be believed to be cursed by natural disasters? A country where power does not hesitate to violently repress those who oppose it? 'Freda' is a story about the doubts of a generation in its hyper-actuality. Freda lives in Haiti. She shares her daily life between the family shop and the university where she studies anthropology. Political instability urges her family to prepare for the departure of her youngest brother Moses. Freda is forced to become a waitress in the beautiful neighbourhood of Pétion-Ville while trying to continue her classes at the university. Like Haiti, with Freda, I too wonder about reconciliation and reparation. What might be the path of resilience?

Director's Biography

Gessica Génés started her acting career at 17 in 'Barikad', a feature by Richard Sénécal. Recently, she appeared in a TV movie on Toussaint Louverture, directed by Philippe Niang and produced by France 2. In 2011, Gessica was granted a scholarship from the Acting International de Paris. Back in Haiti, she founded her own production company, Ayizian Productions. In 2014, in partnership with Télévision Caraïbes, she directed 'Vizaj Nou', a portrait series of contemporary Haitian figures (Anthony Pascal dit Konpè Filo, Viviane Gauthier, Odette Roy Fombrun, Frankétienne). 'Douvan jou ka leve' (The Sun Will Rise) was her first documentary for France Télévisions.

Company Profile

Merveilles Production SARL is a Beninese company of independent production and realisation of audiovisual and cinematographic works, created in 2011. Open to the world, Merveilles production cultivates a committed relationship with African filmmakers and focuses on the discovery of new authors, and the production of first and second films. Favouring original proposals and singular perspectives, Merveilles Production produces society documentaries, citizen documentaries rooted in reality, history, arts and culture, but also short and feature-length fiction, as well as television series. This audiovisual production company is a framework that extends the dynamic of promotion, direction, production and exploitation of audiovisual and cinematographic works carried by a new wave of young filmmakers who have been flooding the African continent in recent years. It also serves as an interface to all other young cultural actors who have a project to defend at the national and international level, and authors who have different views on African society.

Contact

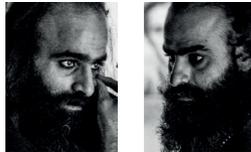
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Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Tarzan Nasser, Arab Nasser

Directors / Screenwriters



Rani Massalha, Marie Legrand, Mickaël Eckelt

Producers



Pandora da Cunha Telles, Pablo Iraola, Rashid Abdelhamid

Co-producers

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Gaza Mon Amour

Palestine, France, Germany, Portugal, Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 85 mins

Genre: Comedy, Drama

The discovery of an ancient Greek statue at the bottom of the Gaza sea disrupts the life of an old fisherman—challenging him to approach the woman he secretly loves.



Gaza, today. Sixty-year-old fisherman Issa is secretly in love with Siham, a woman who works as a dressmaker at the market. Finally determined to propose, Issa discovers an ancient statue of Apollo in his fishing net, which he decides to hide at home. When Hamas discovers the existence of this mysterious treasure, troubles begin for Issa. Will he still succeed in professing his love for Siham?

Director's Note

'Gaza My Love' is inspired by a true story that happened in Gaza where a fisherman found a Greek statue of Apollo in the sea. What could be more exciting than to imagine the God of love, making an appearance in Gaza? With this film, we wanted to give a glimpse of everyday life in Gaza. It's a strange place where the simplest situations can seem very complicated and where dreams seem to be the only escape. The heroes of our film are ordinary people. We seek to put a spotlight on their lives to show it in all its ugliness and beauty. The tone of the film may be funny at times, but most of it we wanted to be tender and melancholic, just like our protagonists Issa and Siham. Their comings and goings, their little meetings, their love story. The most beautiful stories are also sometimes the simplest.

Director's Biography

Twin brothers **Tarzan and Arab Nasser** were born in Gaza, Palestine, in 1988. In 2013, they directed the short film 'Condom Lead', which was selected in official competition at the Cannes Film Festival. In 2014, they directed their first feature film, 'Dégradé', which had its world premiere at Cannes Critics' Week in 2015. 'Gaza Mon Amour' is their second feature film.

Company Profile

Founded in 2014 by Marie Legrand and Rani Massalha, Paris-based Les Films du Tambour aims at producing independent feature films from all around the world. It produced 'Dégradé' by Arab and Tarzan Nasser (Cannes' Critics Week, 2015), 'Sibel' by Çağla Zencirci and Guillaume Giovanetti (FIPRESCI Prize at the Locarno Film Festival 2017), 'Our Lady of the Nile' by Atiq Rahimi (Crystal Bear at the Berlinale 2020) and is now in post-production of 'Gaza Mon Amour' by Arab and Tarzan Nasser.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Azra Deniz Okyay

Director / Screenwriter



Dilek Aydın

Producer



Ghosts

Turkey, France, Qatar / Turkish / 2020

Runtime: 86

Genre: Drama, Politics, Social Issues

During a nationwide power surge, four characters from very different walks of life are thrust together through a web of drug trafficking in the ghettos of Istanbul.



İffet, a single mother in her 40s, lives in Sucular, a ghetto fighting against urban regeneration. On a day when a nationwide power surge takes place, she suddenly learns that her incarcerated son is direly in need of money. Unable to procure the money herself, she is left with no other option but to help a drug dealer with his delivery and reaches out to her friend Didem—a hip-hop dancer in her twenties—to be her partner. Desperately searching for a vehicle, İffet asks Raşit, a man in his late 30's who lives in the same neighbourhood and is known for his collaboration with construction moguls. Ela, Didem's friend and a struggling artist, comes to the neighbourhood to give a workshop to the kids. That night İffet, Didem and Ela end up in Raşit's car which, while all these strange coincidences unfold, has been crushed under the debris of a historic building.

Contact

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Director's Note

I wanted to tell a metaphoric story of a country sinking into darkness, and I used a big power surge to tell it. The shooting went very harshly on many different levels. We were archiving certain parts of Istanbul while everything was collapsing after us. While making this film, I had to adapt myself to the chaos of constant change, from production to editing. But this created the dynamism of this film and became my own rebellion. I've made this curvy, multi-functional, dynamic film which resembles a woman, in my opinion.

Director's Biography

Born in Istanbul, **Azra Deniz Okyay** started photography at the age of 12, and became an assistant at 14 of the photographer Dora Gunel. After finishing high school in Lycee Francais Pierre Loti of Istanbul, she moved to Paris to study Cinema at Sorbonne-Nouvelle, where she attained her bachelor's and master's degrees. She worked in Michel Gondry's Partizan Production company. She returned to Turkey in 2010 and became the first female director at Depo, an advertising production company in Istanbul. She has made various shorts and music videos, and her work has appeared in international exhibitions and galleries.

Company Profile

Heimatlos Films was founded by Dilek Aydın and Erkal Taskin in Istanbul and London in 2017 in order to create homeless films that tell universal stories. They produced five different shorts in 2 years that won countless awards and still travel festivals. Later the company started producing documentaries and the first documentary they finished 'Mimaroglu: The Robinson Of Manhattan Island' was recently selected to Visions du Reel's Burning Lights competition for 2020 edition. 'Ghosts' by Azra Deniz Okyay is the first feature the company takes on as the main producer. They continue to develop and produce shorts, documentaries and features.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Khadar Ayderus Ahmed

Director / Screenwriter



**Misha Jaari, Mark Lwoff,
Risto Nikkilä, Thanassis
Karathanos, Martin Hampel,
Stéphane Parthenay,
Robin Boespflug-Vonier**

Producers



Contact

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The Gravedigger's Wife

Finland, Somalia, France, Germany, Qatar / Somali / 2021

Runtime: 70 mins

Genre: Drama



Guled and Nasra are a loving couple living in the outskirts of Djibouti city with their teenage son Mahad. However, they face difficult times as Nasra urgently needs an expensive operation to treat chronic kidney disease. Guled is already working hard as a gravedigger to make ends meet—how will they find the money to save Nasra, and can they keep their family together?

Director's Note

'The Gravedigger's Wife' follows the emotional journey of a small family in Djibouti City that leads a poor but happy life in a society, where there's no health care or social system that's able to take care of its own citizens. The story is universal, simple and socially relevant. It's about loving under impossible conditions, finding strength, sustaining love and force in the most difficult times. Many sub-Saharan African countries experience poor availability of essential medicines in health facilities, substandard-quality treatments, operation, decent surgeries, frequent stock-outs and suboptimal prescription and use of medicines that nobody is talking about.

Director's Biography

Finnish writer-director **Khadar Ayderus Ahmed**, born in Mogadishu 40 years ago, has directed several successful short films, such as the acclaimed 'The Night Thief' (2017). In addition, he has made a notable career as a scriptwriter, having written the feature drama 'Unexpected Journey' (together with director Samuli Valkama, 2017) and the successful short film 'Citizens' awarded in Locarno and Angers (directed by Juho Kuosmanen, 2008). 'The Gravedigger's Wife' is his first feature film.

Company Profile

Founded in 2007 and led by producers Misha Jaari and Mark Lwoff, Bufo has produced a number of films of which many have received international recognition. Based in Helsinki, the ambitious and thrill-seeking company concentrates on plot-driven and meaningful stories that can also entertain big audiences. Bufo's latest productions include 'The Human Part' by Juha Lehtola (2018) and Aki Kaurismäki's Berlinale Winner 'The Other Side of Hope' (2017, co-produced with Sputnik). Bufo has also produced such films as 'Concrete Night' by Pirjo Honkasalo (Finland's official entry for the Oscars in 2014) and Academy Award winner Jörn Donner's 'Armi Alive!' (2015).

Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Kamal Lazraq

Director / Screenwriter



Said Hamich

Producer



Hounds

France, Morocco, Belgium, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Social Issues, Family

In the working-class suburbs of Casablanca, father and son Hassan and Issam, struggle to survive from day to day. They get by on small-time deals and running errands for local gangs until one night; they are asked to carry out an abduction.



In the working-class suburbs of Casablanca, father and son Hassan and Issam, struggle to survive from day to day. They get by on small-time deals and running errands for local gangs until one night; they are asked to carry out an abduction. Everything goes fine until their victim—an obese man—accidentally dies from a heart attack in the trunk of their car. Dib, who ordered the kidnapping, leaves Hassan and Issam no choice but to get rid of the body before dawn.

Director's Note

'Hounds' tells the story of Hassan and Issam, father and son. Their assignment takes us on a desperate journey across the city in a sort of urban road movie. The action takes place over the course of one night, from sunset to sunrise, which makes it easier to enact absurd, excessive or dreamlike situations. Their oppressive nocturnal escapade depicts the world of the underprivileged, people living by their wits on the margins of society, sometimes alongside abundant wealth. Rejects, who, having nothing more to lose, at times resort to violence or even to a form of bestiality. The story is also that of a father-son relationship. Caught in an unfathomable spiral, Hassan and Issam confront one another but also become aware of the almost indestructible bond that unites them.

Director's Biography

Kamal Lazraq is a Moroccan director born in 1984 in Casablanca. He graduated from La Fémis in Paris, and his graduation film, 'Drari', won the second prize of the Cinéfondation of the Festival of Cannes, and the Grand Prix for short films at the Belfort Entrevues Festival (France). In 2014, Kamal Lazraq finished his award-winning short film 'The Man with a Dog', produced by Barney Production.

Company Profile

Barney Production is an independent company created in 2010 by Saïd Hamich Benlarbi, a former student of the production department of La Fémis (Paris) and winner of the Film Producer prize from the Lagardère Foundation in 2012.

Contact

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Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Daniel Joseph
Director



Daniel Joseph, Ed Woodhouse
Screenwriters



**Jessica Khoury, Yohann Comte,
Vladimer Katcharava,
Julia Wagner**
Producers



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LABAN: The False Prophets of Johann Sebastian Bach

Lebanon, France, Georgia, Germany, Qatar / Arabic, French, German

Genre: Comedy

In 1920s Lebanon, faced with a government-mandated flooding, a tiny musical village slips into absurd chaos after realizing they don't officially exist.



The French take Lebanon over from the Ottoman Empire and decide to flood a village in order to supply electricity to the new nation. Little do they know of the mess this will bring to the lives of these villagers, the Laban family. In order to survive, Adnan proclaims himself a priest in the monastery, Fawzi decides to join the English southlands, Yussef the village chief, tries to untangle the villagers' knotty family tree—while his daughter, Areej, tries to find her place and identity in all this confusion. The village microcosm will break down into many conflicting pieces—a nightmare that will force the villagers to reexamine their identity and the history that defines them.

Director's Note

'LABAN: The False Prophets of Johann Sebastian Bach' is nearly as idiosyncratic as the country we set it in—Lebanon, the birthplace of both myself and my producer. Endless volumes of films have tackled Lebanon's epidemic sectarianism through the framework of the civil war. Few, if any, have ventured before this period; few attempted to explore the absurdity that is fundamental to Lebanon's origin story. It is in this forgotten history, where the genesis of our story lies. 'LABAN' is the story of people relying on self-deception to survive; of how identity is formed by myths both public and personal that are integral to the formation and sustainability of a society. It is a historical satire touching upon universal themes such as faith, identity, and generational conflicts; themes that will forever be relevant to the Lebanese question.

Director's Biography

Daniel Joseph is a Lebanese-American filmmaker, photographer and painter. He studied photography and painting at the University of Houston before moving to Los Angeles to study filmmaking at Art Center College of Design. In 2008, Joseph returned to his home country Lebanon where he wrote and directed his first narrative feature film, 'Taxi Ballad', which debuted in competition at the Dubai International Film Festival. Joseph currently resides in Beirut, shooting documentaries, fine art photography, and working on his second feature, 'LABAN: The False Prophets of Johann Sebastian Bach'.

Company Profile

About Productions produces feature films and documentaries with a distinctly Arab voice, expressing the identity of the region. Since 1998, the company has managed to bring together an important network of Arab and Lebanese filmmakers and artists and produced award-winning films. About Productions has enabled emerging talents to work with leading industry figures, often collaborates with international partners and receives support from international institutions. It has established close working relationships with leading sales agents and film distributors in Europe and has a strong partnership with MC Distribution, a distribution company dedicated to distributing independent films in the Middle East and North Africa along with priority access to the sole art-house theatre in Lebanon, Metropolis Cinema. About is one of the most ambitious production companies in the Middle East. Its main objective remains to help structure the Lebanese and Arab cinema craft into a solid industry.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Adil El Fadili

Director / Producer



Adil El Fadili, Alexis Caro

Screenwriters

My Dad Is Not Dead

Morocco, Qatar / Darija / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Drama, Environmental

Malik, a young boy, finds himself alone after the abduction of his father by the police. With the help of his showmen friends and an overflowing imagination, he does everything he can to find his father.



Malik and his father Mehdi live in a funfair where they work as handymen. One day, Mehdi offers five paintings to his son, remarking that they are special. Malik is curious, but more dazzled by the beauty of the artworks. The next day, the two set off for a theatre to look for posters, but accidentally find themselves in the middle of a political rally. Mehdi panics and takes the wrong box. When leaving, he gets roughed up in front of Malik by two cops who accuses him of propaganda against the government. Later that night, the police burst into the funfair and arrest Mehdi. They are led by a merciless and fearsome chief, L'Ghoule. Shocked, Malik starts searching for his father with the help of the other showmen, finding answers in the paintings that his dad left.

Director's Note

'My Dad Is Not Dead' does not claim to present historical realism or to bring new information about Morocco's history (the sixties), which has already been studied in depth. It is a comedy-drama which, in many ways, adopts the emotional and attractive touch of a philosophical tale. The world of showmen and artists in which my main character, a charismatic and colourful little boy evolves, allows me to keep him in a magical world, while focusing on the hard times he goes through. This contrast provides the opportunity to feature a childish and dream-like world, as seen through an adult point of view.

Director's Biography

Adil El Fadili was born on June 26, 1970. He studied at the CLCF Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma Français in Paris. After graduation, he came back to Morocco to follow his passion. He started by co-writing and directing the first sketches of his equally famous sister, the humorist Hanane El Fadili, for a program that aired on the national TV channel 2M. In 2010, Adil produced and directed his first short film entitled 'Courte Vie'. The film was selected for many prestigious festivals throughout the world, including the festivals of Clermont-Ferrand in France, Dubaï in the United Arab Emirates, Aspen in the USA, and Valladolid in Spain, and showing in more than 45 countries.

Company Profile

ProdApArt Films was created by Adil El Fadili in 2000 and has produced all his series and feature films, mainly for television. In 2010, the production company produced Adil's first short film, 'Courte Vie', which was selected in over 54 festivals around the world. In 2017, the company received the CCM production fund for his feature film 'My Dad Is Not Dead'.

Contact

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Mano Khalil

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Neighbours

Syria, Switzerland, Qatar / Arabic, Hebrew, Kurdish / 2021

Runtime: 124 mins

Genre: Drama, Politics, Biography, Based on a True Story, Childhood

A six-year-old Kurdish boy experiences his first year in an Arab school and sees how his little world is radically changed by absurd nationalism. How much friendship, love and solidarity are possible in times of repression and despotism?



In a Syrian border village in the early 1980s, little Sero attends school for the first time. A new teacher has arrived with the goal of making strapping Panarabic comrades out of the Kurdish children. To enable paradise to come to earth, he uses the rod to forbid the Kurdish language, orders the veneration of Assad and preaches hate of the Zionist enemy—the Jews. The lessons upset and confuse Sero because his long-time neighbours are a lovable Jewish family. Sero's uncle is even secretly in love with their lovely daughter. With a fine sense of humour and satire, director Mano Khalil depicts a childhood which manages to find light moments between dictatorship and dark drama. Little Sero gets involved in dangerous pranks with his friends and dreams of having a television so he can finally watch cartoons. But he also experiences how the adults around him are increasingly crushed by the despotism, violence and nationalism which surround them. The film was inspired by the director's personal experiences, and so his bitter-sweet memories connect the Syrian tragedy to the present.

Director's Note

I was born in a little Kurdish village near the town of Kamishli in Syria. At the age of six, I started school. On that day, my feelings were a mixture of joy and fear. On the first day, the teacher forbade us to speak Kurdish. I kept quiet. On the second day, the teacher showed me a picture and asked me to say what it was. It was an apple. When I spontaneously answered in Kurdish, the room became very quiet, and the teacher began to beat me so hard that I went home with swollen hands. At that time, the schools in Syria were not places of learning, but instead, a place to train children according to the ideals of the Baath Party. Education on the basis of obedience, fear and loyalty to serve the dictator. Every morning we stood in the schoolyard like sheep, all in a row, right hand extended, and had to respond to a student standing in front of us, yelling slogans. Only later did I realize what these morning exercises were all about. I was not happy to swear every morning that I would sacrifice my soul and my blood for a dictator. The brutal and disrespectful behaviour of the teachers towards their students made us become extremely aggressive. We killed insects, destroyed plants and were not exactly nice to each other. Subconsciously we were looking for an outlet for our pent-up anger.

Director's Biography

Mano Khalil is a Kurdish-Swiss filmmaker who lives and works in Switzerland. From 1981-1986 he studied history and law at Damascus University in Syria. Then from 1987-1994, he studied fiction film direction in former Czechoslovakia. Between 1990-1995, Mano worked as an independent film director for Czechoslovakian and later for Slovakian Television. Since 1996, he has lived in Switzerland, working as a director and producer, and in 2012 he founded Frame film production in Bern.

Company Profile

Frame Film Ltd. is a film and television production company founded in 2012 by Mano Khalil, based in the centre of Berne, Switzerland. The company develops and produces feature fiction and documentaries for cinema and television, as well as international co-productions. Frame Film produces and realises commissioned and commercial films.

Contact

Mano Khalil

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Development

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Carlos Chahine

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Night in a Glass of Water

France, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Women's Issues, Drama, Social Issues, Psychological

The summer of 1958. While revolution rages in Beirut, a six-year-old boy in a village looks on helplessly as his mother, who has discovered desire with a stranger, turns her back on him and walks out.

Northern Lebanon, summer of 1958—in a small village in the ancient Christian Qadisha Valley, many families have left the stifling city to enjoy a cool, quiet summer in their country houses. Meanwhile, revolution rages in Beirut. One morning six-year-old Charles spots two foreign tourists who have arrived at the village hotel—Hélène and her son René. The next day a miracle occurs. In the village church, the statue of the Virgin Mary sheds tears of blood. Because it is too dangerous to travel, the two French visitors have to stay. They get to know some of the summer folk from the city and grow particularly attached to Charles and his mother. René and Charles' mother, Layla, have a passionate, illicit fling. Layla comes to realize that she can no longer bear being a woman in the man's world to which she belongs—beholden to her father, husband, lover, even her son, who demands her constant presence. In the end, she chooses to walk out on them all. By the end of the summer, Lebanon has pulled back from the brink. There is hope that the golden years are about to begin. What nobody yet knows is that those years will be the last of an already dying social order and a country on the road to self-destruction.

Director's Note

The narrative of this film operates on three intertwining levels. The first level is the story of a young mother and her son. The mother wakes up to the realization that her life is not her own and that she is shackled by men—her father, husband, lover and son. As for the son, he looks on helplessly as his mother gradually breaks her chains and leaves. The next level is that of the family drama. It revolves around three Chekhovian sisters doomed to being women in a man's world where the weight of tradition crushes their dreams and desires. Finally, the third level—the historical narrative—addresses the little-known revolution of 1958. My movie plays out in a closed-in, open-air world. Through the eyes of Charles, we watch the acts and antics of a cast of colourful, comical, endearing, flawed and profoundly human characters.

Director's Biography

Carlos Chahine was born in Lebanon, which he left for France in 1975 when civil war erupted. After qualifying as a dentist, Carlos won a place at the prestigious National Theater of Strasbourg's drama school. He went on to work as a stage, film and TV actor for more than 20 years. His work with Lebanese director Ghassan Salhab prompted his return to Lebanon. Carlos has written, directed and acted in three films set in Lebanon: a short, 'The North Road'; a documentary essay, 'Chekhov' in Beirut; and another short, 'The Gambler's Son'. Together, they make up a family trilogy about a father, mother and child.

Contact

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Sahar Mossayebi

Director



Tala Motazed

Screenwriter

Ahmed Al Baker, Tahoora Abolghassemi, Mahtab Keramati Sheikholeslami

Producers



Contact

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Orca

Qatar, Iran / Farsi / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Drama, Biography, Women's Rights, Sports, Endurance Swimming, Overcoming Hardship

The dark waters you fear to enter holds the salvation that you seek.



Elham, a young divorced Iranian woman, seeks to find herself after being nearly beaten to death by her husband. She discovers solace and salvation in the water, and soon makes her mark as a formidable endurance swimmer. In the fight of her life, Elham faces political, religious, and personal obstacles in search of her goal—the Guinness World record for swimming the longest distance with her hands bound.

Director's Note

Have you ever arrived at your life's zero-point? What decision have you made? This lowest point might mark the miracle of your life. 'Orca' is the true story of a young woman, Elham, reaching the lowest point in her life; how she fought her way back from the abyss, and turned the darkness into a miracle.

Director's Biography

Sahar Mossayebi was born in Tehran on May 4th, 1975. She graduated in Theatre with a BA from The Azad University of Art and Architecture. Sahar started her career in 1996 as an actor in a performance by Davoud Mirbagheri called 'Eshgh Abad'. She has worked in different positions in cinema, including as a production manager, planner, script supervisor, and assistant director.

Company Profile

Katara Studios is a Qatar-based full-service independent studio specializing in the financing, development and production of premium content in music, film and television.

Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Aida Senna

Director / Screenwriter / Producer

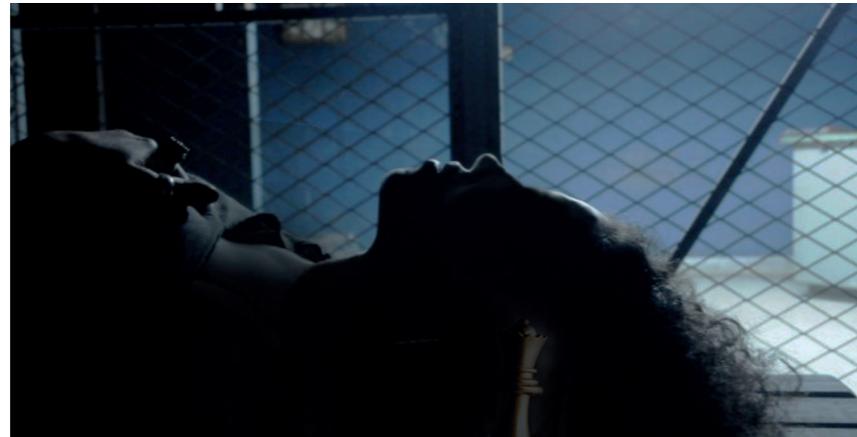


Queens of Shadow

Morocco, Qatar / Darija

Genre: Women's Issues, Thriller, Social Issues

Houria, a young law student, finds herself in prison after filing a complaint against a very influential man. Disappointed by the justice system, she questions her own values and decides to take revenge, with the help of other women whose paths have crossed in prison.



