

Qatari filmmakers praise the role of Qumra in developing and promoting home-grown talent

- *Networking with global film experts is one of the most important features of Qumra, say Qatar's emerging talent*
- *Directors agree that Qumra offers a unique learning platform for Arab filmmakers and takes Qatari stories to global audiences*

Doha, Qatar: 18 March 2019: Young Qatari directors with projects at Qumra 2019, the industry incubation event by the Doha Film Institute, have endorsed it for the new learnings and wealth of networking opportunities offered. They praised Qumra for its vital role in developing and promoting the local creative industry, and offering a dedicated platform that allowed them to connect with some of the best in the global filmmaking community.

Hamida Issa's *Places of the Soul*, the first Qatari documentary feature screening in the work-in-progress segment of Qumra 2019 is about her journey as the first Qatari woman to travel to the Antarctic in hope of a sustainable future before returning to Qatar in search of inspiration to make positive change. "This film documents the environmental, the spiritual, and the personal," said Hamida.

She continued: "I think Qumra has a huge role in helping young Qataris – especially women – to tell their stories to the world. The advice I'm getting from people in the industry about my film is really helping me now that I'm in the editing phase. After that, I want to get my film out there and I hope that the connections I'm making here will help me to do that."

A.J. Al Thani, who is presenting her new feature-length film project *Khuzama*, said: "I have attended every edition of Qumra and the experience I have gotten from the initiative is really amazing. I brought my latest film, *Khuzama*, to Qumra last year because I really wanted to strengthen the central character of the film – a Bedouin girl who is thrown into a world of turmoil and challenges. I got some brilliant feedback from the industry professionals and then reworked the character completely.

"I'm back at Qumra this year with a project that is much more developed than it was previously, with the aim of getting it financed. For me, Qumra has helped me become more confident as a filmmaker through the feedback and encouragement I receive here."

Nouf Al-Sulaiti, producer of *Khuzama*, agreed that the opportunity to meet people in the film industry at Qumra is extremely valuable. "For me, it's all about networking," she said. "I have attended previous editions of Qumra and met some amazing people who have been in constant touch enquiring about the status of my projects. It's great to make such important connections in the industry."

Hend Fakhroo, director of feature film in development *Behind Closed Doors*, said: "My film will make its audience work very hard as much of the narrative happens off-camera. So, I'm here at Qumra this year for reassurance and feedback that the story will travel and appeal to audiences across borders. Qumra is a great opportunity for me to get feedback on my work that will help me refine it – there is no other

learning platform like it in this part of the world. Qumra has made me more enthusiastic about pursuing my career in film with confidence”

Filmmaker and visual artist Khalifa Al-Thani’s *Border*, short film in development is about a Middle Eastern man’s experience through airport security. “It’s a study of judgement,” said Al-Thani about his film. “I am here at Qumra for the second year with this new film and I want to understand what I need to do to develop the story further. This initiative is an amazing opportunity for young Arab filmmakers to learn from global film experts and contribute to the future development of the industry. It’s an exciting time for us as we start to see critical and commercial success of films from the region.”

The fifth edition of Qumra brings together more than 150 acclaimed filmmakers, industry professionals and experts to nurture 36 Qumra Projects – by first and second-time filmmakers that are in various stages of development. The six-day event takes place 15–20 March at Souq Waqif and the Museum of Islamic Art, and features Qumra Master Classes, Qumra Talks and screenings in the Qumra Masters and New Voices in Cinema series.

On the schedule for tomorrow is a Qumra Masters screening of Alice Rohrwacher’s *Happy as Lazzaro* – at 7 PM at the Museum of Islamic Art. Further details about ticket prices and sales for the screenings are now available on www.dohafilminstitute.com.

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Note to Editors

About Qumra

Directors and Producers attached to thirty-six projects in development and post-production are selected to participate in the event. They will include a number of emerging filmmakers from Qatar, as well as recipients of funding from the Institute’s Grants Programme. The robust programme will feature industry meetings designed to assist with propelling projects to their next stages of development, including master classes, work-in-progress screenings, bespoke matchmaking sessions and tailored workshops with industry experts. This creative exchange will take place alongside a programme of public screenings curated with input from the Qumra Masters.

The event is organised in three main sections: The **Qumra Master Classes** are daily sessions; each led by one of the Masters. The participating filmmakers have full access to these sessions, which are also open to accredited industry guests to attend in an observational capacity.

The **Qumra Meetings** are a series of one-on-one meetings, workshops and tailored mentoring sessions between representatives from the selected projects and seasoned industry experts.

The **Qumra Screenings** are open to the public and feature projects funded by the Institute through its grants and co-financing initiatives, as well as a series of films chosen by the Qumra Masters accompanied by Q&A sessions.



The Arabic term 'qumra' is popularly said to be the origin of the word 'camera', and to have been used by the scientist, astronomer and mathematician Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham, 965-c.1040 CE), whose work in optics laid out the principles of the camera obscura.

About Doha Film Institute

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the local film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Youth Film Festival; and Qumra. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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