As a young law student, Houria dares to file a complaint against her rapist. She ends up in prison, accused of prostitution and illegal abortion. Through various encounters in prison, she opens her eyes to the outside world. Little by little, she understands that her vision of justice is only an illusion. Oum, dean of the prison, is a former queen of the night. These two women have nothing in common except the same enemy—the deputy Mohammed Zemmour. Together, they establish a plan of revenge to regain their dignity.

Director's Note

This project is in line with my artistic work, among others, my short film 'Amal'—bringing to light human struggles against a society that forgets them. Universally, the situation and position of women define the society in which they evolve. My influences include the cinema of Scorsese for the intelligence and subtlety of its stories, but also the depth of the characters. The film 'Queens of the Shadows' is punctuated by various twists and turns that push the characters to their extremes. A play of light, both warm and cold at the same time, underlines the duality of the characters and the situations experienced. There is also Almodovar's cinema, for the humanity and finesse of its female characters. In order to avoid miserabilism and clichés, the characters are endowed with great humanity and show a rare solidarity. And finally, Mikhail Kalatozov's film 'Soy Cuba' influences me for the artistic side and the grandeur of its "living" shots. Indeed, the film will be shot mainly with a shoulder camera. There will be many sequence shots, which from my point of view, humanizes the image of the film. It is a thriller that is, above all, human. The realism of the characters allows us to project ourselves onto them. Thus, by its universality, the story will touch a broader public. It is a Moroccan story by its actors, its places, its codes and universal by the strength of its humanity.

Director's Biography

Born of a mixed Franco-Moroccan couple, Aida grew up in different countries such as France, Algeria, Morocco, Spain and the United States. During her studies, she did many photo shoots for the AFP. After obtaining her degrees in visual communication in Paris, photography in Toulouse, and video editing in Washington DC, she joined several advertising agencies in Paris and Casablanca as artistic director between 2008 and 2012. She left advertising for the world of cinema. After several writings and experimental videos, she directed videos of the rap group "La Rumeur", before directing her first short film, in 2016, 'Amal'. Cinema has allowed her to return to her first passion of highlighting human dignity despite harsh living conditions. This vision has become a guideline in her artistic work. After conducting research on female prisons, and collecting testimonies of women, Aida is now in development for her first feature film, 'Queens of Shadow'.

Company Profile

Heos Creations is a production company that has produced various institutional films and commercials. The company is made up of diverse individuals, including the highly experienced production manager Bahija Lyoubi, and are currently in the process of producing their first feature film 'Queens of Shadow'.

Contact

Aida Senna

Heos Creations

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Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Abdullah Mohammad Saad

Director / Screenwriter



Jeremy Chua, Rajib Mohajan, Sydul Khandaker Shabuj, Adnan Habib

Producers



Ehsanul Haque Babu

Executive Producer

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Rehana Maryam Noor

Bangladesh, Singapore, Qatar / Original Language: Bengali / 2021

Runtime: 107 mins

Genre: Women's Issues, Drama, Thriller, Social Issues

A stubborn medical professor embarks on an extraordinary journey to seek justice for her student, young daughter and perhaps, for herself.



Rehana, a 37-year-old assistant professor in a private medical college, struggles to keep the harmony between her work and family as she juggles the complex roles of a teacher, doctor, sister, daughter and mother. Her life starts to spiral out of control on a quiet evening when she witnesses a female student storm out of a professor's office in tears. Meanwhile, she receives a complaint about aggressive behaviour against her 6-year-old daughter. Both incidents leave a searing impact on her. Unable to accept the madness of this society, Rehana embarks on an extraordinary journey to seek justice for her student and daughter, all the while grappling with her ego, sense of morality and repressed anger.

Director's Note

At some point in all our lives, we have witnessed or experienced "unacceptable" incidents that occurred where we looked away. We have our own reasons not to get involved. If the damage assessment is not fatal, we accept and move on. However, our protagonist, Rehana, is not one to simply accept. She acts and pursues. Yet her motive is unknown, making it difficult to judge her. Is she really a righteous person or traumatized; a humanitarian or a hypocrite; a moralist or egoist? These questions perplexed me. She is a flawed superwoman, and through her journey, I was able to investigate the complex relationship between men and women; the reasons behind the growing tension and distrust. I grew up with three elder sisters who are independent and wonderful women. Their ideas and choices have always had a profound effect on me. Perhaps, 'Rehana Maryam Noor' is the result of living my life under their influence.

Director's Biography

Abdullah Mohammad Saad is a Bangladeshi filmmaker. His first film, 'Live from Dhaka,' won the Best Director and Best Actor prizes at the Singapore International Film Festival 2016, awarded by Jury Head Naomi Kawase. Subsequently, the film has screened at Rotterdam, Jeonju, Locarno and many other international film festivals. His second film, 'Rehana Maryam Noor', is supported by the Asian Cinema Fund 2018 and Doha Film Institute's Post-Production Grant 2020. It was also selected in the Asian Project Market of Busan International Film Festival 2018.

Company Profile

Since 2014, Potocol has focused on the development and co-production of independent Asian films. Helmed by Jeremy Chua, the company has co-produced 'A Yellow Bird' by K. Rajagopal (Cannes Critics' Week 2016), 'A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery' by Lav Diaz (Silver Bear Berlinale 2016), 'Brotherhood' by Pepe Diokno (Karlovy Vary IFF 2016), 'A Family Tour by Ying Liang' (Opening Film, International Competition Locarno IFF 2018), 'Motel Acacia' by Bradley Liew (Tokyo IFF 2019), 'A Love Unknown' by John Clang (IFF Rotterdam 2020) and 'Rehana Maryam Noor' by Abdullah Mohammad Saad.

Metro Video is a Dhaka-based film production company. Currently, it is producing Abdullah Mohammad Saad's second film 'Rehana Maryam Noor' which is now in the post-production phase.

Development

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Dania Reymond-Boughenou

Director / Screenwriter



Annabelle Bouzom

Producer



Contact

Annabelle Bouzom

Les films de l'autre cougar

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The Storms

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Drama, Social Issues, Fantasy

While strange yellow sandstorms strike down upon Algiers and its surroundings, supernatural events begin to multiply around Samir—a print news reporter who is covering the phenomenon.

Mysterious yellow sandstorms strike down upon Algiers and its surrounding areas. Samir, a print news reporter, covers the phenomenon for his newspaper. With supernatural events occurring more frequently, his wife, Fajar leaves him—and his nephew, a medical doctor named Yacine, begins to hear the dead. Faced with increasingly threatening storms, Samir is forced to confront a past that still haunts him.

Director's Note

Algeria acts within me, making me feel as though it were a phantom limb. I no longer live in this country that I left abruptly. However, it lives in me, haunting me like the persistence of an amputated limb whose presence and connection I feel. Why film from this place? The need to evoke this time period in a manner, subterranean but also offbeat, inspired the genesis of the project. I want to direct the resurfacing of past traumatic memories to the present, while allowing a fantastical dimension to this treatment. So, the film is anchored in a realistic space where intimate, social questions and fantastic genre coexist. This relationship between Samir and Fajar is the central knot of the film's story, but it is a blind spot, rendered blind by history. Samir did not accept the death of his wife because it is unacceptable. And he could not grieve because the conditions did not allow him. When writing, I had to work with this paradox that I wanted to preserve at all costs: how to articulate my story around a blind spot, a blind spot? It is about redrawing a border between the world of the dead and that of the living. To embody the dead is to give them the opportunity to leave in peace by filming their death and departure.

Director's Biography

Dania Reymond-Boughenou is a Franco-Algerian filmmaker born in Algiers in 1982. She studied cinema at the School of Fine Arts in Marseille and Lyon and followed the course of the Fresnoy National Studio of Contemporary Arts where she received the Collector Studio Award. In 2015, her work was sponsored by Mounir Fatmi at the Salon Jeune Création. She directed several videos and short films, including the medium-length film 'Le jardin d'essai', shot in Algiers in 2016. The film showed in several festivals, including the Premiers Plans Festival in Angers, the Rencontres du Moyen-métrage de Brive, Cinémed and the Film Meetings of Bejaia—going on to win several awards.

Company Profile

Captivated by autodidacts and directors with training backgrounds that encourage free-thinking and renewal of forms, Les films de l'autre cougar strives to animate the French cinematographic landscape by producing works of deserving writer-directors who distinguish themselves from traditional cinema by what they have to show and by the liberty of their voices which irrigate their creations. All articulate social criticism, by evoking, according to their respective sensibilities, poetry, humour, and drama. They are the portrait of a generation of indignant filmmakers concerned by the world they live in and its political stakes. They are motivated by the desire to sublimate reality and change perceptions.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Amil Shivji

Director / Screenwriter



Jenna Bass

Co-screenwriter

Steven Markovitz, Amil Shivji

Producers



Tug of War

'Vuta N'Kuvute' / Tanzania, South Africa, Germany, Qatar / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Drama, History, Politics

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.



Denge, a frustrated and rebellious young man meets Yasmin, a young Indian-Zanzibari girl in the middle of the night as she is on her way to be betrothed to a man three times her age. This sparks a series of missed opportunities for the forlorn lovers. Yasmin escapes her oppressive marriage and returns to Zanzibar, where she faces rejection from her own family. She seeks refuge at Mwajuma's house in the Swahili quarters of the segregated island, submerging herself in an oppressed yet effervescent culture that she had always been secluded from. Here Yasmin meets Denge who is deeply immersed in the independence struggle against British rule, busy translating and distributing Soviet propaganda. She is pulled towards his ideals of independence as he feels free around her. When Denge's recklessness lands him behind bars, it's up to Yasmin to be part of the larger struggle and free the one she loves.

Contact

Steven Markovitz

Big World Cinema

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Director's Note

As a Tanzanian filmmaker, I do not see my realities, nor my histories portrayed on screen. I have always been committed to telling stories that highlight narratives from my country and elevate them for local and international audiences. To tell a multidimensional, non-binary narrative in Africa is a political act, and I seek to implement it in the most revolutionary medium—cinema. In my previous five films, presentations and university lectures, I have focused on stories of the working people to expose social contradictions within society. Zanzibar is more than a tourist destination, and I strive to explore its character in my film 'Vuta N'Kuvute' (Tug of War). Set in the 1950s, love becomes political as star-crossed lovers attempt to be together and be free against the backdrop of British colonialism. I worked alongside local historians in the research phase of the film visiting archives and museums on the mainland and Zanzibar to provide historical context, accuracy, and justice to the ideological calling and paraphernalia of the time. In addition, the visual approach offers a perspective that brings out Zanzibar's timeless architecture and the film's revolutionary plot while putting Tanzanian history on the map.

Director's Biography

Amil Shivji is based in Tanzania as a filmmaker and lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam. He believes in using images to challenge the powers that be, in particular, deconstructing urban facades of development and emphasizing the strength and struggles of marginalized communities. Amil has written, directed and produced short fiction films that have participated in Rotterdam and FESPACO as well as winning the People's Choice Award in Zanzibar and Best Director and Best Short film in Africa. His feature directorial debut 'T-Junction' (2017) opened Zanzibar International Film Festival and won three awards. He has a master's in Fine Arts from York University in Toronto, Canada.

Company Profile

Big World Cinema, established in 1994 in South Africa, has produced feature films, documentaries, TV series and shorts, many of which have screened at festivals such as Cannes, Sundance, Berlinale, Venice and Toronto. Over the past twelve years, Big World Cinema has focused on producing and distributing content across the continent of Africa and has produced in over 20 African countries. Recent films include 'Rafiki', 'aKasha', 'High Fantasy', 'Silas' and 'Winnie'. Big World has worked with over 100 African directors and produced a number of projects with directors such as Wanuri Kahiu, Hajooj Kuka, Jihan El-Tahri, Brian Tilley and Jim Chuchu.

Kijiweni Productions is an independent Tanzanian film production house that is focused on producing socially conscious films. Our films include 'Shoeshine' (2013, Tampere, Durban), 'Samaki Mchangani' (2014, Film Africa, FESPACO), 'Aisha' (2015, Seattle, Cinemas D'afrique), 'T-Junction' (2017 FESPACO, ZIFF) and 'Wahenga' (2018, Film Africa, ZIFF). Apart from making films, Kijiweni is involved in film training & mentorship and exhibitions.

Production

Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Nadim Tabet

Director / Screenwriter



Antoine Waked

Co-screenwriter

Georges Schoucair

Producer



Contact

About Productions
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Under Construction

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Thriller, Fantasy, Social Issues, Racism, Ghost Story, Political Divide, Foreign Workers, Romance

Syrian workers mysteriously start disappearing from a construction site located near a Lebanese village. In the middle of this paranoid atmosphere, Tarek, a 30-year-old worker, is subject to strange visions. He slowly begins to realize that the site is haunted by the ghost of a woman who was allegedly murdered by a Syrian soldier in the 1990s, when the village was under Syrian military occupation.



Tarek, a 30-year-old Syrian, joins a construction site set in the middle of a forest. Immediately, Tarek is confronted with difficult work conditions plagued by the hostility of Lebanese villagers toward the Syrian workers because they suffered under Syrian military occupation in the 1990s. Despite this, construction on site continues until suddenly, workers start disappearing. In the middle of this paranoid atmosphere, Tarek is subject to strange visions. He slowly begins to realize that the site is haunted by the ghost of a woman who was allegedly murdered by a Syrian soldier. For Tarek, there is no doubt that she must be getting her revenge on the Syrians. He starts investigating and meets Rana, a local guide with whom a forbidden love story starts. But when the villagers also begin to disappear, Tarek realizes that the truth about the murder of this woman might not be what it seems.

Director's Note

In times where walls are built everywhere around the world, 'Under Construction' reflects on how we keep blaming the other for our problems whereas we are responsible for our own ghosts. Whether in Lebanon or in other countries, the best way to avoid confronting our history has often been to accuse the "other" of being at the root of all misfortunes. The questions of the Other, the endless repetition of our historical mistakes, the love and hate relation with Syria, the forbidden loves, are all important themes that are essential to tackle for me as they're present in our everyday society. I believe that using the "ghost story" genre can be a good way to address all these questions especially at this distressing time where the entire country has collapsed and is about to vanish like a lone ghost lost in time.

Director's Biography

Nadim Tabet is a Lebanese director who directed several short films that screened internationally. In 2001, he co-founded the Lebanese Film Festival and has worked as a film programmer for several European festivals. His first feature film 'One of These Days' (2017) premiered at Rome Film Fest and was sold by Celluloid Dreams. He is currently preparing his second feature, as well as a series titled 'Faraya'. Nadim Tabet also directs fashion films and music videos for several bands coming from Europe and the Arab world and gives conferences on cinema for various universities.

Company Profile

About Productions produces feature films and documentaries with a distinctly Arab voice, expressing the identity of the region. Since 1998, the company has managed to bring together an important network of Arab and Lebanese filmmakers and artists and produced award-winning films. About Productions has enabled emerging talents to work with leading industry figures, often collaborates with international partners and receives support from international institutions. It has established close working relationships with leading sales agents and film distributors in Europe and has a strong partnership with MC Distribution, a distribution company dedicated to distributing independent films in the Middle East and North Africa along with priority access to the sole art-house theatre in Lebanon, Metropolis Cinema. About is one of the most ambitious production companies in the Middle East. Its main objective remains to help structure the Lebanese and Arab cinema craft into a solid industry.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Carlo Francisco Manatad

Director / Screenwriter



Giancarlo Abrahan V,

Jeremie Dubois

Co-screenwriters

Armi Rae Cacanindin

Producer



Whether the Weather is Fine

'Kun Maupay Man It Panahon' / Philippines, France, Singapore, Germany, Indonesia, Qatar / Waray / 2021

Runtime: 112 mins

Genre: Drama, Absurd Drama, Catastrophe, True Events

'Whether the Weather is Fine' follows Miguel after he wakes up in the chaos of Typhoon Haiyan, which destroyed Tacloban—a coastal city in the Philippines, in November 2013.



'Whether the Weather is Fine' follows Miguel after he wakes up in the chaos of Typhoon Haiyan, which destroyed Tacloban—a coastal city in the Philippines, in November 2013. Rumours of another incoming storm are spreading like wildfire, and Miguel roams the ravaged city with the two women in his life, his mother Norma, and his friend Andrea. As a rescue ship bound for Manila docks at the port, Miguel must decide whether to stay home with the only people he has ever truly known or evacuate and leave his past behind.

Contact

Armi Rae Cacanindin

ACC Cinematografica Films

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Director's Note

In November 2013, the strongest typhoon ever recorded made landfall in the Philippines, destroying most of my hometown, Tacloban. My city's terrible loss collided with my personal demons, and I decided to make a film set in the aftermath of the typhoon. The film unfolds like a dream—following the strange trajectory of my life and my hometown's destruction through the story of a son, his mother, and their community. After the senselessness of having lost so much to nature for no reason, the characters inescapably lose their own sense of justice. In the desperate struggle for survival, all sense of humanity and morality are eroded, and to save oneself, one must destroy another. No one can stay innocent. The understanding of a devastation has not only changed a "community" but also humanity as a whole. Stripping them bare of everything they have—defining the true essence of love, hope, dreams and survival and how the darkest of happenstance transforms to what humanity really is. And finally, it speaks of a commentary of the absurdist generation we are in today.

Director's Biography

Carlo Francisco Manatad is a Filipino film director and editor based in Manila. He is a graduate of the University of the Philippines Film Institute. His films have been selected and screened at major international film festivals including Cannes, Toronto, Locarno, Busan, and Clermont Ferrand, to name a few. Manatad is also an alumnus of the Asian Film Academy, the Berlinale Talent Campus, the Docnet Campus Project, Tokyo Talents and the Locarno Filmmakers Academy. He is currently working on his first feature film, 'Whether the Weather is Fine'. The project is supported by the Asian Cinema Fund, Globe Studios and the Talents Tokyo Fellowship Fund, Aide des Cinéma du Monde, Vision Sud-Est and the World Cinema Fund. It has also participated at the EAVE Ties That Bind, La Fabrique Des Cinéma du Monde - Cannes, Torino Film Lab - FeatureLab360 and the Cinefondation L'Atelier in Cannes.

Company Profile

Cinematografica Films is a Philippine-based production company founded in 2005 by leading Filipino producers Arleen Cuevas, Armi Rae Cacanindin and Raya Martin. It aims to craft innovative local stories with emerging and established voices, while also promoting a fresh new way of seeing them at home and abroad. Cinematografica is committed to exploring different visions from all over the world. It specializes in international co-productions with several productions / co-productions made from the past ten years, premiering in A-list festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, Locarno, and Rotterdam. 'Aswang', a creative documentary, had its world premiere at IDFA 2019, where it won the FIPRESCI Award, and went to different festivals and won the Amnesty Int'l Award at Thessaloniki and the White Goose Award at the DMZ Docs. 'Window Boy Would Also Like To Have A Submarine', our Uruguay, Brazil, Netherlands, Argentina, and Philippine co-production had its world premiere in the 2020 Berlinale Forum.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2020

Kavich Neang

Director / Screenwriter



Daniel Mattes

Co-screenwriter



Davy Chou,

Marine Arrighi de Casanova

Producers



Les Films du Losange

Sales

Contact

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Anti-Archive
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White Building

'Bodeng Sar' / Cambodia, France, China, Qatar / Khmer / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Drama, Based on a True Story, Youth, Politics, Social Issues

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.



20-year-old Samnang and two of his friends live in the White Building, a landmark tenement in Phnom Penh. In this fast-changing city, the three boys practice their dance routine dreaming of television talent contests while their parents lead a traditional lifestyle, all of them living in harmony. But the White Building is to be demolished. Samnang sees his father unsuccessfully attempting to bring together his divided neighbours on the government's compensation offers for residents to move out, and has to face his best friend's departure from Cambodia. Samnang understands that the stable environment he has always called home is now on shaky ground...

Director's Note

Sometimes I don't know whether I live in my dreams or in reality. I have a recurring dream about the White Building, the place where I grew up. My own family's eviction in 2017 from the White Building occurred with disturbing calm, but the fear we internalized that day never left us. The place has become a memory. My film's protagonist, Samnang, is a passive, dreamy 20-year-old. Like myself, Samnang is confused by surreal images of Cambodia's recent development around him. He dreams of things he does not understand. Samnang's father, in contrast, tries to unite the residents. But he fails. He is also so wedded to tradition that he cannot heal his foot infection. His challenges symbolize the entrenched trauma of Cambodia's older generation. Samnang and his family must grapple with the conflicts which the modern Cambodian social context often uncovers and exacerbates. But Samnang is not trapped by a traumatic past. He dares to believe again in his own future and take a chance on himself, even as he grieves over losing his home. Is that hope enough to heal the wounds of the past or the divisions within families—to allow the possibility of a different future?

Director's Biography

Kavich Neang was born in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in 1987. He has directed five short films since 2011. He first studied under Rithy Panh, and in 2013, he joined Busan's Asian Film Academy. In 2014, he co-founded the Cambodian production company Anti-Archive. He joined Cannes Cinéfondation's Residency in 2017-18. His 2019 documentary 'Last Night I Saw You Smiling' won the NETPAC Award at IFFR, the Special Jury Prize at Jeonju, Best Image at Janela de Cinema and two awards at Tokyo FilmEx. 'White Building' is his first narrative feature.

Company Profile

Chen, and Kavich Neang, with Park Sungho and Daniel Mattes joining in 2016 and 2019. Anti-Archive produces and co-produces fiction and documentary films by the emerging Cambodian filmmakers, as well as international, independent directors shooting in Cambodia and Southeast Asia. The films produced under Anti-Archive have subsequently premiered around the world, including Cannes, Locarno, Busan, Torino, and IFFR.

Apsara Films, a French company created in 2013 by Marine Arrighi de Casanova alongside Isabelle Tillou and Lucie Borleteau, is co-producing 'White Building'. Apsara Films has already produced three feature films: 'Fidelio, Alice's Journey' (2014), which was selected in competition at Locarno Film Festival in 2015 and won Special Jury Mention at the Palm Springs Film Festival before being released in French theatres; 'Whatever Happened to My Revolution' (2019) and 'Into the World' (2020).

Feature Documentary

'As I Want' by Samaher Alqadi

'Atlantide' by Yuri Ancarani

'Big Boys Don't Cry' by Muhammad Mustapha

'The Camera Never Cries' by Abuzar Adam, Elsadig Abdelgayoum

'Children of the Enemy' by Gorki Glaser-Müller

'Companions of the White Arc' by Elia Youssef, Mohammed Al Thani

'The Curious Mr. Daoud' by Sid Ahmed Semiane

'Faya Dayi' by Jessica Beshir

'Fragments from Heaven' by Adnane Baraka

'In the House Of My Father' by Rachida El Garani

'It Snows at Sidi Bou Said' by Fatma Chérif

'Jean Genet, Our Father of Flowers' by Dalila Ennadre

'Jodari Meno' by Jamal Al-Khanji, David Ochoa

'Land of Women' by Nada Riyadh

'The Last Hillbilly' by Diane Sara Bouzgarrou, Thomas Jenkoe

'Les Enfants Terribles' by Ahmet Necdet Cupur

'Miles to Go Before She Sleeps' by Mijie Li

'The Miracle of Almería' by Moon Blaisse

'My Father's House' by Mahdi Fleifel

'The Nablus Runner' by Haïcha Ladrouz

'Our Choices' by Salah Al Ashkar

'Out of Place' by Mohammed Al-Madjalawi

'Targuia' by Leïla Artese Benhadj

'Theft of Fire' by Amer Shomali

'The Wall of Death' by Amine Sabir

Feature Experimental or Essay

'Aleph' by Iva Radivojević

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Samaher Alqadi

Director / Screenwriter



Karim El Hakim, Thomas Kaske

Producer



As I Want

Palestine, Norway, France, Germany, Qatar / Arabic / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Women's Issues

An auteur-driven, documentation-of-self, the film depicts an Arab woman's personal process of self-emancipation in a revolutionary struggle against the odds.



Cairo, January 25, 2013, the second anniversary of the revolution, under then-president Mohamed Morsi—Egypt is in turmoil as protests sweep the country against Muslim-Brotherhood rule. An explosion of politically charged sexual assaults sweeps through Tahrir Square. After the public aggression of her best friend and over 50 other women that night alone, the director begins to use her camera as a protector and weapon against sexual terrorism as she documents the chaos around her. But she also turns the camera onto herself, to see herself and question what being a woman really means. As she becomes pregnant, she re-examines the constructs of her own childhood in Palestine—how her fate was determined because she was born a girl. She initiates an inner-dialogue with her deceased mother, telling her all the things she was never able to say, thus setting her on a course of individual strength, collective power, and personal emancipation.

Contact

Idioms Film
mohanad@idiomofilm.com

Director's Note

I discovered that Egyptian women decided to raise their heads up and protect themselves on their own terms. This inspired me to also speak up and show the power of women. Women did not have the courage before the revolution to talk about their plight openly, but now that is starting to change. Before, these were taboo subjects never discussed in society; a topic better left unspoken. It is my hope that by doing so through this documentary film, I will be able to break the silence and open a broader debate that can encourage women to show their power, demand their rights, and change their lives for the better.

Director's Biography

Samaher Alqadi is an emerging voice in Arabic documentary filmmaking. Her films focus on the evolving status of women and dissident artists in the Middle East.

Company Profile

Idioms Films is based in Ramallah, Palestine.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Yuri Ancarani

Director / Screenwriter



Marco Alessi, Fiorella Moretti

Producers



Luxbox

Sales

Contact

Marco Alessi
Dugong Films
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Atlantide

Italy, France, Qatar / Italian / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues, Coming-of-Age, Experimental

Among the gondolas, canals, and palaces of the Venetian lagoon—tourists have replaced inhabitants. Behind this sobering reality, some locals have formed a resistance movement. At the heart of this alternative society is a group of teenagers seeking their way to adulthood on their powerboats called “Barchini”.



In Venice, between the gondolas, canals and palaces, tourists pour in as residents head out. Locals number fewer than 50,000, less than the daily tourists. However, next to the historical centre, there’s a hidden and silent lagoon surrounded by small invisible villages. A parallel world where residents resist, living a unique life, just in front of Venice. It’s here that young guys bump into little boats running at full speed with their bows rising up into the sky. They call them “Barchini”—small, colourful, fast with souped-up engines, driven by Venetian teenagers as if these motorboats were motorbikes. They take care of the boat’s aesthetic, making them fancy through Hi-Fi, and coloured LED decorations, working hard to pimp the engine. The cooler and more equipped the boat is, the cooler is the guy. And at the end of the day, after the usual party on a deserted island, here they are, challenging each other in dangerous illegal races to win girls’ hearts. Without lights to avoid the police, pointing their bows and wildly heading towards the Serenissima. Daniele, Luca, Alberto—our main characters—will drive us into their summer made by dreams and nightmares of a generation running at full speed.

Director’s Note

I’m not a writer. I come from visual art, and it’s not easy for me to explain by words what I see and what I show through my camera. What I know is that in my films, using a purely observational approach, I talk about things that everyone can understand and in which everyone can identify oneself. In this case, I think there is something deeply human and universally comprehensible in the image of a sixteen-year-old boy speeding across the lagoon with full volume music on his small boat. His girlfriend at his side and a bunch of friends behind, ready to shout, laugh, fool around, despite a magnificent and ancient world that is literally collapsing. Teenage-hood is for me an imaginary picture that, in the scenic space of the Venetian lagoon, so visible yet invisible in its deep truth—comes as a shock wave in the desert, an element of resistance on the Canal Grande, a destructive element of the Porto Marghera petrochemical plant built during the sixties in front of Venice, a dangerous explosion of life on those touristic canals wrapped today by an oppressive exploitation scheme.

Director’s Biography

Yuri Ancarani is an Italian video artist and filmmaker. His works come from a continuous mingling of documentary cinema and contemporary art. They are the result of research aimed to explore regions that are not very visible in daily life, realities in which the artist delves in first-person. He has won several awards such as Locarno FF Jury Special Prize, Talent Prize 2012, nominated for “Nonfiction Feature Filmmaking”, Cinema Eye Honors (Museum of Moving Image, New York); “Grand Prix in Lab Competition”, Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival (France); “Honorable Mention”, Dokufest (Kosovo); and “Best Documentary”, New Horizon I.F.F. (Poland).

Company Profile

Dugong Films is a Rome-based film production company focused on exploring the blurred line between fiction and documentary, developing experimental films in an international framework. Dugong’s work has been shown in international festivals such as Cannes Film Festival (‘Samouni Road’ by Stefano Savona, premiered at Director’s Fortnight and winner of the prestigious Oeil D’Or Award as Best Documentary) Venice Film Festival (‘Controfigura’ by Ra di Martino, winner of Eurimages Lab Project Award) and Toronto Film Festival (‘Mon Amour Mon Ami’).

Luxbox is a Paris-based company dedicated to international sales and co-production of selected projects. With a complementary industry knowledge built on experience in production, distribution, acquisitions, sales and festival programming, Fiorella Moretti and Hedi Zardi, start with a solid film catalogue and a passionate pool of world cinema directors such as Lisandro Alonso, Bruno Dumont, Amat Escalante, Carlos Reygadas and Jonas Carpignano.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Muhammad Mustapha

Director / Screenwriter



Philipp M. Raube

Producer

Contact

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Die Neue Lux
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Big Boys Don't Cry

Egypt, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Social Issues, Youth, Identity, Creative Documentary, Tradition

When asked to play himself on camera, bodyguard Yehia thinks he owns the frame and fills it with his everyday raw masculine performance. However, he is unaware that the filmmaker has different intentions in this story of two men, two performances, two realities, and two unmaskings.



Yehia, a 35-year-old bodyguard, embodies a hyper-masculine image of power and violence. After his release from prison, he wants to be there for his wife and twin boys. He quits illegal business and works as a bouncer; a service-oriented security job that requires him to control his inherent anger. He pursues an acting career but is always stereotyped and cast as a background actor. But not anymore when he is approached by Mustapha, a 27-year-old filmmaker, who wants to film him—an opportunity. The proposed film gives him his sixty seconds of fame. He knows Mustapha intends to make “something raw”. Playing himself for the camera, he’s ready to give him that. But he’s the star who controls the show, or so he thinks. ‘Big Boys Don’t Cry’ is a cinema verité film that includes both the story and the form through which it’s told in its narrative structure. It paints a portrait of its protagonist, as he constructs his masculine identity, performs it, and hides his vulnerability behind it. This is brought to screen through the filmmaking process itself, and dynamics between him and the filmmaker who observes, interacts with him, and reflects on himself as a doubtful filmmaker, and as an insecure man.

Director's Note

‘Big Boys Don’t Cry’ is an accumulation of theoretical anthropology and sociology studies on masculinity and gender, and extensive immersive fieldwork with bouncers in Cairo. Once the protagonist’s involvement with the project was confirmed, research material was shot, scouts were made, and the process of writing directly for the film started. The slow extensive research helped us face the challenge of access. As it grounded the film in a way and also helped us gain trust, acquire access, and fully grasp the minute authentic details of the film’s world. Working on an international co-production, as a writer, I also benefited from multiple perspectives. Philipp Raube (Germany) offered a broad and global perspective on the male gender role, and the Arab male identity. While being a part of the Robert Bosch Film Prize 2020 program, I also benefited from the great mentorship of Raed Andoni, Selina Ukwama and Sabine Sidawi. The writing process was intended to conceptualize a treatment and artistic approach but also to remain open and leave a space for the unexpected. In a production mode

that wants to loosen the boundaries between different production stages, and in a form that’s based on the dynamics between the filmmaker and the protagonist, improvements on the draft will be made after principal photography and initial shootings. These improvements will result from the theory vs practice which will involve a more authentic portrayal of the film’s world.

Director's Biography

Muhammad Mustapha is a filmmaker based in Cairo. Since 2011, he has taken a multidisciplinary approach towards filmmaking—working as a director, scriptwriter, editor, assistant director, and line producer on several short films, features, and documentaries. In 2015, he made the observational cinema-verite documentary ‘Tashkeel’, which was co-produced between Cimatheque Cairo and Ateliers Varans. His debut feature documentary ‘Big Boys Don’t Cry’, which is currently in development, won the Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung in 2020.

Company Profile

Die Neue Lux is a German-based film production company with the mission to create stories for the Pan-European market and international audiences. Founder Philipp Maurice Raube was studying international production at the well-known Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, with the vision to produce authentic and socially relevant films with a distinctive voice, for these markets. The films which are produced under the umbrella of Die Neue Lux have received most of the German national and local film funds like MFG, MBB, Filmstiftung NRW and have a good connection into the German broadcasting landscape.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

**Abuzar Adam,
Elsadig Abdelgayoum**
Directors / Screenwriters



Alyaa Musa
Producer / Co-screenwriter



Contact

Alyaa Musa
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The Camera Never Cries

Sudan, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Human Rights, Middle East, Africa, Politics, Art

Driven by a passion for change, two filmmakers encounter death to document the 2019 Sudanese revolution. During the Covid-19 lockdown, they re-examine their intentions and political drives as they explore the story of the revolution and their friendship.



From the onset of the film, we land in an intimate space with two friends trying to revisit their memories of the revolution through their extensive collection of footage. The self-isolation of Covid-19 contrasts the images of Khartoum during the revolution of the year before. The calmness of self-isolation is a ripe time for self-reflection and brings the pair closer to their unresolved questions and traumas of the past year. They interview each other about their expectations and disappointments as the story of the revolution unfolds. From January to April 2019, the Sudanese protest was in full swing; people protested peacefully even as violence against them escalated. On April 6, 2019, millions of Sudanese marched through teargas and bullets and occupied the area around the military headquarters in the capital Khartoum. The Albashir regime fell, but a sit-in ensued, which was brutally attacked, leaving hundreds dead, and a nation traumatised. While navigating the footage, Abuzar and Elsadig realise that the stories they captured are reflections of their own—two artists seeing their dreams, fears and disappointments coming to life through the characters they filmed.

Director's Note

We decided to make this film to tell the story of our generation with our own voices and lenses. Right away, we agreed to move in together. As flatmates, we would immerse ourselves in continuous discussions and breakdowns, echoed by the walls of our shared shelter. Today we are filming our daily life observing how our city, our families and friends were transforming and responding to the so-called "New Sudan". The story we are trying to tell is alive and being played out now. Keen to keep an open mind and heart, as we are making this film, hoping that we can connect with audiences from all over the world.

Director's Biography

In 2012, **Abuzar Adam** graduated from the telecommunication engineering college at the University of Al-Neelain, Khartoum Sudan. His passion for classic photography was encouraged by his father, who used to collect old vintage cameras to document their life in rural Darfur.

Elsadig Abdelgayoum is a Sudanese photographer and filmmaker. He was born and grew up in Omdurman, Sudan. From 2005 - 2008, he studied Multimedia. Elsadig employs filmmaking and photography as tools to tell stories. He is interested in researching and developing further understandings of his own reality through his work.

Company Profile

Black Balance is a Sudanese independent film production company based in Khartoum, Sudan. The company produces and co-produces documentary films, feature and short fiction and non-fiction films, with a focus on Sudan-based stories and young directors. The company's founders, producers and filmmakers; Alyaa Sirelkhatim Musa, Mia Bittar and Mohamad Hanafi, have a long, rich experience making films in Sudan and internationally, individually and collectively, since the early 2000s. Their work has been screened at international festivals such as Rotterdam, London Africa, Aljazeera, NY and Texas plus a wide range of regional broadcast channels. Black Balance was established in March 2016 with a vision to support young talented Sudanese directors to visualize their cinematic vision despite lacking cinema culture, basic film education and freedom of speech.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Gorki Glaser-Müller

Director



Kristofer Henell, Erika Malmgren

Producers



Contact

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Children of the Enemy

Sweden, Denmark, Qatar / English, Spanish, Swedish / 2021

Runtime: 97 mins

Genre: Documentary, Human Rights, Social Issues, Family

He lost his daughter to Islamic State. Can he save his grandchildren?



'Children of the Enemy' is the story of bohemian musician Patricio whose daughter married one of Europe's most notorious ISIS terrorists. They left for Syria in 2014, and as the caliphate crumbles five years later, both are killed. Their seven small children miraculously survive and are placed in the monstrous camp al-Hol. When the Swedish authorities neglect to act on behalf of the children, Grandpa Patricio is forced to take it upon himself to try to get them out.

Director's Note

On the one hand, 'Children of the Enemy' tells the story of how Patricio Galvez step-by-step struggles to save his grandchildren. On the other hand, this is a story about being human today. The world is polarized, more extreme. In the political climate of today, these children are not valued as innocent Swedish children. In social media, they are referred to as ISIS-children and even terrorist-children. This lack of civilization drives me to make this film. Also, in the old Greek tales from the Iliad, the fate of the defeated enemy is applied to its children. Beyond the news value of Patricio's great deed is a universal story of David against Goliath, of the little man against a system that doesn't want to help the children of the enemy. But at its deepest level, this is a story about the loss of a child, the greatest pain for a parent. When Amanda dies, Patricio makes a pledge to save his grandchildren, no matter the risks. The story about the children of war turns into the children of love.

Directors' Biography

Gorki Glaser-Müller is a filmmaker, writer for film, tv and radio and a multi-artist working with experimental formats such as VR. He was born in Santiago, Chile in 1973 and came to Sweden as a 13-year-old. Since graduating from Valand Academy in Gothenburg, Sweden, he has experimented with audiovisual storytelling in various forms. His first feature film was the critically acclaimed 'Once a Year' (2013). 'Children of the Enemy' is Gorki's feature documentary debut.

Directors' Biography

Cinenic Film is a production company based in Gothenburg, Sweden. The company produces and co-produces high-quality drama, documentaries and animations aimed at theatrical distribution and TV. Titles include 'Beyond Dreams' (2017), 'Flocking' (Berlinale Crystal Bear Winner 2015), 'Underdog' (2014) and co-productions 'And Breathe Normally' (Sundance Best Directing 2018), feature animation 'The Tower' (over 100 festivals 2018-19), 'Phoenix' (Toronto 2018), 'Hacker' (Winner Chicago Int'l Children's FF, Cinekid, Stockholm Junior FF 2019) and 'Daniel' (2019).

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Elia Youssef, Moe Al Thani
Directors



Elia Youssef
Screenwriter

Ghouna Jaber
Producer



Contact

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Ghouna Jaber
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Companions of the White Arc

Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Romania, Norway / Arabic, English

Genre: Adventure, Docufiction, Sports, Nature

After a long and arduous journey, 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.



After conquering the majestic seven summits and the South Pole in 2014, Moe Al Thani is on his way to the North Pole to earn mountaineering's coveted "Grand Slam" title. This is the last leg of a long and arduous journey and will make Moe one of only 50 people in history, and the first Qatari, to ever achieve this incredible feat. This film, however, goes beyond the Grand Slam—it is a tale of evolution, transformation and finding truth. The call of the Mountain was a life changer for Moe and allowed him to grow and become the person he is today. We are but the sum of our experiences, and Moe's experiences have so far been extraordinary. From inspiration to summit, from summit to adventure, and from adventure to inspiring others, we learn all about the values our protagonist has gained and strongly lives by today—the impact of purpose, the drive of passion, the strength of belief, the virtue of patience, the hold of persistence, the radiance of humility, and the joy of appreciation. Moe's story is one of defiance, grit and motivation.

Director's Note

My goal is to inspire others and help them appreciate the environment we share. I want the audience to experience this film as a mystical journey of self-discovery. Life experiences will be told, adventures from the seven summits of the world will be shared, and from all these will emerge seven core values. These seven values are the pillars along the earth's axis from the North Pole to the South Pole. Directing Moe as the protagonist and co-directing the film with him is a unique experience that will fuse both our love of humanity with our love of nature, and I look forward to bringing this story to life.

Director's Biography

Moe Al Thani is a Qatari entrepreneur / mountaineer / philanthropist / photographer / sportsman and co-founder of the travel portal Musafir.com, who set himself a dedicated mission to push his limits by scaling the Seven Highest Summits of the Seven Continents of the World.

Elia Youssef is a multi-award-winning, Lebanese filmmaker that strives to create groundbreaking documentaries which push through cultural boundaries. This mindset continues to fuel his desire to create thought-provoking work that touches the soul of humanity. Elia is a firm believer in the resurgence of nonfiction storytelling. He utilizes all the available tools of his trade to convey to audiences that truth is often stranger and more entertaining than fiction. This is very evident in his 2016 documentary film, 'The Seventh Summit', which won Elia numerous awards and international recognition.

Company Profile

Altitude Productions is an independent film company based in Qatar and was founded by Moe Al Thani in 2016. Altitude Productions produced its first feature documentary, 'The Seventh Summit' in 2017. Through its success, it was featured in film festivals around the world, broadcast on Amazon Prime and on Qatar Airways flights. In 2018, another feature documentary, 'Seal of Approval' was produced, and their most recent short documentary, 'Amadablam, in Its Own Silence' was completed in February 2021.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Sid Ahmed Semiane

Director / Screenwriter



Leila Aoudj

Producer



Contact

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The Curious Mr. Daoud

Algeria, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues

The writer Kamel Daoud is one of a kind. His words unleash passions, acerbic polemics and condemnations as fervid as calls for his murder. A camera, installed in his quiet home, records his innermost thoughts while the country is in turmoil—amid the revolutionary Hirak Movement.



Director's Note

Kamel Daoud is a successful writer that secured a place among the intellectual elite whose voices count. He has been a guest speaker and panellist to various TV and radio shows, and a contributor and columnist in many notorious newspapers such as the New York Times. Despite the fact that he regularly denies it, Daoud is an activist, who speaks his mind, stands up for his fellows, and gets involved through a story; let it be the stories of his home country (Algeria), or those of the Muslim world. His words and reflections hit the nail on the head and create polemics around them. I do not necessarily agree with Daoud's ideas; in fact, I've developed a strong opponent ideology. In a caricatural way, I picture myself as a man of left-wing convictions, and him as a man with a right-wing liberal one either by intellectual necessity or by provocation. I, however, firmly believe that his ideas are of paramount importance for the society and to a certain extent for me as well. As such, filming him is a way of finding answers to my own questions, my own concerns, my own fears. This is very important for me and may open new paths for other people.

Director's Biography

The multi-skilled artist **Sid Ahmed Semiane** (also known as "SAS") was born in Algiers in 1971. A director, writer and photographer, SAS is the author of the best seller 'October, they speak', considered as the reference work treating the dramatic events of October 5th, 1988 in Algeria. SAS is both a word and a photograph lover; several of his materials were exhibited in Algeria and overseas. He began as Merzak Allouache's Assistant, and after collaborating on several other projects, he directed his first feature documentary 'Babylon Constantina' in 2019.

Company Profile

Founded in 2015 by Laila Aoudj, Minima Films is a cinematographic and audiovisual material production company. Minima is a meeting space between artists and specialized technicians, which allows us to produce state-of-the-art projects, technically as well as artistically speaking. In less than five years of existence, thanks to a dedicated, dynamic and passionate team, Minima Films has already worked with numerous Algerian artists and built fruitful partnerships with internationally renowned Television networks.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Jessica Beshir

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Faya Dayi

Ethiopia, USA, Qatar / Harari, Oromo / 2021

Runtime: 100 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues, Tradition

'Faya Dayi' is a spiritual journey immersed in the rituals of "khat", a fantasy inducing leaf that has become the most lucrative cash crop in Ethiopia.



'Faya Dayi' is a spiritual journey through the rituals of "khat", a mildly narcotic leaf chewed for centuries by Sufi Muslims in their religious meditations and today's most lucrative cash crop in Ethiopia. Weaving a tapestry of intimate stories made of observations, poetry, 'Faya Dayi' provides a window into the hopes and aspirations of the youth living under a repressive regime.

Director's Note

Ethiopian myth has it that "khat" was discovered by Sufi Imams in search of eternity. Inspired by this myth, 'Faya Dayi' is a hybrid, creative documentary that echoes that search for eternity and meaning by weaving intimate stories through a tapestry of moving images and poetic soundscapes to create a sensorial portrait of Harar under the spell of khat.

Director's Biography

Jessica Beshir is a Mexican-Ethiopian director, producer and cinematographer based in Brooklyn. She made her directorial debut with her short film 'Hairat', which premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was released by the Criterion Channel. Her short films have screened in festivals and museums around the world including IFFR, Hot Docs, IDFA, Tribeca, Cannes Lions, Museum of the Moving Image and the Eye Film Museum, among others. Beshir is a recipient of the Sundance documentary, Jerome Foundation and NYFA Fellowships. 'Faya Dayi' is her first feature film.

Contact

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Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Adnane Baraka

Director / Producer



Jean-Pierre Lagrange

Producer

Fragments from Heaven

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic, Berber / 2022

Runtime: 82 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Road Trip

Looking for stones in the desert of Morocco might seem ludicrous unless those stones are celestial and able to change one's life forever. That's the story of nomad Mohamed, scientist Abderrahmane, and other Bedouins. They all search for the same stone, but each one has his own reasons. Their search merges into an inherent quest that resonates with that of all the others.



The deserts of the east and the south of Morocco are famed for meteor showers, and their arid lands are the perfect location to find these celestial stones. 'Fragments from Heaven' tells the story of Mohamed, a nomad in his fifties who lives with his family in a tent in a remote area of the eastern Moroccan desert. In order to improve his family's harsh living conditions, he decides to go searching for these objects. For him, they represent an opportunity to change his life, and that of his family, forever. The film also tells the story of Abderrahmane, a renowned Moroccan scientist. Meteorites further his research into the origins of Earth and of life itself. He believes the celestial detritus may reveal some answers to his existential questions. The nomad and the scientist never cross paths in the film—it is the language of cinema that allows their connection.

Contact

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Director's Note

In 'Fragments from Heaven', I delve into questions of the origin of life. However, when it comes to this question, answers continually drift away into an abyss, always leaving behind a new enigma to be solved. For me, confronting these conundrums through a quest is an intimate way to exorcise the anguish they bring about. By wandering in search of meteorites in the company of nomads and a scientist, we grasp the meaning of the quest and that, in the end, it is the path that makes sense, not the destination. It is through cinema that this quest crystallizes, by gathering the nomads and the scientist together with all of us. As well, cinema helps us to dig into emotion when the intellect is arid. For these reasons, for me this film is a journey during which I no longer force myself to find answers, which are unreachable. Nevertheless, I focus with gratitude on humans and environments with all their complexities, while honouring what unites us with each other, with the Earth, and ultimately with the universe. It is all about diving into the world of the subtle to touch a chord of sensibility, and to transcend.

Director's Biography

An independent filmmaker born and living in Marrakech, **Adnane Baraka** studied Directing at the ESAV film school in Marrakech and graduated in 2011. In 2010, he directed his first short documentary, 'Talbanine', about a remote and isolated school in the mountains. In 2019, he completed his first full-length documentary, 'Wandering Stars', which was a portrait of three blind young Moroccans. Since 2014, Baraka has been working on the film 'Fragments from Heaven', which has been shot over several periods between 2017 and 2019. He is also a musician, conducting research into sound through the InCave and SENT projects.

Company Profile

Alpha Ursae Minoris Productions was founded in 2016 by Adnane Baraka and Salma Zdaik, who share an avid eye for the new and vibrant originality in the films and art sphere: "As the reality of the cinema and audiovisual environment in Morocco dictates—from the complication of administrative procedures to the lack of financial resources to produce films—we strongly felt the necessity to handle our own destiny through a production company. The genesis of Alpha Ursae Minoris productions came to help us to be able to carry out our documentary and fiction projects within a professional framework." Projects on the way include the feature-length documentaries 'Fragments from Heaven', 'Wandering Stars' and 'Signs of Existence'.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Rachida El Garani

Director / Screenwriter



Jurgen Buedts, Merièmè Addou

Producer



Contact

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In the House of My Father

Morocco, Belgium, Qatar / Arabic, Darija

Genre: Creative Documentary, Family, Tradition, Social Issues

The story of a Moroccan-Belgian family seen through the lens of their oldest daughter. Squeezed in between Moroccan and Western culture, filmmaker Rachida El Garani searches for answers to past traumas from her 78-year-old father before it is too late.



Twenty-eight years ago, when Rachida was just 16, her father forced her to marry a Moroccan man she didn't know. This became a very violent and abusive marriage. Today Rachida is looking for answers before it gets too late and talks to her father with love like only a daughter can do. Just like her father, Rachida became passionate about film. She invites her father to work together on a film—one about the life and coal miner past of young Mohamed. They will write the scenes together, cast actors, and find locations. But her father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and his memories seem far away. During this process, Rachida questions the position of women within the patriarchal Moroccan culture. 'In the house of my father' is a very personal and yet a universal creative documentary film on what can tear and reunite a family.

Director's Note

In this film, I want to challenge the patriarchal system in which I grew up in. Being born into a Moroccan family in Belgium and growing up in between two cultures has made me struggle to find my place in society. By rebelling and taking control of my own faith and destiny, I realized my own dreams, and I can live a life as an independent woman, free and without coercion. And this should be possible for every woman—not just Muslim women but all women in the world.

Director's Biography

Rachida El Garani is a Moroccan-Belgian film director, screenwriter and actress. In 2015 she graduated from the RITCS Filmschool in Brussels with great distinction in audiovisual arts and with her first documentary film 'Into Darkness', which won the Audience Award at the Los Angeles Film Festival. This film was selected for a world premiere at IDFA Film Festival in two categories: "Best Student Documentary" and "Kids & Docs". This film was also selected as the opening film of the Moroccan FIDADOC Festival in Agadir and has also won the Jury Prize at the Zagora Sub-Saharan Film festival in Morocco. In the spring of 2017, she won the Diwan "Woman of the year" award in Brussels. The Diwan Award ('Diwan' is Arabic for 'light') is awarded to the most successful Moroccan Belgians in twelve categories. In the fall of 2017, she was also included in the Dutch 'Kleurrijke Top 100', a Dutch diversity prize. She achieved 2nd place for her film and television works.

Company Profile

Las Belgas is an award-winning production company founded in 2014 by Jurgen Buedts in Flanders, Belgium. Las Belgas works with an array of international freelance directors, writers and producers. These range from young talented filmmakers to established names in the industry, often from diverse backgrounds. With a strong focus on relevant and original stories about the world in which we live today, Las Belgas produces fiction and documentary content for cinema, but also ARTE, AVROTROS, Al Jazeera, BBC, ZDF, Knowledge Network, Netflix, POV, SVT, WDR, and multiple other channels worldwide.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Fatma Chérif

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Imed Marzouk

Producer



It Snows at Sidi Bou Said

Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Family, Identity

My relentless travels between Paris and Tunis provoke as many discussions with my children as questions inside me. This is a filmed diary. I embark on the journey of searching the images that nurtured me, and questioning the power they had over my life choices.



My relentless travels between Paris and Tunis provoke as many discussions with my children as questions inside me. This is a filmed diary. I embark on the journey of searching the images that nurtured me, and questioning the power they had over my life choices—family images in Super 8, political archives, and memories, all mingle. These images will summon a thwarted dream, that of participating in the democratic change in Tunisia, a past where colonization and Western dreams collide with a future inhabited by the fear of identity assignment.

Contact

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Director's Note

Does history shape our future? Colonization, dictatorship, revolution. All of these words have made, and still make, history. This story was transmitted to me by two opposing clans—the official one, that of school and national television, on one side—and the non-official one, that of my family, on the other. The latter thrived by following and referring to the glorious history of France. In my perception, there was the truth told by my family, and the lies imposed on us by the leaders of the country. Manipulation of symbols, deviation from history, the film is about how history is told. It's not about giving my side of the story, but about breaking down the historical narrative, the official narrative, but also that of my family.

Director's Biography

Born in 1975 in Tunisia, **Fatma Chérif** is a Franco-Tunisian director who has always had a foot in each country. She started as a camera assistant on fiction feature films with directors such as Moufida Tlatli, Ghassan Salhab, Bruno Dumont, Frédéric Wiseman, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Pascal Thomas, and Alain Gomis. She has filmed several documentaries by directors such as Hala Abdalla, Sarah Benillouche, Julia Durante, and Nadia El Fani. After participating in La Fémis Documentary Workshop in 2010, she made her first documentary, 'Sweet Home' (Bent Eddar), which received the Brouillon d'un rêve grant from the SCAM and which was selected in several festivals including Amiens, Brussels, Arles, and Doc à Tunis. In 2015, she directed a documentary for TV5Monde and the History Channel on the question of the departure of Jews from Tunisia entitled 'Tunisia, the Jewish memory'.

Company Profile

Propaganda Production is a Tunisian company. It was created in 2002 by Imed Marzouk and Néjib Belkadhi. The main activities of Propaganda Production are the production of feature-length and short films, as well as documentaries, broadcast series, and commercials.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Dalila Ennadre

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Lilya Ennadre, Lamia Chraïbi

Producers

Jean Genet, Our Father of Flowers

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic, English, French, Spanish

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues

Under the benevolent shadow of Jean Genet, buried in Morocco, this film is a dialogue between the living and the dead—an invitation to hold these worlds together, between deaf humanist revolt and poetic elegy.



An anonymous grave in the middle of a cemetery with a view of the sea. We are in Larache, south of Tangier, where Jean Genet lived the last ten years of his life—and where he is buried. Today, the writer is a legend to the town residents, though few knew him, and rare are those who have read his work. But they all have something to say about him; each has reinvented him in his or her own way. These are simple, poor people, and to be honest, invisible. They are the Moroccan people without a voice and without a future. They resemble the characters in Genet's books and now keep vigil over his grave. This film is a look back at the great author, a view of a country, a homage to its residents, a dialogue between the living and the dead, an invitation to bring these worlds together, and an example of humanity.

Director's Biography

Dalila Ennadre was born in 1966 in Casablanca, Morocco. After growing up in Paris from 1985 to 1996, she moved to Guyana, Germany, Morocco and Canada. With a self-taught background, she has directed several documentary films on subjects related to Moroccan society. Her films have won awards at documentary film festivals around the world.

Company Profile

La Prod develops fiction in its broadest sense by combining imagination and rigour without compromise or self-censorship. La Prod accompanies directors in the creative process, including Hicham Lasri, Narjiss Nejjar, Ismaïl Ferroukhi, and Mohcine Besri. The company co-produced Oliver Laxe's 'Mimosas' (Grand Prize of the Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016) as well as Balint Kenyeres' 'Tegnap / Hier' and has produced various feature film projects and television programs.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Jamal Al-Khanji

Director



Ricardo A. Nascimento

Screenwriter

David Ochoa

Co-director / Producer



Contact

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Jodari Meno

Italy, Zanzibar, Qatar / English

Genre: Action, Sports, Creative Documentary, Adventure, Diving

A Qatari spearfisherman embarks on a journey of self-exploration by chasing his dream of catching a once in a lifetime fish. This is the story of how passion helps shape his world and the life of those around him in a way he never thought possible.



Born and raised in Qatar—a small middle eastern country that developed from a fishing village that depended on pearl diving—into an international powerhouse with an ambition to be at the forefront of international politics, health, education, and sport. Those hopes and aspirations brought about many challenges and unique circumstances that tested the country's capabilities and perseverance. The lead character talks about his homeland, the culture, its ambition and reflects on how this has shaped his life starting from his passion for the ocean where his ancestors made their living, to his pursuit of self-improvement and ability to overcome significant challenges. The sport of spearfishing is one of the most dangerous extreme sports in the world and the "Jodari Meno" is its most valued prize. Along the way, he sheds light on the spearfishing lifestyle and the amazing community of mentors and friends that helped him along his journey. He travels to different countries pursuing the wisdom and knowledge of the sports' legends and goes on to create his own epic story.

Director's Note

'Jodari Meno' is a story of passion, pain and perseverance. At 47, competing with the younger guys in their 20's is always a challenge. But competing with myself, challenging my fears and overcoming my weaknesses is more challenging and much more important. A constant fight with my demons. Why are you doing this? Why are you risking everything? Why are you jeopardising your career? You have a family, a great job making a good living. Slow down, don't risk it all. The usual thoughts that come to mind every time I have a new idea, think of starting a new business, and want to participate in a new challenge. I always wondered how some people do it—home to work and work to home and maybe a little gym on the side. Being a Qatari naturally pushes you to do more. A small country that makes a big statement. Brave, ambitious, stubborn, always trying to punch over its weight, always pushing the limits. Spearfishing represents all this to me. Every time I hold my breath and dive searching for that monster fish, I start fighting all my demons, gathering all my courage, pushing myself to go deeper, stay longer and fighting the thought that I might not be able to see my kids again. A passion that forces

your life to pass in front of your eyes for a few seconds every time your head submerges underwater. Those mixed feelings that make your heart race against your will. To the ultimate feeling you get when you're back on the surface taking a deep inhale and knowing that you are—alive.

Director's Biography

Dr. Jamal Rashid Al-Khanji is a physician and entrepreneur, as well as an adventurer that has travelled the globe in the pursuit of his passion for spearfishing. He created the first accredited spearfishing academy in the world with courses taught across five continents and hundreds of graduates from all nationalities. He is passionate about underwater videography, and his Instagram account is followed by thousands of spearfishing enthusiasts. He is considered one of the best middle eastern Spearos, constantly in pursuit of the dogtooth tuna (Jodari Meno) the most sought-after game fish in the sport, with his current personal best of 75.9 kg considered the 2nd best Arabic record for that fish and broken only by another Qatari. He is a graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and holds a Master of Business Administration and a Juris Doctor law degree from

Hamad Bin Khalifa University. He was contracted to film a national day documentary by AIKASS sports channel in 2018 which aired on all Qatari TV Channels.

David Ochoa is a director specialising in underwater sports and wildlife. David started diving at a very young age in the Azores Islands and naturally throughout the years he developed the skills needed to capture amazing images when freediving, allowing him to travel around the world shooting underwater in the most challenging scenarios. David is currently directing documentaries for TV stations in different parts of the globe while shooting branded content.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Nada Riyadh

Director / Screenwriter



Ayman El Amir

Producer



Land of Women

Egypt, France, Denmark / Arabic

Genre: Women's Issues, Coming-of-Age, Creative Documentary

In a conservative village in the south of Egypt, a group of teenage girls reject the traditional roles forced upon them—rebellious through a mix of theatre, performances, songs, dreams and confessions.



In an impoverished and patriarchal Egyptian village by the Nile, seven teenage girls rebel by forming an all-female street theatre troupe. Through the building and dismantling of their primitive stage, the girls resist the classical roles they are destined for. Instead, they role-play as women, boys, men and trees. They are at that age where they can be anything they imagine to be. They sing, dance and run around performing, confusing their families, challenging the villagers and the camera. While fighting against time itself, against a future already written, they seduce us into a world where they have the power to transform into mystical characters and to write their own future. Their unawareness of their own limitations pushes the boundaries of theatre and film. A hybrid documentary that engages in a conversation with the girls using theatre, performances, monologues, songs, reconstruction of myths, dreams, confessions and self-portraits, chasing the wildness and elusiveness of being young.

Director's Note

When I first met the girls, I was fascinated by their creativity, courage, humour and perseverance. However, I am truly perplexed by how unfree I am compared to them. Those teenagers, living in a marginalized village in the south of Egypt, under so many restrictions religiously, socially and economically, are freer than me, an educated artist raised in the city. Their unawareness of the risks they take, or their disregard of the consequences is outstanding. I want to make this film to move past my fascination with them. The film poses the questions—on our way to adulthood, can we ever preserve our freedom? What spaces of freedom can a girl, or a woman, negotiate within societal restrictions?

Directors' Biography

Nada Riyadh is an Egyptian director and screenwriter. Her debut documentary film 'Happily Ever After', premiered at IDFA in 2016, and was later screened in more than 20 international film festivals. Her short fiction film 'Fakh' ('The Trap') was selected for the official competition of 58th La Semaine de la Critique, Cannes Film Festival 2019 and TIFF 2019. Her work mainly focuses on exploring the depth and complexity of the human psyche and relationships through the visual medium.

Company Profile

Felucca films is a Cairo-based production company that aims to help filmmakers explore and shape their own personal voices and to produce unique and original fiction and documentary films, with a particular focus on fresh and new talents and contemporary social issues. Felucca's latest productions include 'Fakh', Cannes' Semaine de la Critique 2019 and 'Happily Ever After', IDFA 2016. Felucca Films has a special focus on script development through its script development programme (MAHD Film Lab) which works as an incubator for new Arab film productions and Arab-European co-productions.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Diane Sara Bouzgarrou,
Thomas Jenkoe

Directors / Screenwriters



Jean-Laurent Csinidis

Producer



The Last Hillbilly

France, Qatar / English / 2020

Runtime: 80 mins

Genre: Environmental, Politics, Social Issues, Youth, Creative Documentary

In the US, the word “hillbilly” often refers to the inhabitants of the Appalachians, a region devastated economically, ecologically, and socially. This film is a portrait of one such hillbilly family told through the words of one of their own.



In the Appalachian Mountains, east of Kentucky, people feel less American than Appalachian. They don't always recognize the authority of the US-government. Some of them don't pay their taxes, even if it means doing without running water or electricity. Over time, the inhabitants of this area of “white rural America” have seen an explosive mix made of economic decline, ecological disaster, and social violence. In the US they're often called “hillbillies”. An insult some of them use to define themselves, almost as a provocation. This film is a portrait of a hillbilly family told through the words of one of their own—combining documentary observation and a surprising interior world, witnessing a world on the verge of disappearing.

Contact

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Director's Note

As the political crises go by and shake the world, as nationalism and communitarianism have made their return on the political spectrum, what does it mean to love one's land? To be a part of a community? It is fundamental not to let the populist right-wing have the sole interest in answering those questions for they can lead to xenophobia and racism if they are not being addressed—even if it means leaving our comfort zone. That is one of the reasons why we decided to get out of our immediate surroundings. The current events in France would have matched with this line of questioning (for instance with the “yellow jackets”). But we would have lacked distance. So, we wanted to find a place where those issues were observable but where we could maintain a ‘neutral’ stance on things as foreigners. We also needed to create a strong, durable bond with people who would become our protagonists. This was our mindset when we left for the United States in the summer of 2013. Why the US? Because it seemed to us that a strong feeling links the Americans to their country no matter what.

Director's Biography

Thomas Jenkoe lives and works in France as a director, a DOP and a producer. He is one of the founders and partners of the production company Triptyque Films, where he has produced over 20 films since 2010 (films that were shown at Tribeca, Rotterdam, Karlovy Vary and the like). As a director, his ‘Memories from Gehenna’ won the French competition at Cinéma du Réel in 2015 and was shown in many other places, most notably at the DocFortnight of the MoMa in New York.

Diane Sara Bouzgarrou was born in 1985 in France. Since the end of her studies, she has been active in both fields of cinema and video art. Her last medium-length film, ‘I Remember Nothing’, premiered at Cinéma du Réel 2017 (Special Mention from the Youth Jury) and was shown in many festivals such as Torino Film Festival, Jihlava Intl Documentary Festival, the RIDM in Montréal, DOK Fest München, etc. In France, it is distributed by Docks 66.

Company Profile

Films de Force Majeure is a production company based in Marseille, France. Since its creation in 2010, our activity has mainly focused on art-house films, with a particular interest in documentaries and international collaborations. We are keen on strongly committed projects that transcend boundaries. Films de Force Majeure is part of several European networks such as EAVE and EURODOC.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Ahmet Necdet Çupur

Director



Delphine Morel, Anke Petersen, Nadir Öperli

Producers



Les Enfants Terribles

France, Germany, Turkey, Qatar / Arabic, Turkish / 2021

Runtime: 92 & 52 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Family, Psychological Drama, Tradition, Patriarchy, Underage Marriage, Gender Inequality, Young Women's Access to Education

In a village near the Syrian border of Turkey, a young man, Mahmut, wants to divorce his newly-wed wife. At the same time, his sister Zeynep, an adolescent girl, decides to get a factory job and starts studying by distance learning. Their idea is regarded as a sin, and an impossible battle begins.



In Keskinçik, a village situated near the Syrian border of Turkey, a young man, Mahmut, wishes to divorce his newly-wed wife. Guilt-ridden, he doesn't know how to end the marriage. Recently, Mahmut's sister Zeynep has ended her engagement as well. Resolute to quit the village, Zeynep enrolls in an open high school and finds a job in a factory. Against her father's wishes, Zeynep hopes to leave the village and study at a university. Mahmut and Zeynep become the centre of a genuine conflict in their family and community. As resentments and dilemmas come to light, the film aims to magnify this upcoming generation as they try to escape child marriages and create a new way of life for themselves.

Contact

Deckert Distribution
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Director's Note

In this documentary, I try to be more observant of the situations; however, gradually, I include myself in the story and try to set my role as a filmmaker directly linked to the characters. I do not cast any moral judgment; instead, I wish to let the events reveal their own meanings. Principally, I try to film my siblings, Mahmut and Zeynep's point of views on their lives, how they seek a solution while still keeping the family ties intact. My family ties are felt either by me being present in front of the camera or by my voice behind the camera. I try to achieve a narration that unfolds as the younger generation gather together in solidarity against their parents and the community elders to see the transformation of old values into new ones.

Director's Biography

Ahmet Necdet Çupur worked for three years in Iraq and Afghanistan during the war as a civil engineer. He had a growing interest in cinema, so he decided to be a filmmaker and moved to Paris. Two years after his arrival, he got funding from CNC for his short film 'Latin Babylon'. The year he completed his film, he returned to his village, after twenty years, with an idea of shooting a documentary about his family. His filmography includes 'Latin Babylon' (2018), 'Boy and Bicycle' (2015), 'Experience' (2014), and 'Alley Dancer' (2014).

Company Profile

Producing fiction and documentary films since 1986, TS Productions (Paris) has a slate of over 50 documentaries. Two of its productions, 'Home Sweet Home' and 'De Cendres et de Braises', were recently screened at the Visions du Réel.

With an aim to shed light on untold stories, Jyoti Films (Hamburg) tries to produce films that open new perspectives on internationally relevant topics and improve understanding of the unfamiliar.

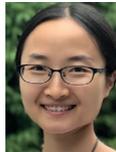
Founded by Nadir Öperli, Liman Film (Istanbul) produces films with directors' labels. The company also offers consultancy and line production services. Their recent titles include 'A Tale of Three Sisters' (2019), and 'My Favorite Fabric' (2018).

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Mijie Li

Director / Producer



J. Faye Yuan, Mario Ducoudray

Screenwriters / Producers



Miles to Go Before She Sleeps

China, USA, Qatar / Mandarin, Yulin Dialect / 2022

Runtime: 141 mins

Genre: Social Issues, Tradition

A 65-year-old Chinese animal activist is on a mission to stop the slaughtering of dogs in provinces where dog consumption is glorified as a gourmet tradition.



Yang Ai Yun is a retired schoolteacher and animal sanctuary founder, who for over twenty years has been rescuing dogs to keep them off peoples' plates. Portrayed in the media as a "Schindler for dogs", Yang has millions of online followers. Some call her a hero; others call her a sham. Still, her mission remains the same—save as many dogs as possible. Online donations pour in, as Yang sets out to establish a new sanctuary during the notorious Yulin Dog Meat Festival. Soon after, she is caught in a maelstrom of nationalistic fervour, police incompetence, and a hostile takeover. Evicted in the middle of the night with nowhere to go, Yang must find a way to guide her dogs home.

Contact

J. Faye Yuan
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Director's Note

I never thought twice about the tradition of dog-eating until I turned 24, when the Yulin Dog Meat Festival attracted international outcry. Curious, I investigated the only way I knew how—with my camera, which led me to Ms. Yang. I followed her, documented her, and as she educated and impassioned me, our film was born. Yang views animal justice as equality for all—human and nonhuman. Six years and many hardships later, Yang no longer possesses the faith she once had. Yet responsibility dictates that I finish telling her story. This is a story about a woman's search for meaning that arouses inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. Yet such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of her existence. There is nothing in the world that would help her survive the worst of conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning to her life. Dogs are her last hope.

Director's Biography

Originally from Hunan, China, **Mijie Li** served as co-producer on the Sundance and Oscar-winning documentary, 'American Factory'. Her debut feature 'Confucian Dream' premiered at Hot Docs in 2019 and went on to win the Special Jury Prize at Karlovy Vary and the Independent Spirit Award at Los Angeles Chinese Film Festival, before taking home the top prize for global impact at Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival. 'Miles to Go Before She Sleeps' is her second feature.

Company Profile

New Circle Films, co-founded by J. Faye Yuan and Mario Ducoudray, is an independent film and TV production, development, and distribution company based in New York City.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Moon Blaisse

Director / Screenwriter



Thomas Bellinck

Co-screenwriter

Souleymane Coulibaly, Sidi Yaya Konaté, Antonio Miras, Paco Vizcaino Cid

Co-directors

Emmy Oost, Louis Mataré, David Fonjallaz, Katja Draaijer

Producers



Contact

Emmy Oost
Cassette for Timescapes
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The Miracle of Almería

'Het Mirakel Van Almería' / Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, Qatar / Arabic, Bambara, Spanish / 2022

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Creative Documentary, Docufiction, Environmental, Immigration, Food Production

The legal and illegalised inhabitants of Almería, the biggest vegetable garden in Europe, cooperate to reveal the system of violence behind our tomatoes.



At the far end of Europe, on the southern border of Spain, lies Almería. It is a huge province completely covered with white plastic, harbouring Europe's largest vegetable garden. It is the place where our tomatoes come from, even in winter. But under all the plastic, strange things happen. Today, Almería's freshwater resources are nearly exhausted, pesticides and large quantities of plastic have irreversibly contaminated the soil. Supermarkets yearly decrease the price they are willing to pay for their tomatoes. Vegetable cultivation moves inevitably to Poland and Africa. Spanish farmers dive well under their prices to keep in the race. 120,000 migrants work in slave-like conditions on the plantations. In this film the inhabitants of Almería work together to reveal how Almería grew from an empty desert in the 1950s, into a white, plastic kingdom in the 1980s—and finally into an exhausted wasteland today. With the use of their imagination, we try to find out the blind spots of our capitalist system.

Director's Note

About seven years ago, while researching places that were completely transformed by globalization, I discovered the extensive vegetable garden in Almería, Spain. My challenge as a filmmaker was to avoid a single-view story, and certainly my version of the story, and to empower the different social classes in Almería to present their perspective freely. Working with their imagination and with fantasy scenes, we discovered, made it much easier to understand what people had really suffered and what made them so powerless to react to it. Instead of thinking by the rules that are written for them right now—the rules of what a black person can do, or what a poor farmer or an uneducated woman in the South of Spain can do—they start to think within a reality where these rules would be different. And suppose they start to talk about their reality from this other role. In that case, people can more easily talk about the invisible power structures of oppression, discrimination and sexism, which are often not very easy to prove but are a very vivid reality for them. Together with the people of Almería and with this film, I want to offer different perspectives on what should change in our big vegetable production sites worldwide.

Director's Biography

Moon Blaisse is Dutch, living in Belgium. She is an award-winning director who graduated with a Master in Audiovisual Arts in 2010. Moon was awarded multiple times internationally with her short film 'Sometime later' (2011). With the short film 'Guest' (2015), she went on to receive the press prize by l'union de la critique de cinéma de Belgique. Moon Blaisse is a Sundance grantee and has also been selected for the Berlinale Talent Campus in 2013 and the IDFA-Mediafund Script development lab in 2014. For 'The Miracle of Almería', she participated in the EDN Docs in Thessaloniki workshop and pitched at CPH:Forum, Dok Leipzig, Visions du réel and the Venice Production Bridge. 'The Miracle of Almería' will be the result of a co-creation process with the inhabitants of Almería and will be Moon's feature film debut.

Company Profile

Cassette for Timescapes produces films and cross-media projects that combine innovative vision and social or political engagement. The company has successfully co-produced with the US, UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and aims at distributing its films worldwide, often through a tailor-made impact strategy. A selection of projects produced include 'All-In' by Volkan Üce (2021, CPH:Doc), 'Glad That I Came, Not Sorry to Depart' by Azam Masoumzadeh (2020, VR), 'Dad Magnet' by Daphne van den Blink (2020, Dok Leipzig), 'Mars, Oman' by Vanessa del Campo (2019, Visions du Réel), 'Barber Shop' by Luc Vrydaghs (2017, tv series), 'The Invisible City [Kakuma]' by Lieven Corthouts (2016, FIFDH), 'Problemski Hotel' by Manu Riche (2015, IFFR) 'No Man Is an Island' by Tim De Keersmaecker (2015, HotDocs) and 'Double Take' by Johan Grimonprez (2009, Berlin FF).

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Mahdi Fleifel

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



My Father's House

Denmark, UK, Palestine, Qatar / Arabic, Danish, English

Genre: Biography, Creative Documentary, Immigration, Identity, Cinemoetry

A personal story about memory, exile, and a father and his son.



In 2012, two weeks after 'A World Not Ours' was completed, my father died at the age of 59. He didn't leave much behind—only a rusty Mercedes and a few thousand dollars in a bank account in Lebanon. But he did leave behind an old Samsonite full of photographs from his youth, and boxes filled with videotapes from the past 11 years of his life. In 2009, my father went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, apparently on a spiritual journey, though he was mostly interested in filming. Eventually, someone had had enough and confronted my father, "Do you think you're on a safari trip?"— "No", my father replied, "This is footage for my son". What did my father want to tell me with his recordings? And who was my father, really, in the time before I was born in Dubai, and after my parents' divorce in Denmark? This is a personal story about memory, exile, about a father and his son, and a family bond through three generations. An expansion of the universe from my first feature, 'A World Not Ours'.

Director's Biography

A graduate of the UK National Film & Television School, **Mahdi Fleifel** lives and works between Denmark, England and Greece. Fleifel's critically acclaimed debut, 'A World Not Ours', premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and received over 30 awards. In 2016 Fleifel won a Silver Bear for 'A Man Returned'. His follow up, 'A Drowning Man', was selected in the Official Competition at Cannes, and was nominated for a BAFTA. 'I Signed the Petition', won Best Documentary Short at IDFA and was nominated for the 2018 European Film Awards. His most recent piece, 3 LOGICAL EXITS, premiered in the Tiger Shorts Competition in Rotterdam 2020.

Company Profile

Nakba FilmWorks is a London based production company primarily focused on the work of writer / director Mahdi Fleifel. Formed in 2010 by Fleifel and Irish producer Patrick Campbell, Nakba FilmWorks released the feature documentary 'A World Not Ours' in 2012. The film went on to screen at over 100 festivals worldwide, collecting over 30 awards, including the Yamagata Grand Prix and the Berlinale Peace Prize. Their 2016 short documentary, 'A Man Returned', had its international premiere at the 2016 Berlinale where it won the Silver Bear and their short film 'A Drowning Man' premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 and was nominated for a BAFTA in 2018. Fleifel's most recent release, 'I Signed the Petition', has screened at over 70 festivals picking up a European Film Awards nomination and winning the Best Short Film prize at IDFA in 2018.

Contact

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Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Haïcha Ladrouz

Director / Screenwriter



Palmyre A. Badinier,

Ossama Bawardi

Producers

The Nablus Runner

France, Switzerland, Palestine, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary

Despite imposed restrictions on movement, a passionate long-distance runner strives to complete a marathon in one of the smallest territories in the world.



Deya is a young Palestinian man passionate about marathon running. His obsession takes him through occupied territory, running long miles along imposed roads, with or against the wind. But in his territory, it is impossible to find the 26 regulatory miles with no obstacles. So Deya is often forced to run in circles. There is an extraordinary story behind his tenacity to run the marathon—one of a young man who is confined to his small territory, running through the town and its outskirts which have become his racetrack. A marathon in truncated loops, due to a lack of space. Despite imposed restrictions on movement, every day he runs on the streets of Nablus and Nur Shams, the refugee camp where he lives. He strives to reach his ultimate goal—to run a famous international marathon and achieve his dream of one day representing his country Palestine at the Olympic Games.

Contact

Haïcha Ladrouz

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Director's Note

Deya's challenge is to run a marathon in a space made up of fragments of territory, occupied. I was moved by this story as it seemed so improbable, but especially it seemed to resonate with my vision of Palestine, where everything seems impossible, but when dreams are brought to life through passion, they can break down walls. For Deya, running is a human right, running is like an outlet and peaceful reaction to human rights not respected, and freedoms abused. Deya lives in a refugee camp where the occupation is present on all levels of his life. Running is a metaphor for life, an ultimate way of breaking away from an established order, not giving in, allowing oneself to create one's own inner and outer space. Deya is symbolically re-establishing the borders of his land while creating his own inner space.

Director's Biography

After finishing her cinema studies, **Haïcha Ladrouz** began working for French TV channels ARTE and Canal+, reporting in conflict zones such as Algeria, Palestine, Syria and Yugoslavia. She made her first documentary 'Des Pas Sans Elle' in 2000, before entering The Documentary School of Lussas. After making several short fictions and video clips, she entered the Femis cinema school in 2004. In 2009 and 2012, she returned to the West Bank to make the feature-length documentary 'Hope in the Bottle', which received several international awards. A feature film, 'The Soul Fruits' followed. In 2019, she graduated with a screenwriting master's degree with honours. Haïcha is currently working on a new documentary project: the story of a Palestinian marathon runner. She divides her time between fiction writing and documentaries.

Company Profile

Founded in 1997, Philistine Films is an independent production company based in Jordan and Palestine. The company is known for its interest in challenging, thought-provoking and original films from directors with distinctive visions, and has established itself at the forefront of independent cinema in the region, producing films for both big and small screens. Philistine Films was created to support new voices and to offer a platform for

the emerging independent Arab film scene. The company's goal is to focus on the development and co-production of independent feature and documentary films, and to find unconventional stories and fresh narratives. We hope to challenge the creative, financial and practical obstacles that confront filmmakers working outside the mainstream. Philistine's productions have been selected for the Festival de Cannes twice, screened in the Berlin, Toronto and Venice International Film Festivals and the Tribeca Film Festival, among more than 300 other festivals. Philistine-produced films have won numerous awards, and one was a finalist for an Academy Award.

Since 2005, Akka Films has dedicated itself to art-house documentaries, fiction films and television programs. Based in Geneva, at the crossroads of Europe, we favour works of international and universal scope, although strongly anchored and incarnated in their regions of origin: powerful, contemporary and singular films carried by an affirmed vision of their authors. This approach naturally leads us to co-produce most of our projects to offer them the widest resonance. Akka Films production board gathers founder and filmmaker Nicolas Wadimoff, and senior producers Philippe Coeytaux and Palmyre Badinier.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Salah Al Ashkar

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Etienne de Ricaud

Producer

Our Choices

Syria, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2022

Runtime: 100 mins

Genre: War, Creative Documentary

Set in Aleppo from 2011 to 2016, 'Our Choices' follows Salah Al Ashkar, the witness and protagonist of an impossible revolution.



Set in Aleppo from the first demonstrations in 2011 up to the evacuation of the city in 2016, 'Our Choices' follows the destiny of the revolution through the eyes of Salah Al Ashkar—the witness and protagonist of an impossible revolution, of a utopia that collided with the wall of reality.

Director's Note

'Our Choices' recounts the choices we were all confronted with in this war—to stay in the regime-controlled part of the city and take the risk of being arrested, or move to the free part of the city but take the risk of receiving a bombshell from the sky. To fight, but how? Or to leave, but abandon our relatives and our fight. I want to bring something specific inside a certain profusion of images coming from Syria, give pause for reflection on the reasons of our collective failure in this struggle; I would like to make visible the divergent behaviours, the differences of opinions and beliefs, the lack of external help, our unpreparedness, divisions, the naivety we often had along these years; I would like 'Our Choices' to be a film about lost battles, but also about the tenacious hope which, despite everything, drives us and keeps us alive.

Director's Biography

Born in 1988 in Aleppo, **Salah Al Ashkar** lives today in Paris. He filmed the uprising of Aleppo from 2011 until his evacuation in December 2016. During the war in 2012, he co-founded the Aleppo Media Center and later worked as a cameraman, field producer and independent photographer for several international TV channels and news agencies. In 2012 as well, he set up "Rouh" ("The Soul"), a structure through which he produced or directed short documentary and fiction films. Since 2017 he's been working on 'Our Choices', with images that he has filmed and kept only for this film.

Company Profile

Set up in 2015, Caractères Productions produces films mainly in Western Asia and particularly the Middle East.

Contact

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Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Mohammed Al-Madjalawi

Director / Screenwriter



Manolo Diaz Rämö, Beatrice Pourbagher Garcia

Producers



Out of Place

Sweden, Qatar / Arabic, English, Swedish

Genre: Coming-of-Age, War, Immigration, Identity, Creative Documentary

A coming-of-age story built on unique material filmed throughout 20 years following Palestinians, who have now successfully settled in Europe. An intimate dialogue spiced with humour and honesty.



Mohammed, a chubby adolescent, is dancing the Dabke with his teenage friends in the cultural centre of Jabalia refugee camp, Palestine in the year 2000. His parents brought him here to make sure that Israeli soldiers wouldn't take him off the street, as he already looks like an adult, even though he's only 12. But Mohammed's dancing doesn't impress the teacher, and instead of dancing lessons, he's given a camera. The dancers he films become Mohammed's closest and most intimate friends. When the war breaks out, Adham, Shahed and Mustapha dance on the rubble of buildings with the others, Mohammed is there with his camera. He films their dreams and despair, their way to resist through dance and laughter. Ten years later, Mohammed lives in Sweden, and his closest friends are scattered all across Europe. He continues to film them to understand their shared story and what growing up really means.

Contact

Manolo Diaz Rämö
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Director's Note

The first idea for this film came to me when I worked as a cameraman, fixer and translator for international journalists. They all wanted the same; to meet jihadist, politicians, devastated families or visit bombed and destroyed places in Gaza. That is when I realised that the other image of Gaza—the love, the dancing and the struggle was something I had to tell. When I moved to Stockholm, I realised what Gaza meant for the outside world. I was perceived as a living ghost, a damaged victim, or a war survivor. This strengthened my belief in the necessity of my story. The lack of complex stories about Palestinians has dehumanised us. Through my story of friendship that survives war, hardship and crossing of borders, I want to humanise us. I strongly believe that stories can change the way we perceive others, and my film is part of that change.

Director's Biography

Mohammed Al-Majdalawi

was born in Palestine and has a master's degree in documentary film from Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts. While living in the Gaza Strip, he worked as crew for several international films including 'Bridges Over Blood' and 'Eyewitness Gaza' and made his own short film, 'Gaza Art Through Barbed Wire'. He is currently working on his documentary features 'Out of Place' and 'To Mai'.

Company Profile

Filmilia is a newly founded production company based in Malmö and Gothenburg that produces short, feature and TV series, both documentaries and fiction. It focuses on new upcoming voices from Swedish filmmakers that are part of the global south diaspora. It emphasizes local stories with an international perspective with the belief that film is a crucial part of the global narrative of humankind.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Leïla Artese Benhadj

Director / Screenwriter



Justin Pechberty, Nabil Bellahsene

Producers



Contact

Nabil Bellahsene
Les Valseurs
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Targuia

Algeria, France, Italy, Qatar / Arabic, Tamasheq

Genre: Women's Issues, Identity, Creative Documentary, Tradition

Tab is 16 years old and lives in the Algerian Sahara. Since her mother's death and her father's departure, she has taken care of her ten siblings in the family tent. But soon, she will have to choose between getting married and settling in town, or staying in the desert.



'Targuia' is the story of Tab, a 16-year-old nomadic girl living in the Sahara in southern Algeria. Like most "targuia" (Tuareg women) of her age, she would like to get married and start a family, but her mother's death prevented that, leaving Tab in charge of ten brothers and sisters. After the tragic loss, Tab's father decided to go look for a job in the city but eventually got swallowed into a fast-paced urban way of life. Tab's childhood best friend is called Asha. At the age of 10, Asha left the desert to settle in the city of Tamanrasset with her parents. Since then, her life has completely changed. She went to school for the first time and discovered technological devices such as computers, laptops, and the internet. Every summer, Asha goes back to her native village in the desert. This year, Tab is looking forward to seeing her best friend again and tells her that several men have come to ask for her hand in marriage. But before becoming a wife, Tab plans on leaving the desert for the first time with Asha's complicity to look for her father. This journey to an unknown world will change both girls' destiny.

Director's Note

My mother is Algerian, and my father is Italian. Since I was a child, I have had the chance to be immersed in both cultures. I discovered that part of my Algerian family was of Targuia origin. This is where my interest arose in these nomadic people who crisscross the vast expanses of desert sand, away from big urban areas. I first heard about Tab via her older sister, Fatima, whom I met during the shooting of 'Parfums d'Alger', a film I was working on as 1st AD. When I asked her about her origins and her family, she agreed to tell me about her life in the desert. I set off in the Algerian desert, looking for her family. I quickly created a special bond with the eldest of Fatima's little sisters, Tab. The days spent in the company of this young targuia and her family convinced me that I had the material for my documentary.

Director's Biography

After studying at the Faculty of Literature, **Leïla Artese Benhadj** went to a school of cinema in Rome. She worked as 1st Assistant Director and editor on Rachid Benhadj's feature films 'Parfums d'Alger' and 'L'Étoile d'Alger'. These first two experiences strengthened her desire to write, direct and edit what became her first short fiction film 'The Queen of the Ants'. She then worked as an AD on Algerian documentaries and eventually decided to write and launch herself into her first documentary feature 'Targuia'.

Company Profile

Les Valseurs is a film production company, producing short fiction films, animated short films, documentary feature films and also involved in international and French feature films projects. Concurrently, Les Valseurs is also developing a feature film distribution business.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Amer Shomali

Director



Rashid Abdelhamid, Ina Fichman

Producers



Theft of Fire

Palestine, Canada, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation, Action, Thriller, Based on a True Story, Creative Documentary, Human Rights, Palestine, Politics

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 in this hybrid documentary based on a true story.



A failing museum and a career hampered by the Israeli Occupation push Naji, a struggling Palestinian artist, to undertake a daring heist inside a prison in the Negev Desert. Inside, Naji must outwit Moshe Dayan, an Israeli military legend, who has hidden away a massive collection of stolen Palestinian archaeology. Naji carefully executes his heist as he deals with mistrust from his fellow inmates. Ultimately, Naji is faced with a decision—choose his own personal revenge or help his fellow inmates in the Palestinian resistance. As Naji gets closer to finding the artefacts, he also must come to terms with a tragic loss that has been haunting him since childhood. Shifting between documentary and narrative, 'Theft of Fire' is a heist film where the audience becomes part of the robbery. At its core, the film questions how a people can tell their narrative when history is being stolen out from under their feet.

Contact

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Director's Note

Frank Stokes once said: "You can wipe out an entire generation, you can burn their homes to the ground, and somehow, they'll still find their way back. But if you destroy their history, you destroy their achievements, and it's as if they never existed". In this film, I want to examine how history works to shape the future and how what exists underground has the power to legitimize what is over it. It's a documentary about a fictional story. Every character in the film is based on an actual character in real life. But the film combines all these true elements and juxtaposes them at the same time and place to produce a dramatized story that is not real. It's a multiple timelines film, one line will follow the interviews with the real characters, while the other constructs a fictional story. The two lines intersect every now and then with a real character confirming an event in the fictional line. While commenting on the Israeli attempts to edit history, I am doing it myself. It will provoke curiosity, spark heated discussions, test realities, and question the ethics of manipulating the past, whether in this film or in a museum.

Director's Biography

Amer Shomali is a Palestinian multidisciplinary artist, using painting, films, digital media, installations and comics as tools to explore and interact with the sociopolitical scene in Palestine. Much of Shomali's work examines the creation and the use of the Palestinian revolution's iconography. Shomali co-directed an award-winning animated documentary, 'The Wanted 18', which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2014. The film was awarded the best documentary award in Abu Dhabi, Carthage, Traverse City, and Al-Jazeera Film Festivals. 'The Wanted 18' was in the official submission lists for the foreign language and documentary categories of the 88th Academy Awards.

Company Profile

Made in Palestine Project is an independent arts initiative to create and promote contemporary visual art and culture with a focus on Palestine. We seek to create a collaborative environment that supports the creativity of emerging visual artists who share in our vision. Our company is committed to reaching new audiences and improving understanding through a variety of platforms, including exhibitions, publications and particularly films.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Amine Sabir

Director



Nadège Labé, Alexis Taillant, Merièm Addou

Producers



Contact

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The Wall of Death

'Le Mur De La Mort' / Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues, Women's Emancipation, Family, Tradition, Legacy

Hassan and Khadra have been performing the motorcycle acrobatics show "The Wall of Death" for four decades. But they refuse to let their daughter Zahra, a young woman passionate about football and motorcycles, take over. At 27 years of age, Zahra is torn between solidarity with her family and the desire to assert her personality by choosing another path.



The Ennassiri family are starting a fortieth consecutive year of "The Wall of Death", a fairground show that can be found in Morocco during the summer rural festivals. Nicknamed "champion", Hassan is the centre of the show in which he performs impressive acrobatics on his motorbike. During summer, he has to earn enough money for the family to survive for the rest of the year. Khadra has always been by his side; she manages the staff when he is away, takes care of the household, of her cat and chases away evil spirits. Zahra, a 27-year-old woman, with short hair and loose-fitting clothes, participates in the show by performing simple acrobatics on her motorcycle. Despite her age and experience, Hassan refuses to let Zahra take over the show, which he believes is too precarious, risky and not suitable for a young woman. Khadra dreams of seeing Zahra married and encourages her to be more feminine. The film shows the difficulty of communication between parents and their daughter despite the probable disappearance of their show—and on the other hand, the problematic emancipation of a young woman who is seeking her place in a conservative society.

Director's Note

I want to tell the epic story of an atypical family, the union of a motorcycle "Champion" and an adventuress who for love, has swapped the comfort of her middle-class background for a precarious life on the road—and their youngest daughter Zahra, who has been immersed in the fairground world since she was a child. By taking over the family business, Zahra could ensure the continuity of the show, threatened with extinction by its logistical heaviness, the more modern attractions, and its dangerousness. But without the hoped-for handover, I am witnessing a generational conflict where the parents prefer to see their show and way of life disappear rather than confronting the eyes of the others by going against tradition and passing on their heritage to their daughter. Through the Ennassiri family, the portrait of a country in transition emerges, between an old world subject to social norms on the one hand and a new world, that of Zahra permanently connected to social networks and her modern look that clashes with.

Director's Biography

Amine Sabir is a Moroccan writer-director. He graduated in film directing from the University of Corsica. In 2014, he directed his second short film, 'Sending Saïd Home' (Le Voyage Dans la Boite), selected at the Clermont-Ferrand short film festival and winner in 2015 of five prizes, including the jury prize at Tangier National Film festival. The film has been broadcasted on France Televisions, Moroccan 2M TV, and screened at festivals in France, Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Italy, Sweden, and Costa Rica.

Company Profile

Iris Prod is a Moroccan audiovisual production company whose mission is the audiovisual production and provision of services for the benefit of the audiovisual press. It is in charge of the shooting of reports, news, documentaries, magazines, TV shows, institutional films, and event reports.

Wendigo Films is a French company founded in 2006, dedicated to the production of creative documentaries and fiction films. Wendigo Films brings together three producers, Alexis Taillant, Nadège Labé and Nicolas Lheureux. Their catalogue contains approximately thirty films carried by a new generation of French directors as well as international talents.

Post-Production

Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2020

Iva Radivojević

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Madeleine Molyneaux,

Vilka Alfier

Producers



Aleph

USA, Croatia, Qatar / Arabic, English, Greek, isiZulu, Nepali, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Thai / 2021

Runtime: 90 mins

Genre: Identity, Creative Documentary

‘Aleph’ is a travelogue of experience. A journey to find that place of connection, of clarity, of understanding across language, geography, and experience. The thoughts, ideas, and dreams of protagonists in ten countries serve as pieces of a puzzle that lead to what the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges called “the unimaginable universe”.



Inspired by a short story from Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, Aleph is a creative documentary—a hybrid feature film that uses elements of narrative fiction and documentary practice to create multiple angles and points of view. The film zooms into the hyper present to observe and document the ties that bind people across space and time. The experience of meaning, as both revelation and challenge, is what drives the film’s narrative. Through play with uncertainty and serendipity, the film constructs its own narrative.

Contact

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Director’s Note

There is an immediacy built into the structure and process of ‘Aleph’. It’s fueled by chance, serendipity, and uncertainty. There are ten protagonists, ten stories. Each protagonist assigns the next location and the next story. It is here that the film finds its excitement and there that it makes its point. Each country, each protagonist is a new unknown. There isn’t a linear thread to be followed, no one character to attach to. Rather, it’s a flow, a series of possibilities. It is the complexity of the inner world of each protagonist, the texture of their thinking that reveals certain “truths.” It aims to create an internal dialogue and to question ‘was it real’. At my most ambitious, I want to create an experience in which the viewer can tune into that special feeling, a rapture of being alive. To say, “I’m here and I am dreaming”.

Director’s Biography

Iva Radivojević was born in Belgrade and spent her early years in Yugoslavia and Cyprus. She is an artist and filmmaker who currently divides her time between subarctic Alaska, Brooklyn, and Lesbos. Her work presents itself as a collection of fragments (observations, poetry, images, sounds, melodies, languages) which collage together to connect into a ruminating whole. The work circles around displacement and

belonging, seeking to connect to the metaphysical or the magical. Iva’s award-winning films have screened at international film festivals including IFFR, NYFF, CPH:DOX, SXSW, Doc Lisboa, Sarajevo; at museums including MoMA (NY), and broadcast on PBS and New York Times Op-Docs. She is the co-writer and editor of Martin DiCicco’s ‘All That Passes by Through a Window Does Not Open’ (DFI Fall Grant 2014). Iva is the recipient of numerous fellowships, grants and residencies including Sundance Art of Non-Fiction, Guggenheim, Princess Grace Special Project Award, NYFA, Djerassi and Watermill Center.

Company Profile

Ivaasks Films is a production company based in Brooklyn, NY. The company was founded by the filmmaker Iva Radivojević and has produced the award-winning feature documentary ‘Evaporating Borders’ (2014), executive produced by Laura Poitras, an official selection of over 30 international film festivals, including IFFR, SXSW, Hot Docs, DokuFest (Best Balkan Doc); Doc Lisboa (RTP Prize for Best Investigation Film); FIGIF (Coup de Coeur de Jury); Chicago Underground Film Festival (Best Feature); Thessaloniki Doc Fest, Sarajevo, RIDM, Jihlava, Taiwan. et

al. The company has also produced numerous shorts by the filmmaker, including ‘Following Crickets’, ‘Gawking Red’, and ‘Ben: In the Mind’s Eye’.

Picture Palace Pictures, founded in 2004, works closely with emerging and established international artists and filmmakers to develop, produce, and represent films, curatorial initiatives with a focus on creative documentary / hybrid projects that often defy easy categorization. The productions have screened at major international festivals including Cannes, Venice, Rotterdam, Berlin, Toronto, Sundance, BFI / London, BAFICI, Jeonju, Oberhausen, as well as art institutions (Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, MoMA, Whitney, ICA), biennials (Whitney, Sharjah), cinemas, broadcast and streaming platforms. Recent award-winning productions include Kevin Jerome Everson’s ‘Tonsler Park’ (2017) and Bill Morrison’s ‘Dawson City: Frozen Time’ (2016) in association with ARTE-La Lucarne and MoMA, NY. The company is currently developing the fiction feature ‘Hank’ based on the life of poet Charles Bukowski, directed by David Jacobson (‘Down in the Valley’, Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2005), an official selection of IFFR’s Cinemart 2019 and IFP No Borders.

Short Narrative

'A Proposal' by Nadia Al-Khater

'A Simple Cut' by Maha Al-Jefairi

'The Bird's Placebo' by Rami Jarbouï

'The Day Vladimir Died' by Fadi Syriani

'Dear Son' Wassim Geagea

'Hope' by Abdulla Al-Janahi

'Kendila' by Nadia Rais

'The Key' by Rakan Mayasi

'The Last Displaced' by Muhannad Al Sudany

'On the Dock' by Yassine Ouahrani

'Revenge Knows Nothing' by Abdulla Al-Janahi, Abdulaziz Khashabi

'The Shadow of The Butterflies' by Sofia El Khyari

'Smile You Deserve It' by Ibrahim Albuainain

'Under Her Skin' by Meriem Mesraoua

Short Documentary

'Aziza' by Chahine Fellahi

'Shadows' by Rand Beiruty

Short Experimental or Essay

'Abandon' by Farah Shaer

'Don't Get Too Comfortable' by Shaima Al-Tamimi

'The Greatest Wait' by Razan AlSalah

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Nadia Al-Khater

Director / Screenwriter



Justin Kramer

Producer



Contact

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Justin Kramer
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A Proposal

Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Comedy, Drama

A young Qatari man seeks approval from a council in order to marry his foreign fiancé.



Nasser, a young Qatari man, dreams of marrying his American fiancé. He finds himself at the Ministry of Interior, at the department dedicated solely to the review of marriages between Qataris and non-Qataris. There, he must face a panel who decides whether or not he can marry her. The panel digs into his personal life as he continually attempts to defend and justify his hope to marry for love.

Director's Note

In Qatar, to marry a non-Qatari, approval from a department dedicated to such matters is required. I have had to seek out such approval because I am a Qatari woman married to a Swedish man. On one end, my future was in the hands of indifferent individuals with significant power. On the other end, I had to open my private life to a council and plead for their approval. This experience inspired me to write this short. However, I never personally sat before the panel. As a woman, I could not represent myself. Instead, my father sat in for me. Therefore, I based this story on the experience of a friend. 'A Proposal' is a story of a man who must, in a way, propose to a group of old and strange men in his hope to marry the love of his life.

Director's Biography

Nadia Al-Khater is part of a new wave of Qatari filmmakers drawn to provocative, confrontational storytelling. Her early passion for filmmaking inspired her to become extensively involved with Doha Film Institute since 2013. After graduating from Georgetown University, she wrote and directed the short film 'This Is Not a Drill' (2019) with The Film House.

Company Profile

The Film House is a Doha-based film, video, photography and multimedia production company. Its talented team of experienced and creative storytellers, documentarians, animators, photographers, and film directors cover all aspects of projects, from idea generation through post-production. Not a traditional production company, The Film House offers flexible production to facilitate a range of requirements. With a wealth of local knowledge and Qatar's community in mind, the company is primed to foster local talent and to redefine visual storytelling in the region. The Film House is a home for high-calibre international productions that want to come to town and place Qatar in the spotlight.

Production

Short Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

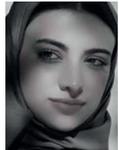
Maha Al-Jefairi

Director / Screenwriter



Jawaher AlMoawda

Producer



Ghouna Jaber

Co-producer



Contact

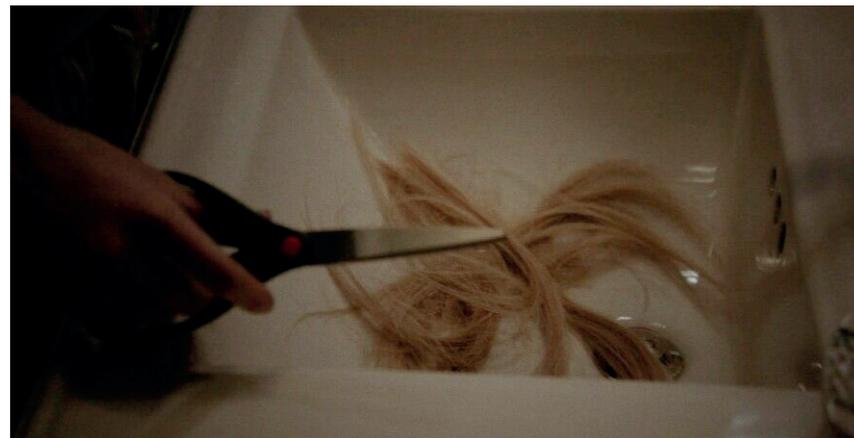
Maha Al-Jefairi
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A Simple Cut

Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Comedy, Coming-of-Age

A young girl goes to ridiculous lengths to hide her haircut from her overbearing mother.



After 14-year-old Kholoud rebels and cuts her hair without her mother's approval, what should be a minor disagreement between mother and daughter turns into a series of mishaps and unfortunate mistakes that end up changing the relationship unexpectedly.

Director's Note

No one wants to disappoint their mother. But eventually, in every young girl's life comes a time where a girl craves more control over the life they're living. Haircuts are a symbol of independence and freedom. But a haircut is never simple. In the Arab world, long hair on women symbolizes beauty and femininity, while short hair masculinity and tomboyishness. Almost always, going up against such beauty standards evokes backlash and unacceptance, especially from mothers. Mothers tend to be very adamant about not letting their daughters cut their hair. I wanted to tell this story because every Arab girl can relate to this story one way or another. Every Arab girl has a story about the first time they cut their hair short. Every cut and every strand feel like an act of defiance against our mothers. Doing such a thing fuels many mixed emotions, as it makes you question yourself, leaving you to wonder if you made the right decision or not. 'A Simple Cut' examines the complicated dynamic between Arab mothers and their daughters.

Director's Biography

Maha Al-Jefairi is a Qatari filmmaker that is passionate about telling stories which reflect modern Qatari society. She believes in films' power to bring people together. She has worked on several short film projects since her university days. Her debut short film 'Me, Myself & A.I.' (2018) examined a person's relationship with technology. 'A Simple Cut' would be her second short film, shedding light on the societal and cultural pressures a young girl faces during her formative teenage years.

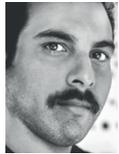
Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Rami Jarboui

Director / Screenwriter



Sarra Ben-Hassen, Meryam Joobeur, Maximilian Becht

Producers



The Bird's Placebo

Tunisia, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation

After his legs are amputated while trying to cross the Mediterranean, Yahya—a young Tunisian man from a poor neighbourhood—has a strange encounter with a bearded man and is reincarnated into a bird.



Director's Note

As a filmmaker, I've always been drawn to explore the lives of marginalized characters placed in a surreal and absurdist environment to explore the harshness of their reality. In my film 'Success Story,' currently in pre-production, I explore the anxiety of the dwindling Tunisian middle class through a character who wakes up one day to discover he can only walk backwards. With 'The Bird's Placebo', I mix animation with comedy, drama and magical realism to explore the youth of the poorest neighbourhoods of Tunis and the extreme desperation that makes them susceptible to risking everything to cross the Mediterranean in search of a better life. 'The Bird's Placebo' is a fable about Yahya, a young Tunisian man who becomes a bird and experiences the absolute escape of flying and leaving without having a direction in mind only to discover you can never really run away from undealt baggage.

Director's Biography

Emerging filmmaker **Rami Jarboui** was born in Tunis in 1990. He graduated in Multimedia at the ISAMM in Tunis, where he studied animation. He directed the short film 'Soup' which received the International Grand Prix 2017 at the Mobile Film Festival in Paris. Also in 2017, he directed the experimental short 'Eidos', which was selected at the experimental festival of Berlin, the alternative film festival of Chicago and the JCC (Carthage Film Days). He is currently in pre-production for his short fiction 'A Success Story', which received funding from the Tunisian Ministry of Culture and OIF.

Company Profile

Instinct Bleu is a Tunisian based film company founded in 2019 by the independent Tunisian producer Sarra Ben Hassen with the Academy-award nominee Tunisian filmmaker Meryam Joobeur. The company aims to employ producer's Sarra Ben Hassen twenty years of experience in the Tunisian film industry to guide the new generation of Tunisian filmmakers through an approach of sincerity and freedom of creation. Instinct Bleu is currently developing shorts, documentaries and features by emerging Tunisian talents, including Meryam Joobeur's first feature 'Motherhood', a co-production with Midi La Nuit (Canada), and Tanit Films (France).

Contact

Sarra Ben Hassen

Instinct Bleu

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Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Fadi Syriani

Director / Screenwriter



Maryam Al Khulaifi, Jana Wehbe, Roland Fischer

Producers



The Day Vladimir Died

Lebanon, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation

Vladimir, an old Beirut resident, checks the obituary page in the local newspaper and attends neighbouring funerals daily. Following an unusual encounter during his “mourning” routine, Vladimir finds himself searching for his own notice.



Vladimir, an old Beirut resident, checks the obituaries page and attends funerals daily. Following an unusual encounter on his “mourning” routine, Vladimir finds himself searching for his own notice. On his journey, Vladimir tries to cope with the decay and gradual disappearance of loved ones. ‘The Day Vladimir Died’ is a poetic interpretation of a troubling quest to deal with the uncertain and probably imagined end to our mortal and ephemeral presence.

Director's Note

‘The Day Vladimir Died’ is an animated personal exploration into the fate of our human mortal condition and a melancholic projection on the main character, of my own questioning, hesitation and fear of the decay, and departure of loved ones. It’s also a journey to find a plausible version of the final destination of the two components that constitute us, mortals— the earthly physical self and the ever-roaming soul. Through Vladimir’s story, I am attempting to comprehend, accept and cope with our decay and gradual disappearance, death and any presumed / potential afterlife. Vladimir is the ultimate substitute for a narrative in the first person, where I would find myself faced with mourning, decay and irrevocable death. It’s a cinematic exercise to comprehend, accept and ultimately handle the loss of life, in other terms the prospect of the fatal absence of family members, friends and other mortals living on, and ultimately leaving this earthly setting. This project is my own poetic interpretation of a troubling quest to understand the unexplainable, the uncertain and probably the imagined end to our mortal and ephemeral presence.

Director's Biography

Fadi Syriani is an animator, a writer / director and a holder of a master’s degree in architecture. In 2016, Fadi founded the Youth Animation Platform (YAP), offering young talents the opportunity to tell their stories through different animation techniques. Fadi is currently working on his animated short film ‘The Day Vladimir Died’. This film has been selected to take part in the Arab Animation Co-production Forum in April 2019, in the framework of the International Trickfilm Festival in Stuttgart, Germany. The film then went on to receive a nomination for the 2020 Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung. His first animated short film ‘Operation Rudolph’ is in the production stage after being awarded the Arab Fund for Arts & Culture (AFAC) Grant for Cinema in November 2015. As a YAP lead mentor, Fadi offers young filmmakers hands-on training to all the elements required for the production of animated films, and different kinds of animated art. YAP was recently selected to receive a grant as part of AFAC Training and Regional Events Grants Program 2019, to support young talents to produce short animated films in collaboration with Metropolis Art Cinema in Beirut, Lebanon.

Company Profile

The Attic is a growing boutique film production house with an innovatory sparkle that intends to bring to light films by emerging talented directors. Based in Beirut, The Attic was founded in 2009. It aims to participate vigorously in the present and future of cinema in the Middle East by focusing on fine and exceptional content without compromise. The Attic produced Elie Kamal’s short films ‘212’ (2010), which was screened at numerous film festivals and received a FIPRESCI award at the Dubai International Film Festival, ‘Talej’ (2012), ‘Revoltango’ (2014), ‘Beirut Terminus’ (2018) and a series of corporate projects.

Ocean Pictures Film production develops and produces ambitious German and international films in close cooperation with filmmakers and partners. CEO & Producer Roland Fischer is responsible for ‘Andersartig’ (2011), which won the FFA-Short Tiger Award, the critically acclaimed short ‘Sechster Sinn, Drittes Auge, Zweites Gesicht’ (2012/2013), which was nominated for the German Short Film Award. He also produced the Berlinale selected ‘The Old Man and The Bird’ (2015) and the award-winning co-production ‘Schwerelos’. Latest projects are the Swiss-German co-production ‘Greater Than’ and the Austrian-German co-production ‘Wannabe’, nominated for the European Film Award 2017 / 2018.

Production

Short Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Wassim Geagea

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Gaby Zarazir

Producer

Dear Son

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Women's Issues, Drama, Social Issues

Our bodies take decisions thus refractions, thus dreams.



Between the vows imposed by the monastic life and the maternity feeling, a nun finds herself facing difficult decisions.

Director's Note

We live in societies that drive us to make drastic life-changing decisions, and we have to coexist with these decisions thinking that they are right and that they will eventually change our lives for the better. Until suddenly, something unforeseen happens, something that births in us unexpected feelings. We are then surprisingly betrayed by our bodies shattering all our values and principles. These feelings reshape our human nature; they remind us of the realities of our lives, knocking down with them the overhead structure we have built all our lives. An internal fight surges in us between the decisions we had made and our ever-changing, unstable human feelings. Do we have the courage and the strength to follow these feelings? To accompany them with their ever-changing nature? Completely overlooking the social repression that we suffer from in our Arab societies?

Director's Biography

Wassim Geagea is an award-winning Lebanese filmmaker, who studied Cinema at the Lebanese University, Faculty of Fine Arts, before pursuing a master's degree in filmmaking at St-Joseph University in Beirut. Wassim's realistic stories and unique style made waves in many international film festivals with his two short films 'My Grandfather's Photo' (2011) and 'Omé' (2019). Geagea is currently filming his third short film 'Dear Son' and developing his first feature film 'Barka'.

Company Profile

Madame Le Tapis (MLT) is a young production house based in Lebanon, founded by the Zarazir Brothers in 2018. With the experience of making short films that are repeatedly awarded at film festivals in all continents (except Antarctica), they develop and produce multimedia projects across various art mediums.

Contact

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Production

Short Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Abdulla Al-Janahi

Director / Screenwriter



Abdulaziz Khashabi

Producer



Hope

Qatar / English

Genre: 3D Animation

The journey of a disabled, but very determined little sea turtle named Aqua as he overcomes every obstacle from nest to sea.



Aqua, the sea turtle, was born with the disability of having one fin smaller than the other. But he doesn't let it get in the way of his life's journey from nest to sea—one fraught with dangerous predators and tragic pollution. This endearingly humorous animation hides a more profound message of perseverance and the importance of being environmentally conscious.

Director's Note

I continuously strive to achieve something different in the everyday things we see, but often do not take notice of. I aim to show the audience that there can be a simple but unique story in my work. Something that you will not usually see or realize. I want my work to have meaning and focus, to teach a valuable lesson, or send a compelling message to its viewers that are aligned to my own values and passion towards the environment and animal welfare.

Director's Biography

Abdulla Mohammed Al-Janahi is a Qatari filmmaker with a passion for making a difference through his work. He firmly believes that through the power of creativity and animation, a person can do magical things. He has written several scripts for feature and short films and has worked on a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes. He is the writer and director of the short film 'Hope', which was supported by Doha Film Institute. In addition, he was the producer of the short film 'The Unlucky Hamster', which won the Made in Qatar Special Jury Award at the Ajyal Film Festival 2019. He is currently working on several upcoming projects for 2021.

Company Profile

GreenTree Production is an animation company based in Doha, Qatar. Founded in 2017 by Abdulaziz Khashabi and Abdulla Al Janahi, GreenTree specializes in creative, magical, and meaningful films, by bringing imagination to life. The company has worked on several projects, including a feature film, short films and a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes.

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Production

Short Narrative
Fall Grants 2020

Nadia Raïs

Director / Screenwriter



Alaeddin Abou Taleb

Producer



Contact

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Kendila

Tunisia, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation, Environmental Issues, Politics

The story depicts a neo-apocalyptic world told through the landscape of the polluted village of Makhboul, whose bay has become infested by a swarm of jellyfish due to pollution.



The story depicts a neo-apocalyptic world told through the landscape of the polluted village of Makhboul, whose bay has become infested by a swarm of jellyfish due to pollution. Because of governmental neglect, the inhabitants give up and let fate take its course, hoping for a divine sign. Except for Boub, an evil archaic merchant, who takes advantage of the proliferation of jellyfish in the bay. Preying upon the inhabitants' sense of guilt as well as the political chaos, he creates a clothing project made from the jellyfish, thereby pretending to cope with the environmental issue. To maximize profits, Boubb's maniacal plan leads him to throw the waste of jellyfish into the sea to proliferate it throughout the Ziak basin.

Director's Note

Since the end of the 1970s, several countries have formed an alliance to fight global warming. Although Tunisia is part of a program aimed at preventing environmental degradation, the implementation of sustainable measures remains insufficient. At the political level, there are no more ecological parties than there are deputies committed to the cause. There are only a few organizations that are called "biodegradable" actors who present themselves with ecological projects but end up disappearing. It's from this context that I staged characters living in the fictional city of Makhboul, whose bay is infested with jellyfish, a direct consequence of pollution. Given this chaotic situation, a character named Boub will try to turn the situation to his advantage by exploiting the carcasses of jellyfish and making clothing out of them. However, during the narration, we learn that the manufacturing of these clothes discards a significant amount of waste into the city's basin, which increases the number of jellyfish. As a result, Boub's business never runs out. The viewer ends up understanding the double game of this character, who makes

us believe in pro-environmental commitments while aggravating the initial situation. In this project, the story is not set up in a narrative way but is presented in the form of a symbolic visual language. In order to talk about the ravages of corruption that degrade the city and deteriorate the environmental situation, a theatrical representation is played throughout the film and tells the story of all its inhabitants. The jellyfish, a symbolic creature in the story, echoes the failing local system, the corruption, and the profiteering of some in the political system. All this to the detriment of the population, which finds itself a victim and often ends up migrating to other places.

Director's Biography

Nadia Raïs was born in Tunis. She has a master's degree in Art Science and Techniques. She has been involved in many artistic exhibitions, residing at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris (2012-2013) and has made several animated short films, including 'L'Ambouba', 'L'Mrayet', 'Survival Visa' and 'Briska'. Her work has been selected at many international festivals, such as the Annecy animation festival and has been awarded.

Company Profile

Key Production Films is an emerging Tunisian audiovisual and film production company founded by the visual artist and filmmaker Alaeddin Aboutaleb. It has produced several short films and commercial projects for several companies and associations and has won awards at film festivals, including the Carthage Film Festival. The company is working on various projects in production such as documentaries, animations, and live-action. It provides services in animation and audiovisual techniques (2D, 3D, and stop motion) for companies and clients in all specialties as well as advertising services—helping them in communicating information and developing methods of communication through different media tools.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Rakan Mayasi

Director / Screenwriter



Rakan Mayasi, Laura Jumel, Francois Morisset, Boris Despodov

Producers



The Key

Palestine, Germany, France, Qatar / Hebrew

Genre: Drama, Politics, Adaptation

The ominous sound of a key opening the Biton family's door is haunting young Edina at night. But when the entire family starts experiencing this same nightmare, they begin to panic. Will Dr. Naftali be able to solve this strange phenomenon?



Moshe and Elza are awoken by the cries of their six-year-old girl, Edina, who frequently hears someone trying to open the front door. After taking her to the psychology clinic, Dr. Naftali prescribes a sedative. Days later, while Edina sleeps quietly, Elza is awoken by the same ominous sound of someone trying to open the door. After talking to building security—and getting no answers—Moshe is awoken in the middle of the night by the same sound. How will Dr. Naftali treat this case?

Director's Note

I belong to the Palestinians in Diaspora, and I have never seen Palestine—the land we lost and the houses that were taken away from us. Our right of return is one of the greatest fears in the Israeli narrative. The film is a genre short that tries to portray our Palestinian plight from a new perspective.

Director's Biography

Rakan Mayasi is an independent screenwriter, director and producer from Palestine, born in Germany and currently based in Lebanon. He studied Cinema, Theatre and Psychology in Lebanon and then received film training with Abbas Kiarostami in South Korea at the Asian Film Academy. He underwent different filmmaking experiences around the globe in writing and directing and has written, directed and produced several short films. His previous film 'Roubama' was an official selection at the Locarno Film Festival in 2012. His latest film 'Bonbone' tackles the phenomenon of Palestinian sperm smuggling from Israeli jails and has world premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017 and is the recipient of 28 Best Short Awards at international film festivals, namely Küstendorf Film and Music Festival (by celebrated Master Filmmaker Emir Kusturica), in the 40th Moscow International Film Festival and the Bucharest International Film Festival.

Company Profile

Based in Paris and Berlin, Salaud Morisset has been producing and distributing short films since 2007. They distributed the 2019 Oscar-Winning short, 'Skin', as well as the latest shorts by Yorgos Lanthimos ('The Lobster') and Jonathan Glazer ('Under the Skin'). Their films, whether produced or distributed, have won awards in the most prestigious festivals (Cannes, Sundance, Toronto, Locarno) and have been broadcasted worldwide.

Arthouse Blockbusters is a film production company based in Germany and Bulgaria. Since its beginning in 2010, the company has devoted itself to the idea of creating author-driven films, which have the qualities to approach a wider audience.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Muhannad Al Sudany

Director



Muhannad Al Sudany,

Mohadeseh Jalilvand

Screenwriters

Huda Al Kadhimi

Producer



Contact

Huda Al Kadhimi

Ishtar Iraq Film Production

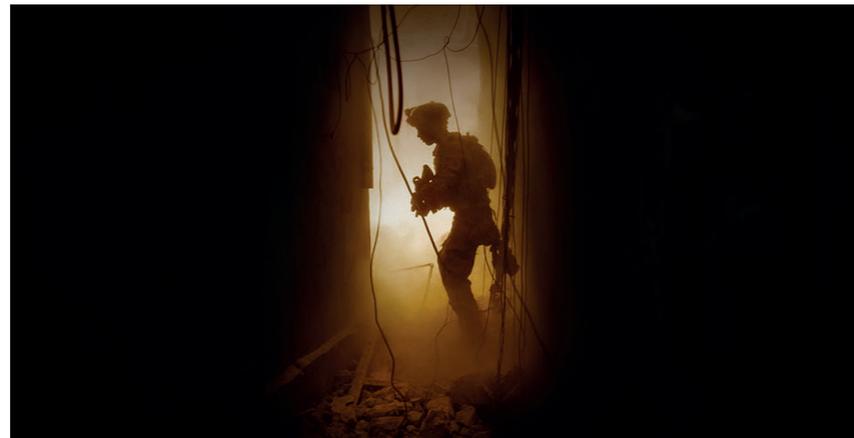
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The Last Displaced

Iraq, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, War

A soldier in Mosul tries to engage with a sniper who wants to take her infant from him.



Director's Note

Fadi attempts to save a child whose mother is a sniper and killer in the Al-Khansaa Brigade of ISIS. She is of German nationality, and this is another sign for European countries to address extremist thought in cinematic language. The film represents "Warrior", son of the south, who realized that death is inevitable. Despite his arrogance, the meaning of immovability within him costs him the honour of his word, preventing him from retreating, even if it costs him his life. I find myself born in the middle of war, growing up in the time of the siege and realizing the occupation, sectarianism, and corruption surrounded me. The ruins of this devastation accumulated inside me, as it became clear to me that this war continues and will be the fate of the coming generations. I'm sure that surviving war is in saving the children through an intellectual birth that enables them to reject war and raise people toward peace—whatever their beliefs, identity, affiliation, nationalism and so on. I want to clarify the extent of responsibility of the person who fought the deadly war in Iraq, and I hope the film will carry an important message.

Director's Biography

Muhannad Al Sudany graduated from sports science and received a diploma in photography from Fiap. He is a photographer and cinematographer, and a member of the Iraqi society of photography, as well as the union of Arab photographers. He is also a member of the Iraqi Film Center, and the Iraqi journalist's union. Muhannad Al Sudany has worked on three feature films and two documentaries and was the cinematographer for 14 short films. He has also directed one short called 'The Last Breaths', which participated in several festivals and workshops and won many international and local awards.

Company Profile

Ishtar Iraq Film Production was established in 2017 by Iraqi young women as a company for producing and distributing independent films in Iraq and the Arab world. IIFP aims to compete with leading film industries in the world and support Iraqi cinematic talents from inside and outside Iraq and encourage and promote Arab cinema talent within the country and around the world. In 2019, IIFP opened a new office in Amman to be a link between the film industry in Iraq and the wider Arab world. With offices in Baghdad and Amman, the company is well-positioned to collaborate with emerging talent and established

industry leaders. IIFP's services include Development, Distribution and Marketing Films, Short, Feature, Fiction, Documentary, and Animation. Ishtar's extensive experience in physical production and financing supported by its team's combined backgrounds in business administration, marketing, and social policy ensure an ethical approach to filmmaking that integrates creative and technical choices with social and fiscal responsibility. The company has produced influential films that participate in most leading international festivals, including the documentary 'Door of The East, Taboo' directed by the Iraqi Director Medoo Ali. Also, the UK- Iraq co-production, and the 2020 Oscar official selection film for the short's category, 'MOSUL 980' by the Iraqi director Ali Mohammed Saeed, which premiered at Berlinale 2019 and screened in most prestigious festivals worldwide.

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2020

Yassine Ouahrani

Director / Screenwriter



Karim Aitouna

Producer

On the Dock

France, Morocco, Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Drama

When a new law is introduced to facilitate his permanent return to his home country, a retired immigrant tries to find new ways to justify his stay in France.



Aziz, a retired immigrant, learns that a new law facilitates his permanent return home without having to stay in France to receive his pension. Afraid of no longer being useful if he returns, Aziz starts to work to keep sending money home. What he is truly afraid of is becoming like the other retirees who go back: invisible.

Director's Note

I was always intrigued by my grandfather's denial of old age. Whether through the denial of his diabetes, or his refusal to accept help with heavy physical tasks, my grandfather never accepted the fact that his age limited him physically or mentally. It wasn't until he told me about his immigration to France in the 1960s that I understood that he had worked all his life to provide for his family. He found in this process a sense of identity, of dignity even. Accepting that he is now incapable, that his body has reached its limits, is for him accepting that he has become useless, almost non-existent. In his eyes, it is like being invisible. From this arose my interest in making this film, particularly my desire to show this rejection of old age that I saw in my grandfather and how he would feel if he were forced to accept it.

Director's Biography

Yassine Ouahrani is a French-Moroccan filmmaker and graduate of Northwestern University. He is a two-time Studio20Q grant recipient for his short narrative films and received recognition from the university's annual Media Awards for his short 'Noor'. 'On the Dock' is his third short film.

Company Profile

Haut Les Mains is a production company based in Lyon, France. The company produces both documentary, fiction and hybrid films for cinema and television with a special interest in international co-production. They have produced Anna Roussillon's documentary 'I Am the People' selected at ACID Cannes, Rotterdam IFF and awarded at more than 37 festivals; David Yon's first feature 'The Night and the Kid' selected at the 65th Berlinale, 'Sans Bruit' by MML Collective presented at FID Marseille and Doc Fortnight at the MOMA, and lately 'Poisonous Roses' by Ahmed Fawzi Saleh which premiered at Rotterdam IFF, awarded more than 16 international awards and Oscar-nominated by Egypt in 2020.

Contact

Haut les Mains Productions

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Production / Post-Production

Short Narrative

Spring & Fall Grants 2020

Abdulla Al-Janahi,
Abdulaziz Khashabi

Directors



Abdulla Al-Janahi, Omar Ashour

Screenwriters

Abdulla Al-Janahi

Producer

Revenge Knows Nothing

Qatar / English

Genre: Animation, Adventure, Nature, Action, Drama

‘Revenge Knows Nothing’ combines two stories in a creative manner showcasing the horrific effects of human injustice and selfish actions on its victims—human or otherwise.



Unfortunately, we live in a world filled with injustice and selfish human actions. ‘Revenge Knows Nothing’ combines two stories in a creative manner showcasing the effects of these actions on its victims—human or otherwise. A helpless child witnesses the horrific actions of war criminals as they destroy his village and kill his beloved family. At the same time, a baby elephant enjoys his last moments before animal poachers attack his mother and kill her for her valuable tusks in front of him. Witnessing these horrific life-changing actions, both the child and baby elephant lose their inner peace and childhood, which is replaced with hate and anger they must carry for the rest of their lives.

Contact

Abdulla Al Janahi

GreenTree Production

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Director's Note

We always aim to be different and to have a unique edge to our work, something that you won't usually see. In addition, we aim to teach a lesson or send a message to our audience through our work. In ‘Revenge Knows Nothing’, we tried to showcase a serious message in today's world. Unfortunately, we live in a world filled with injustice and selfish human actions. We creatively combined two stories showing the effects of these actions on its victims; being human or not.

Director's Biography

Abdulaziz Mohammed Khashabi is a Qatari engineer and filmmaker. He graduated from the University of Portsmouth in the UK and holds a bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering. He has a passion for animation films, ever since he grew up watching cartoons and Disney classics. Abdulaziz aims to become one of the best-known animation filmmakers in the region. He has written numerous scripts including a feature film, several short films, and a 15-episode traditional Qatari series. He is known for his short film ‘The Unlucky Hamster’, which won the Made in Qatar Special Jury Award at the Ajyal Film Festival 2019. In addition, he has directed and produced other short animated films such as; ‘Hope’, which won the best short film award in Ajyal Film Festival 2020, and ‘Revenge Knows Nothing’.

Abdulla Mohammed Al-Janahi is a Qatari filmmaker with a passion for making a difference through his unique work. He firmly believes that through the power of creativity and animation, a person can do magical things. He has written several scripts for feature and short films and has worked on a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes. He is the writer and director of the short film ‘Hope’, which won the best short film award at the Ajyal Film Festival 2020. In addition, he was the producer of the short film ‘The Unlucky Hamster’, which won the Made in Qatar Special Jury Award at the Ajyal Film Festival 2019. He is currently working on several upcoming projects for 2021.

Company Profile

GreenTree Production is an animation company based in Doha, Qatar. Founded in 2017 by Abdulaziz Khashabi and Abdulla Al Janahi, GreenTree specializes in creative, magical, and meaningful films, by bringing imagination to life. The company has worked on several projects, including a feature film, short films and a traditional Qatari series consisting of 15 episodes.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Sofia El Khyari

Director / Screenwriter



Yves Bouveret, Olivier Catherin, Mahacine Mokdad

Producers



The Shadow of the Butterflies

France, Morocco, Qatar / Darija

Genre: Animation

In a mysterious forest, a woman is slowly lured into a daydream as she observes butterflies.



This is a film about the time that has gone, about regrets and fear of our own choices. It is about the refuge that nostalgia provides, like the butterflies that we gaze upon whilst they elegantly flutter about in a glass jar. The film takes place in a mysterious forest, where a melancholic woman is surrounded by butterflies that remind her of memories of a lost love. The butterfly is very important in this film, as it symbolizes memory and desire. Thus, this is an ambivalent bug, colourful, attractive, but also scary when seen up close. The unpredictable path taken by these ephemeral butterflies is a metaphor for this time that is, paradoxically, both regular and irregular, absurd and linear, repetitive and surprising.

Contact

Sofia El Khyari

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Director's Note

'The Shadow of the Butterflies' is a film about the refuge that nostalgia provides, like the reassuring familiarity of the sound of a music box. It is about the butterflies that we hope to capture, then gaze upon whilst they elegantly flutter about in a glass jar. This painful yet gentle sentiment of nostalgia has different names. It is close to the Arabic word "al-Shajan", but the Portuguese word "Saudade" seems to better express the feelings I would like to explore in this film. "Saudade" depicts a mixed-feeling of melancholy, nostalgia, desire and hope. It is such a mysterious and beautiful feeling that I wanted to express it in a film. It is this particular tension that the woman, the main character of my film will experience, as she thinks about the memory of a past love. A love memory is elusive, usually beautiful, unseizable and sadly ephemeral, such as the image of a butterfly. Animation allows me to easily and freely depict feelings and atmosphere. I would like the viewer to experience even the lightest of touches, the slightest moment of sensuality, the most negligible sense of pain.

Director's Biography

Sofia El Khyari grew up in Casablanca and later moved to Paris to study cultural management. It was here that she taught herself the craft of animation. She directed her first short film before obtaining her master's degree in animation from the Royal College of Art in London. Her films have since won several awards and been screened at more than 60 international festivals. El Khyari's recent work has been supported by international institutions such as the animation residency of la Cinémathèque Québécoise (Montréal), AFAC grant (Beirut), and the Annecy animation festival pitching focus (France). El Khyari's life experience has allowed her to develop the sensitive internal universe portrayed in her work. She explores the themes of poetry, science, spirituality, absurdity and surrealism. Within her work, we see a recurring female figure, powerful and troubling, yet simultaneously soft and gentle.

Company Profile

Am Stram Gram was founded by Yves Bouveret in 2015. Prior to that, Bouveret ran three arthouses for ten years at Les Toiles cinema in Saint-Gratien, Paris. Since 2002, he has been the delegate general of the Ecrans VO association, which groups together 25 cinemas in the Val d'Oise region. He has also been the art director of the Image par Image animation festival that has welcomed several international animation director guests such as Isao Takahata, Michel Ocelot and Michael Dudok de Wit.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Ibrahim Albuainain

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Smile You Deserve It

Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, 3D Animation

Two farmers face distinct challenges, despite their contrasting tools and capabilities—a genuine smile makes all the difference.



A forever-smiling farmer proves that hard work and optimism can bring you the fruit of success. The positive demeanour of an ever-optimistic farmer teaches his pessimistic neighbour a beautiful life lesson—that work done with joy and persistence always bears the best harvest.

Director's Note

Filmmaking is the only domain where I can have enough space to show my creativity. It's a combination of skills, creative writing, planning, visualizing, drawing and the list goes on. As a filmmaker, I like to present simple ideas in a creative and a tad complex way. This time, I've touched one basic human expression—a smile—in my short film titled 'Smile You Deserve It'. Every human being deserves to smile. Sometimes smiling and living our lives positively can help us overcome life's biggest challenges. Yes, we all deal with problems, but the only difference is our attitude and how we feel about it. My film shows two farmers working under the same conditions, and how their attitude made a noticeable difference in the harvest. I believe there's something beautiful and significant in the movie that can impact your life. You see, life's simple—every person would gain the reward of their efforts and commitments. Therefore, I want my audience to enjoy the simplicity of life regardless of how advanced we are. We've become so attached to our routine that we even forget to smile. So, smile, you deserve it.

Director's Biography

Ibrahim Albuainain is a writer, art director and filmmaker. He embraced art since childhood, and always wanted to understand the magic and secrets of cartoon animation and stop-motion. As a result, he dedicated many years of research and experimentation in order to make animatable puppets. He has knowledge in puppet making using various mediums such as silicone and foam latex. He is known for his first stop-motion film 'The Last Drop of Oil' (2012) which was an official selection in many film festivals such as the Family Film Festival in Hollywood and Douban Film Festival in Seoul. The film also won an award at Ras Al Khaimah in 2014. In addition, his second film 'Mata Alwusol', a 2D animated short film was an official selection in Douban Film Festival in Seoul. 'Smile You Deserve It' is Ibrahim's third animation film which combines the style of 3D animation and 2D texturing. The film will be submitted to local and international film festivals.

Contact

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Post-Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2020

Meriem Mesraoua

Director / Screenwriter



François D'Artemare

Producer



Under Her Skin

Qatar, Algeria, France / Arabic / 2020

Runtime: 15 mins

Genre: Drama, Coming-of-Age

When her mother forbids her from biting her nails, Sarah must now abide by rules she does not fully understand.



When her mother forbids her from biting her nails, Sarah must now abide by rules she does not fully understand. By regaining control over her actions and projected image, Sarah slowly redefines her attitude towards herself and others.

Director's Note

'Under Her Skin' explores a teen's unusual rite of passage —a rupture triggered and dictated by the gaze of others. The girl must conform to a code she does not fully understand, as she is deemed too young to grasp the real motives behind it. And so, a gesture as trivial as biting her nails becomes her mother's primary concern, perpetuating the blind transfer of an internalized, yet unfavourable mandate. The girl's impeded image awakens her to the gaze she is subjected to, finally inciting her to react.

Director's Biography

Meriem Mesraoua earned a BSc with Honours in Media Industries and Technologies from Northwestern University. Her short films include 'Our Time Is Running Out' (2017) and 'Under Her Skin', which premiered at the 2020 Venice Film Festival. Meriem is currently developing her first feature narrative, 'The Other Wife'.

Company Profile

Les Films de l'Après-Midi has produced and co-produced films from all over the world. Their work spans Bosnia ('Snow' by Aida Begic - Critics' week Grand Prix Award, Cannes 2008, 'Children of Sarajevo' - Mention of the Jury Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2012), Angola ('The Hero' by Zeze Gamboa - World Cinema Dramatic Jury Prize at Sundance 2005), Portugal ('Montanha' by João Salaviza - Venice 2015, 'Saint George' by Marco Martins - Venice 2016), Romania ('one Floor Below' by Radu Muntean - Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2015, 'Alice T'. - Locarno 2018), Bangladesh ('Made in Bangladesh' by Rubaiyat Hossain - TIFF 2019), and Tunisia ('Noura's Dream' by Hinde Boujemaa - TIFF 2019). The company now develops the feature films of Marco Martins, Angela Schanelec, Laurent Herbiet, and Diana Saqueb Jamal, among others.

Contact

Les Films de l'Après-Midi

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Production

Short Documentary
Fall Grants 2020

Chahine Fellahi

Director / Screenwriter



Tawfik Smaoui

Producer



Aziza

Morocco, Qatar / Darija, French

Genre: Women's Issues, History, Identity, Docufiction, Creative Documentary

An autobiographical documentary uncovering the untold stories of women's participation in the resistance movements against colonial occupation in Morocco.



'Aziza' is a documentary on the place that women occupy in the history of decolonization in Morocco. This project interrogates the ways in which official accounts of this history exclude the contribution of women in these struggles. The subject is approached from a personal and autobiographical perspective, the departing point being the recent passing of the director's grandmother. Tracing a genealogy of resistance, the film collects oral testimonies of different generations of women from the director's family.

Director's Note

'As a young child, I was fascinated by the stories of resistance told by the women of my family, often during evening gatherings over long summer nights. It is the recent passing of my grandmother, which has given birth to this film, as I came to realize the fragility of these stories. Morocco, like many other countries, has systematically kept women on the margins of collective memory. Their participation in the struggles against colonial occupation is significantly omitted in national history. The memory of their acts of resistance only lives through oral transmission and familial storytelling. 'Aziza' focuses on private histories within public conflicts and emphasizes the decisive role gender plays in determining that experience. Weaving threads between collective history and personal memory, this project intends to legitimize the historical value of intimate, familial narratives.

Director's Biography

Chahine Fellahi is a Moroccan visual artist and filmmaker based in London. Combining analogue and digital tools, her interdisciplinary practice explores the potential of images to operate as sensual sites of inter-corporeal and inter-subjective encounters. Chahine studied Documentary film and Philosophy, obtaining an MA from Goldsmiths University in 2016 and an MA at King's College London in 2018. Her work has been screened locally and internationally, including at the San Francisco Arab Film Festival (2019) and Kaleidoskop Film festival in Vienna (2020).

Contact

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Production

Short Documentary
Spring Grants 2020

Rand Beiruty

Director / Screenwriter



Jude Kawwa

Producer

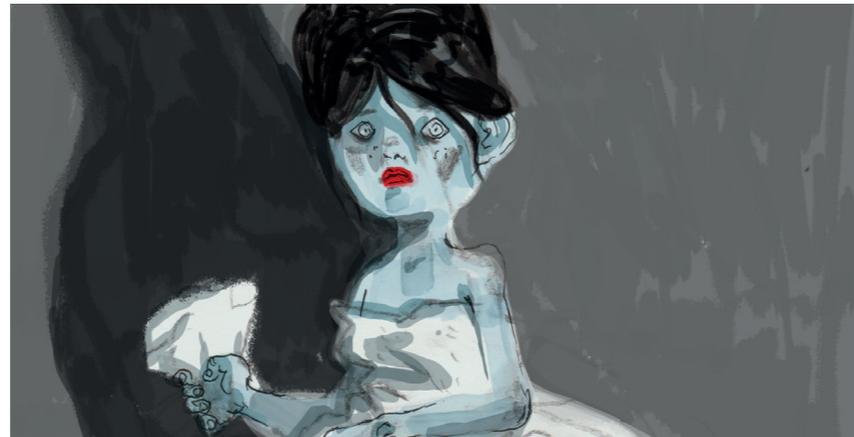


Shadows

Jordan, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation, Creative Documentary

At an overcrowded airport, Ahlam, a 14-year-old runaway mother, fights the lurking shadows that attempt to steal the only dream that will set her free.



It's Ahlam's first time at an airport. But soon, the excitement of travelling to a new place is overshadowed by the melancholy of choosing to leave her past behind, indefinitely. At a large neon-lit departure hall, a blue deer guides us through some of her childhood memories and traumas. Similar to the travellers gruesomely devouring their food at the airport cafeteria, the barbaric reality of her child marriage strikes her. At 14, she gives birth to her child. At the airport security check, memories of her lonesome and painful childbirth take the shape of a fetus assembly line. The once disoriented deer metamorphoses into an unrelenting and fearless creature, ready to take on the world and embark on a new journey to heal and accomplish her dream of becoming a self-sufficient flight attendant.

Director's Note

Opting for an animated documentary allows us to place the subjective world of Ahlam in the centre of the film while protecting her vulnerability. Along with Ahlam's words, the animation takes us through her internal memories and desires, not in a merely illustrative way, but rather in an expressive and metaphorical one. 'Shadows' is set at an airport, a place where Ahlam's past, present and future merge together, a liminal place where she transits from one state to another. Ahlam's story is a portrayal of resilience over victimhood. She refuses to let the suffering she has experienced define who she is and rather chooses to take her destiny into her own hands. Through 'Shadows', we want to share Ahlam's story with young girls around the world in hopes of showcasing the power of bravery and the importance of fighting for one's rights and dreams.

Director's Biography

After obtaining her MA degree in Media Arts from Bauhaus University Weimar, **Rand Beiruty** is pursuing a practice-based PhD from The Konrad Wolf Film University of Babelsberg. She is an alumna of Berlinale Talents, Beirut Talents, Film Leader Incubator Asia, Documentary Campus, Locarno Documentary School and Ji.hlava Academy. She was nominated for the Robert Bosch Film Prize in 2018 and 2020. Beiruty won the ESP Jury Prize for the International Script Pitch at Interfilm Berlin 2016 for her short animation 'Encountering Samir' and the Tribeca Film Institute IF / Then Pitch Competition at CPH:DOX, 2017 for her short documentary 'Nudar'. She's now developing her first feature documentary titled 'Tell Them About Us' that won best pitch at the Reception of German Film Schools during Berlinale 2020.

Contact

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Production

Short Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2020

Farah Shaer

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Abandon

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama

A VR 360° short that tells the story of Khalil and Zalfa, a middle-aged couple, and how they spend their last day in Lebanon before their planned emigration—amid the country's socio-economic meltdown.



A VR 360° short that tells the story of Khalil and Zalfa, a middle-aged couple, and how they spend their last day in Lebanon before their planned emigration—amid the country's socio-economic meltdown. After a long day of preparing, their destination turns out to be much darker than expected.

Director's Note

'Abandon' is a story of a person probing for closure in a culture of corruption and a fixated desire to break free from despotism. Khalil's alienation is directly related to his suffering with his national identity. Lebanon has been heading into the abyss for years, and it finally reached the economic meltdown. This socio-political, economic crisis affected people's lives in violent ways leading to a stark rise in suicide cases and emigration as the middle class is crushed, and the poor become on the verge of famine. The whole country suddenly moved from the hope of change during the start of the October 2019 revolution to the despair of the inability to change in mid-2020. I want to convey this transformation through the eyes of people who are living it using Virtual Reality's total immersion into a tragic moment in one's life in this intense moment of Lebanon's history.

Director's Biography

Farah Shaer is a Lebanese director, actress, and socio-political activist. Her debut short fiction film 'I Offered You Pleasure' (2012) was selected at Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival and Busan Film Festival, among others. In 2015, she was awarded a full-ride scholarship to pursue an MFA in Film Directing at UCLA. Farah's latest short film 'Soukoon' was selected at acclaimed festivals such as Telluride Film Festival, Palm Springs Film Festival, and CINEMED Film Festival. She received several awards on her short films, including the Motion Picture Association of America Award, James Bridges Award of an Outstanding Director, Delia Salvi Memorial Award for Directing the Actors, and UCLA Directors' Spotlight Award. She also co-produced and acted in the Lebanese feature film 'Heaven Without People' which won the Jury Prize at Dubai Film Festival (2017). Farah Shaer is currently in the script development writing stage of her debut fiction feature film.

Contact

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Production

Short Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2020

Shaima Al-Tamimi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Mayar Hamdan

Producer / Editor / Animator



Contact

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Don't Get Too Comfortable

Yemen, USA, The Netherlands, Qatar, UAE / Arabic, English, Swahili

Genre: Creative Documentary

More than fifty years after his death, Shaima Al-Tamimi shares a heartfelt multimedia letter addressed to her grandfather reflecting on her family's journey of migration and resettlement—while examining the intergenerational burden of relocation impacting Yemeni migrants and their descendants for decades to come.



When Shaima Al-Tamimi's paternal grandfather migrated from Yemen to Zanzibar half a century ago to find work, little did he know that migration would continue as a pattern for later generations of his family. Having lived through a deadly revolution in the 1960s, he fled back to Yemen with family, including Shaima's father. Fast forward 55 years and five countries later, she is a member of a generation of Yemenis who have grown up confused, marginalised and deprived of opportunities to thrive due to the limitations of being a Yemeni passport holder. This film fuses archival images, found footage, animation and sound design to create a multimedia letter to the director's grandfather, reflecting on the migration and resettlement of her family following his death. Family photos, archival materials, and self-portraits place the viewer in-between time and space, calling attention to the collective feeling of statelessness and sense of being, felt by Yemeni migrants and their descendants. This introspection attempts to heal intergenerational trauma, creating space for a new and more nuanced narrative of Yemeni migration.

Director's Note

'Don't Get Too Comfortable' is a continuation of a long-term photo project that acknowledges and appreciates legacies rooted in a painful past felt by Yemeni migrants and its implications for a new generation of Yemenis living outside of their homeland. My approach to this work has been largely informed by archival materials and photographs. Objects such as my grandfather's expired British passport also connect to the collective experience, speaking to the hopes and dreams of all Yemenis with shared migration histories. Documenting the stories of new Yemeni migrants is critical to ensuring their visibility in their new host countries and guaranteeing their access to essential support and services. Understanding their stories within the larger historical context of Yemeni migration opens opportunities to collectively discuss issues of identity and trauma associated with voluntary and / or forced relocation. Through this work, I hope to draw attention to ongoing Yemeni migration, encouraging greater recognition of our stories and fostering space for collective healing among our community. It is important for our voices to be heard, and more important for us to be in control of our own narrative.

Director's Biography

Shaima Al-Tamimi is a Yemeni-Kenyan visual storyteller based in the GCC. Her work explores themes such as migration, identity, and social issues through introspection and a deeply-rooted documentary approach. Using photography, film, audio and writing as mediums, she merges historical and family archives with present-day portraits and visuals to create vivid narratives. Challenging mainstream and linear notions of identity, her work offers unique perspectives into the lives of her subjects and calls for a more nuanced understanding of native experiences. Shaima is a 2020 Social Justice & Photography fellow with Magnum Foundation, which resulted in the multimedia video film 'Don't Get Too comfortable' and a former participant of the Arab Documentary Photography program through which she completed her project 'As If We Never Came' in 2019. She was also one of the forces behind the 2020 global 'Prints for Yemen' sale with Inti Bint, collaborating with 14 Yemeni Female artists to raise funds for farmer families to grow crops sustainably in the rural parts of Yemen. Shaima is also a long-term contributing member to Everyday Middle East.

Production

Short Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2020

Razan AISalah

Director / Screenwriter



Emilie Dudognon, Ghassan Fayad

Producers



The Greatest Wait

France, Canada, Palestine, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Politics, History, War, Creative Documentary

Zei finds herself trapped in cyberspace in an impossible, yet eternal return to Palestine. Disembodied by the virtual, she interconnects Haifa, Beirut, and Montreal in the 1940s, 1990s and 2020s. Returning home to her body, Zei discovers a new way of existing in the world.



Zei loses her body in cyberspace and finds herself trapped in a city that bears an uncanny resemblance to her grandparents' home but denies they ever existed. She floats in photorealistic locations she cannot enter and navigates through an immersive depth that denies her senses. Only when Zei begins to witness the injustice of her own entrapment, does she regain physical sensation. Excavating her own inherited and living memory of exile pixelates the panoramic image of Haifa to a glitchy 3D triptych city, a collage of the many places Zei lives between today. Zei moves in place again, with a new understanding of how to inhabit space—shifting from gazing at the world to being in the world. Her exile transforms from a national identity to a political commitment to decolonize this place, wherever that may be.

Contact

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Director's Note

For the past three years, I've been recording experimental films inside Google Street View, exploring a virtual return to Palestine and the aesthetics of land reclamation in a virtual space. In 'The Greatest Wait', I approach the land as a form, inextricably linked to my body, weaving (non)narratives that blur the two at a fundamentally material level to circle back on the cultural, social and political. I use the cinematic form, and specifically virtual reality, because it connects physical space to the projected image. This formally manifests the tension between colonial and indigenous worldviews, between the Euclidean image and the immersive environment, between perspectival depth and spatial depth, between embodiment and disembodiment; inhabiting space by being in the world versus gazing at it.

Director's Biography

Razan AISalah works across a range of image, text and installation practices investigating the politics of dis/appearance of places and bodies in colonial image worlds—photographic, digital, virtual—breaking these thresholds of view into elsewhere here—where colonialism no longer makes sense. She is a 2020 Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) Grantee and Sundance New Frontier Story Lab Fellow and Grantee. Her work has been exhibited internationally in festivals and galleries, including Rencontres Internationales du Documentaire de Montréal, HotDocs, Melbourne, Glasgow and Beirut International, Sharjah Film Forum, Blackstar Film Festival, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Boston Museum of Fine Arts & Sursock Museum. Razan teaches Moving Images and Intermedia at Concordia University in Tiohtiá:ke / Montreal.

Company Profile

IDA.IDA is a production company for auteur films and artists' projects, based in Paris. It was created by Emilie Dudognon, in 2005, in order to answer the specific production needs of films at the crossroads of cinema and art. IDA.IDA's first international co-production, Ouroboros by Basma Alsharif, opened in Locarno in 2017.

Kngfu produces content for all screens and platforms spanning different genres, including documentary, fiction, games, apps and VR/AR/XR. Our projects share common values: a strong social message, a diverse and inclusive cultural blend and a singular approach to storytelling and treatment. Since its foundation in 2005, the company's work has been dedicated to meaningful and offbeat forms of storytelling that use new tools and technologies and has gathered numerous awards and recognitions internationally. Through the years, we have collaborated with broadcasting platforms, social and cultural institutions, research and academics, and content producers who are passionate about exploring new territories. Based in Montreal, Kngfu builds partnerships both locally and internationally, multiplying bridges between cultures and countries.

TV and Web Series

'The Closet Sessions - Season 2' by Ahmad "Satti" Ibrahim

'The Exchange' by Nadia Ahmad

'Locals. Qatar.' by Saud Al Thani, Stephen Ochsner

'Mornings in Jenin' by Annemarie Jacir

'Oddity Tales from a Strange Land' by Ahmad Samara

'Rise of the Mad Cat' by Meshaal Al Abdulla, Ibrahim Al Abdulla

'Traditional Qatari Songs' by Aisha Al-Jaidah

'Zyara - Season Five' by Muriel Aboulrouss

Production

Web Series

Spring Grants 2020

Ahmad “Satti” Ibrahim

Director / Producer



The Closet Sessions (Season 2)

Jordan, Qatar / Arabic, English / 2020

Runtime: 10x10 mins

Genre: Music, Youth, Creative Documentary

A music web series that documents and showcases the diversity of the music scene in Jordan and the wider Arab region.



‘The Closet Sessions’ concept existed ever since hip-hop artist and director Ahmad “Satti” Ibrahim used to record his songs at the beginning of his career inside his closet, for best acoustic results. ‘The Closet Sessions’ is a web-series with a high-production value and a cozy feel, where local, regional and international artists come and experiment with genres in a walk-in closet. This concludes with quality-recorded acoustic live music sessions, accessible to the world on social media platforms. From indie ballads and ethnic folk, jazz, rock and electronic sets, ‘The Closet Sessions’ crew paint a canvas of musical colours for everyone to explore. Along the process of highlighting the layers of Jordan’s multicultural music scene, comes the regional and international music projects that complement the overall canvas of the current scene. ‘The Closet Sessions’ universal concept is not new, but it is the first of its kind in the Middle East, uplifting the musical scene and contributing to the universal dialogue of cultural production.

Contact

Ahmad Ibrahim

Mama’s Productions

ahmadsattiyaseen@gmail.com

Director’s Note

For years, I was living two separate lives; one as a musician and the other as a freelance filmmaker. Creating ‘The Closet Sessions’ has given me the opportunity to achieve my dream of combining both of my passions into one world. Establishing myself as a music video director in the region that has limitless music layers compels me to continuously explore in sounds and create in visuals. While the musical audio content in the region is abundant, the visuals are lacking. I am investing my experience in building the strength of visual content to mirror the beauty of the music that the Arab region has to offer. ‘The Closet Sessions’ fulfil my desire to add to the cultural dialogue about music, and to showcase the best of the region in a unique visual character and innovative way.

Director’s Biography

Ahmad Ibrahim, better known as “Satti”, is a Jordanian rapper, songwriter, filmmaker and producer. Satti began releasing his music in 2011, which led to fruitful collaborations with many peer musicians in Jordan, the Arab region and the world. As a carpenter, Satti got involved in film in Jordan as an art assistant / construction manager, then as a props master. After that, he became a production manager and assistant director in over ten feature films shot in Jordan. Satti directed his own music videos and just wrapped the second season of ‘The Closet Sessions’ music web-series. Satti started his own production company Mama’s Productions in 2018.

Company Profile

Mama’s Productions is an independent music production company founded by Ahmad Yaseen AKA Satti, focused on quality indie music documentation, striking visuals and innovative audio perspective.

Development

TV Series

Fall Grants 2020

Nadia Ahmad

Director / Producer / Screenwriter



Anne Sobel, Adam Sobel

Screenwriters



Contact

Nadia Ahmad

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The Exchange

Kuwait, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Based on a True Story, Women's Issues

Two trailblazing women disrupt the corrupt boys club of Kuwait's banking industry as the Gulf War looms in this late 1980s period drama inspired by actual events.



Kuwait. 1988. In two years, the country will be invaded by Iraq, but Farida is currently embroiled in a more personal drama—her bank account is draining fast. Recently divorced, Farida's already a pariah in her social circle. Now, to support herself and her daughter, Farida must get a job. Farida's cousin, Muneera, is a trailblazer who works as a clerk on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. Usually an impenetrable boys club, Muneera's panache sustains her on the trading floor. Farida, desperate to pay her daughter's private school tuition, turns to Muneera for help. Ever the negotiator, Muneera exploits Farida's vulnerability by soliciting insider information. But in doing so, she opens the door to a competition with her cousin. Farida outmanoeuvres Muneera and leverages her stock tip into a job for herself on the Exchange. A competition is stoked. Family rivalry fuels their success, and the cousins rise through the ranks of the cutthroat financial world. But their paths diverge when Farida uncovers a network of industry corruption—which Muneera is benefitting from. Farida becomes a whistleblower. Muneera seems headed for jail. And then, Saddam Hussein sets Kuwait's oil fields alight. Kuwait on the brink threads through Farida and Muneera's arcs, revealing women struggling to set their country in a new direction while fighting for their own personal freedom.

Director's Note

I am an only child raised by a single mother during the 80s and 90s, a pivotal time for the Gulf and its women. My mother talked me into becoming a producer when I was thirteen. I told her I wanted to be an actress and she said: "You can be more than an actress. You can pull the strings". My mother buried her creativity because she wasn't applauded for it growing up. And when she did grow up, a little too fast, she had me to think about. My mother was my only provider, and she did it by becoming one of the first women in the booming industry of investment banking. The other woman was her cousin, with whom she shared an underlying sense of competition since childhood. Together they broke barriers with two different approaches. In this series, I want to explore how different women contributed to the same movement. Whether it be in banking, sports, politics, or education, Kuwaiti women were fighting for their rights in every sector and asking—does being a progressive female mean you have to act like a man, or can you embrace your femininity while still looking "strong" in the workplace?

Director's Biography

Nadia Ahmad is a media professional and human rights activist from Kuwait whose work spans four continents. Nadia's professional experience in the last 15 years intersects broadcast media, theatre, cinema, community development and alternative education. She initiated and launched sustainable development programs in Kenya, Yemen, Lebanon and Kuwait. Nadia is a co-founder of the LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA), the first non-profit arts academy in Kuwait, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020. She is also a board member and acting director of LOYAC Lebanon. Nadia is best known for her work on TV, having hosted the leading prime time talk show in the Arab world, 'Kalam Nawaem' on MBC 1 for five years.

Development

TV Series

Fall Grants 2020

Saud Al-Thani

Director



Stephen Ochsner

Co-Director / Screenwriter



Fahad Al-Attiya,

Julia Shaginurova, Galina Bott

Producers



Contact

Julia Shaginurova

Caravane Earth Ltd.

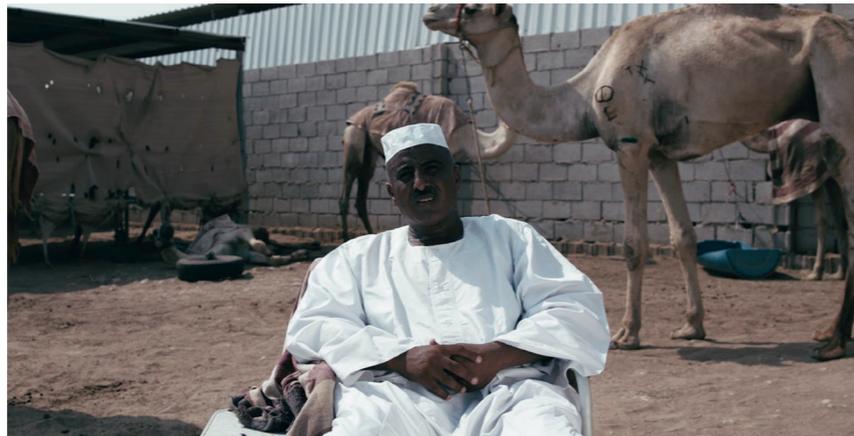
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Locals. Qatar.

Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Creative Documentary

A hyper-inclusive look into what responsibility and sense of belonging mean in a place where 90% of the population are guests.



In this web series that underlines unity between people, five radically inclusive episodes feature expatriates alongside prominent Qatari public figures, reflecting the day-to-day reality of diversity. By inviting guests of the country to speak as locals, we are promoting a sense of belonging that is unique to the world.

Director's Note

The series underlines stark contrasts between the skyscrapers of Doha and the desert grasses of Al Aamriya. It is not shy in displaying all that has been gained in Qatar over the past 70 years, nor does it refrain from reflecting on that which is being lost. Locals of all professions, genders and backgrounds talk about dreams, responsibility, depression, anger, tradition, and progress. Five radically inclusive episodes feature expatriates alongside prominent Qatari figures to reveal diversity while preserving a unified voice. Interviews are shot where each person feels at home. Natural lighting allows us to capture essential beauty in each face, and our questions provoke a conversation from the heart. The term "locals" carries a meaning of belonging. When non-nationals speak as locals in Qatar, the majority of today's population (guests) become part of the national discourse.

Director's Biography

Saud Al-Thani graduated from Princeton University with honours concentrating in Near Eastern Studies and receiving certificates (minors) in Medieval Studies and Translation and Intercultural Communication. He has subsequently worked to serve the country in varying capacities, ranging from a researcher in solar energy, to an analyst in smart cities. 'Locals. Qatar.' is his debut work in film.

Stephen Ochsner is a screenwriter, actor, film and theatre director born in Colorado, USA. Captivated by Russian theatrical heritage at the age of nineteen, Stephen moved to Moscow to study acting and work in theatre. There he took up a multifaceted creative career sharing his time between acting, developing artistic projects, directing and writing.

Company Profile

Caravane Earth is an international foundation whose mission is to practice and promote ethical entrepreneurship and wellbeing through art, craft, architecture, agriculture, and education. We work towards positive systemic impact in social, cultural, and ecological realms. Our team is a global fellowship of artists, tutors, thought leaders, diplomats, film & theatre makers and experts in water, agriculture, green energy, and architecture. The ultimate purpose of our activity is to empower local communities by reviving artisanship and vernacular architecture, as well as revitalising local ecosystems. Caravane Foundation's creative divisions produce theatre, film, performance, architecture, and events. Our artistic endeavours are driven by ethical principles that prioritise human relationships rather than expressions of individual ego.

Development

TV Series

Fall Grants 2020

Annemarie Jacir

Director



Ismail Khalidi, Naomi Wallace

Screenwriters

Alison Sterling

Producer



Contact

Alison Sterling

alison@ignitionfilms.org

Mornings in Jenin

Palestine, USA, UK, Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Drama, Family, Politics

Beginning in Palestine in 1947, 'Mornings in Jenin' centres on the intertwining lives of three siblings who make starkly different choices in the face of turmoil and conflict. This deeply human chronicle is a searing exploration of friendship, love, courage, and hope.



Philadelphia 2001. Amal lives an unremarkable life with her daughter, Sara, but mother and daughter are becoming estranged through Amal's attempts to bury the past. Then Amal receives a phone call, a call that she has been both dreading and anticipating for the last 30 years. The next day a man arrives at the house, a 50-year-old Israeli named David. This encounter forms the framework to go back to the Nakba of 1948, where the lives of Amal and Yousef are torn apart when their brother Ismail is snatched by an Israeli soldier (and is brought up as David). Over the course of the following 50 years in Palestine, Lebanon, and the USA we see how the paths of the three siblings intertwine and collide in painful and dramatic ways—the painful exodus from their home near Haifa; the growing closeness of Amal and Yousef as they suffer the loss of both parents; in Shatila camp in Lebanon when Amal loses her husband; at an Israeli checkpoint when David the IDF soldier encounters his brother Yousef; and ultimately on Amal's return to Palestine, and the refugee camp in Jenin, some 30 years after her departure. Amal finds a final moment of redemption and acknowledgement, as well as a rekindling of the love and understanding between her and her daughter.

Director's Note

'Mornings in Jenin' appealed to me instantly as a Palestinian story told on both an epic and a human scale. But, equally importantly, I was drawn to the story of three siblings, flawed and real, whose lives have been formed by the reality of our existence—all the cruel moments and the beautiful ones. From the beginning of our exile in 1948, and in each and every country we have ever lived, we have been suffering a collective trauma and a great pain, yet also nurturing a tradition and spirit of revolt. This is a story that resonates with me because of the insistence that even at the most defeated and desperate moments in our lives, there is hope. Working on this project with two writers I greatly admire—Ismail Khalidi and Naomi Wallace—is very exciting to me. It made sense to imagine 'Mornings in Jenin' as a multi-episodic series as it allows the freedom to move through the decades, as every generation inherits something from the past, and also moves forward forging something totally new.

Director's Biography

Annemarie Jacir has written, directed and produced over sixteen films. Two of her films have premiered as Official Selections in Cannes, one in Berlin and in Venice, Locarno, and Telluride. All three of her feature films were Palestine's official Oscar entries. Her short film 'Like Twenty Impossibles (2003) was the first Arab short film in history to be an official selection of the Cannes Film Festival and continued to break ground when it went on to be a finalist for the Academy Awards. Her second work to debut in Cannes, the critically acclaimed 'Salt of this Sea' (2008), went on to win the FIPRESCI Critics Award and garnered fourteen other international awards, including Best Film in Milan. Her second feature, 'When I Saw You', won Best Asian Film at the Berlin Intl. Festival, Best Arab Film in Abu Dhabi and Best Film in Amiens, Phoenix, and Olympia, and garnered a nomination at the Asian Pacific Screen Awards. Her most recent film 'Wajib' (2017) won 36 international awards, including Best Film in Mar Del Plata, Dubai, Amiens, DC Film Festival, Kosovo and Kerala and Jury Mention at the London BFI Festival.

Company Profile

Ignition Films is a UK-based production company founded and run by independent film and television producer Alison Sterling. Credits include 'Flying Blind' and a host of award-winning short films. Other development projects include 'Burnt Grass' with Katarzyna Klimkiewicz, a co-production with Metro Films in Poland with development finance from the Polish Film Institute.

Development

TV Series

Spring Grants 2020

Ahmad Samara

Director



Ahmad Samara, Alaa Alhussan, Alaadin Qaraqish

Screenwriters



Alaa Alhussan

Producer

Contact

Alaa Alhussan

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Oddity Tales from a Strange Land

Jordan, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Fantasy, Adventure, Politics, Psychology

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.



Set in the MENA region, 'Oddity Tales from a Strange Land' is an episodic TV series, where human behaviour is explored, such as denial, love, gluttony, revenge, greed, and bravery, all while following the adventures of our protagonist, Aya. A coming-of-age girl who's born in a small village in the Upper Galilee of Palestine. Aya's youth was stolen when her mother passed away when she was seven years old, and she had to take care of her father and little brother. In this series, the line between realism and fantasy is blurred, with magical realism and the escapist narrative spread throughout and exhibited in the contemporary Middle Eastern context. The series is composed of six stories / episodes: 'The Green Bird', which is the pilot episode, and talks about the bird that comes back to the village where Aya lives to take its revenge. 'Rum' is when Aya gets involved in a war between the Jinn and the humans. 'Al Rasd' which is the monitoring or the finding of hidden gold by using Jinn. 'The Fennec', which is the white Arabian fox that helps Aya find water for her village. 'Al Zar', a festival in Egypt that opens the door to the world of the dead. And 'Nos Nsais', the half-crippled human who kills the Ghoul.

Director's Note

Since 2003, with the war on Iraq, and many other downfalls (such as economic disparity and lack of political liberty) happening in the Arab world, we have lost every sense of life. In this context, the entertainment industry has also focused on these events, with an almost exclusive industry focus on politics and war. The main purpose of this TV series stems from my belief that we can, and should, be telling more stories that tackle politics, religion, love, philosophy and psychology, while reviving and bringing back all the bedtime stories, tales and mythologies we used to hear when we were younger—creating this fantasy world for both adults and children equally—a spark for a cultural rebirth in our region. The different stories in this series will involve multinationals, and will be based in different countries within the Arab region, showing the different cultures and background for each one of them.

Director's Biography

Ahmad Samara is an independent filmmaker who fell in love with the magical world of filmmaking and music during an uncertain time in his life. For years he felt that the cinema was a place where you can revive things you love and would like to immortalize. Ahmad has now more than ten years of experience in directing, writing and producing commercials and music videos, as well as fiction and non-fiction films. He continues to work towards putting Jordan and the Middle East on the map of the film industry worldwide.

Production

Web Series

Fall Grants 2020

**Meshaal Al Abdulla,
Ibrahim Al Abdulla**

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Rise of the Mad Cat

Qatar / English / 2022

Runtime: 10 x 10 mins

Genre: 3D Animation, Comedy, Fantasy

The adventures of a stray cat named Chimbir and Casper the goldfish as they team up and take on the world in an effort to establish their scientific tech empire!



In a wasteland, Chimbir the stray cat walks through garbage-filled alleyways, one of many hungry cats trying to fill their bellies with a decent meal.

Suddenly, a sparkle from afar catches his eye, and upon following it, he finds an abandoned mansion. Venturing inside, Chimbir discovers what seems to be a laboratory. While roaming through the scientific equipment, he spots a cure for his hunger—a little fish swimming in a bowl. In anticipation of his newfound feast, Chimbir takes out his knife and fork, but just before he can tuck in, the goldfish abruptly introduces himself as Casper!

Director's Note

This series is a side story derived from a mobile video game project 'To Meteora'. The story is created for an international audience by Qatari entrepreneurs. The aim is to expand the web series into many seasons to reach various media channels and penetrate the US box office as a movie. 'Rise of the Mad Cat' is a reflection of various human talents and potential that are living in the wrong time or place—however, certain events can be life-changing.

Director's Biography

Meshaal Al Abdulla and Ibrahim Al Abdulla are Qatari entrepreneurs who graduated from business school in the U.K. They began writing video games and animation content in 2015, as well as scouting team members and participating in various international conferences related to the entertainment industry. In 2018, they founded Digit Ink studio.

Company Profile

Digit Ink W.L.L is a gaming and animation studio founded in the state of Qatar in 2018. Their vision is to become a Qatari ambassador in the international video games development and animation industry. The company aims to craft high-quality games and animation for various media and gaming platforms under the motto "combining minds together shapes greatness". They are currently working on a mobile video game for iOS / Android platforms as well as 'Rise of the Mad Cat', an animated series inspired by the game's story.

Contact

Meshaal Al Abdulla /
Ibrahim Al Abdulla
Digit Ink W.L.L
info@digitink.net

Production

Web Series
Spring Grants 2020

Aisha Al-Jaidah

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Khoulood Al Ali

Producer

Traditional Qatari Songs

Qatar / Arabic / 2022

Runtime: 10 x 4 mins

Genre: Animation, Music, Children, Tradition

A series of lovingly-animated traditional Qatari children's songs—modernized to appeal to the kids of today.



English language children's songs are everywhere these days, and our kids know them by heart, singing them on every occasion. Everyone knows "Baby Shark" and "Five Little Monkeys". They went viral online with their animated colourful style. Qatar's traditional children's songs are sadly fading away by time, and that's where our project comes in—to keep these songs in hearts and minds, with new beats and colourful animations to appeal to the kids of today.

Contact

Aisha Al-Jaidah
Blue Penguin Animation
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bluepenguinanimation.com

Director's Note

We grew up listening to the recitations of our grandparents through our childhood, which still remains in our memories. Sadly, today our cultural heritage is being ignored by the new generation, not because of the accessibility, but because of the lack of development of presenting the information, whether it's a song or a story, etc. Today, with easy access to all the media platforms, it has become very competitive to stay up to date with the latest trends and meet the standard of quality kids demand. This is why we would like to represent our traditional Qatari songs in a more contemporary way that appeals to today's kids. What will remain unchanged are the lyrics, which are the most important link to the heritage we want to preserve. By doing this, we are at the same time educating the kids of our culture. For example, the English version of the song "Rain Rain, Go Away" it is shown that the rain will mess up your day, whereas in our culture we welcome the rain and sing to it with joy. So because of the limited and outdated content available today, we decided to take action ourselves, by preserving our tradition, educating the kids about our culture and giving our grandparents the nostalgic moments they deserve.

Director's Biography

Aisha Al-Jaidah began her animation career professionally in 2010 at Al Jazeera children's channel as a senior animation producer, animating the first animated children's series created by a local in Qatar. With the scholarship awarded by the Supreme Education Council of Qatar, Aisha has pursued her dream to study animation and managed to graduate from Kingston University London, as the first Qatari citizen to hold a BA Hons in Illustration & Animation. This achievement has motivated Aisha to create and run her own animation company and hopes to show audiences the creativity and inspiration Qatar has to offer.

Production

Web Series
Spring Grants 2020

Muriel Aboulrouss

Director



Denise Jabbour

Producer



Zyara (Season Five)

Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2020

Genre: Creative Documentary

In five-minute episodes, 'Zyara' manages to engrave parts of its subjects' souls, some of their stories and most of all—their emotions.



An award-winning web series created by Muriel Aboulrouss and Denise Jabbour, produced by Home of Cine-Jam—'Zyara' is an Arabic word that means "visit" or "encounter". In this series of poeticized portraits featuring authentic emotional stories of resilience from people living in Lebanon, 'Zyara' highlights people who transcended their greatest challenges in life and kept moving forward with faith and positivity. We believe that we are here on a visit and we don't know how short it is. We believe that we need to learn from each other, respect one another and focus on what brings us together, as our tagline says— "Life is a beautiful Zyara".

Contact

Denise Jabbour
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denisejabbour@gmail.com

Director's Note

'Zyara' the doc series was born five years ago, and since then it has evolved in its form and content to become a powerful healing tool promoting beauty, oneness and resilience. Through its audiovisual language, 'Zyara' bypasses judgment and allows people to connect emotionally. We strive to abolish victimization and to remind our future generations of their strength and the beauty of their dreams. 'Zyara', through the topics it tackles in its episodes and the debates it creates not only online and in festivals but in schools as well, is targeting the delicate age bracket where childhood issues are brought back to the surface. In that stance, youngsters are faced with a choice: to express their unresolved issues in a safe space, thus taking a path towards healing, or to keep their experiences bottled up, which, in the long run, leads to complexes. 'Zyara' is working hand in hand with schools and educational institutions who offer this safe and essential space for expression. It's lending its support to their mission in helping this rising generation speak up about its potential pain and turning expression into a tool for social healing. We look forward to our motivational journey with the youth to ensure a better future for humanity. 'Zyara' was born to promote oneness and compassion among the human family.

Director's Biography

Muriel Aboulrouss, an award-winning cinematographer from Beirut, Lebanon, is the first woman to work as a cinematographer in the Arab World. Her numerous cinematography credits include the award-winning documentaries 'The Oil Spill', 'Lesson in History', 'Mercedes' and 'Ya Omri', all by Hady Zaccak. She won the Best Cinematography award at the Arab Screen International Awards for 'The Shower', a short film by Michel Kamoun, with whom she also shot his first feature film 'Falafel' (Best Film at Namur film festival 2006). She shot another Lebanese feature film 'Stray Bullet'. Recently she has contributed to the biographical documentary of Mahmoud Kaabour featuring his grandmother 'Teta Alf Marra'. 'Stray Bullet' won Best Cinematography at Namur Film Festival and Best Arab Film at Dubai film festival (2010) while 'Teta Alf Marra' snatched the audience award for best documentary at Doha Tribeca Film Festival, Docs Box Damascus festival (2010-2011) and in London international film festival. Muriel is also the cinematographer for 'Shankaboot', the first Arab web series produced by the BBC trust fund and Batouta films, 'Shankaboot' won Reflet d'Or for best web series fiction at Geneva film festival in 2010 and again won the digital Emmy award in 2011.

Company Profile

Home of Cine-Jam is an association for humanitarian arts. Their main objective is to inspire and induce social and emotional healing through authentic short films or series.

A full list of projects funded by the Doha Film Institute is available at
www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/projects/grants

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