
Grants Catalogue 2016

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

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Now in its sixth year, the Doha Film Institute Grants Programme is past the big five-year mark, solidifying our core commitment to identify and support emerging talents from across the world, and nurture the next generation of filmmakers.

Our goal was to strengthen the foundations of a thriving film industry in Qatar, and to extend our support to emerging filmmakers from across the Arab region and beyond. During this period alone, I am proud to say that we have been able to support 315 diverse global projects from 56 countries, with over 80 percent coming from the Arab world. These are stories that not only represent our voices, but ones that embrace diversity to highlight key challenges facing our shared global humanity.

I am encouraged by the first- and second-time filmmakers in our latest round of grants who approach these issues with an unequivocal creative curiosity. Their passion for storytelling is only matched by their directorial vision, and it is that unique combination in projects that are challenging, creative and thought-provoking that we aspire to support.

While providing the platform for new cinematic voices, we are also looking to build a culture of universal storytelling with films that resonate across all cultures. We want to empower talented young people by helping them tide over the challenges they face in fulfilling their creative aspirations, and encourage the creation of compelling content.

The resulting 58 projects come from 24 countries this year and join our grantee alumni in telling stories that help us understand each other and foster a greater appreciation for the people and the world around us. They cover a broad range of subjects and represent some powerful new voices in cinema. We are especially proud of the high quality of Qatari projects represented, some from established names and others from emerging young talents, and we are delighted to assist them in pursuing their filmmaking ambitions right here at home in Qatar.

Two of our grantees from this year were selected for screening in the 2016 Cannes International Film Festival's official selection, alongside four older grantee projects, which I think is testament to the strength of our Grants programme, the exciting new filmmakers emerging from our region and beyond, and the high quality of the films we are pleased to be able to support.

Our Grants programme aims to seek out original voices in film, encourage creative interaction among the filmmakers, and develop a community of filmmakers around the Doha Film Institute alumni. Selected projects are also offered creative development support by the Institute's professionals throughout the life-cycle of the films. Through the growing Qumra platform, year-round development opportunities, and support in connecting grantees with the practical needs of their projects, we aim to form long-lasting, productive relationships that will bear value well into the future.

As we look onwards to our first decade, it gives me great confidence to witness the remarkable strides made by our family of filmmakers, who are redefining Arab and world cinema, and making their presence felt on the world stage. We feel honoured to support them in bringing their powerful stories to life, and contribute to the development of a sustainable film industry in Qatar and the region.

- Fatma Al Remaihi
CEO, Doha Film Institute

Doha Film Institute
Grants Team

Hanaa Issa, Director of Strategy and Development

Khalil Benkirane, Head of Grants

Delly Shirazi, Grants Senior Coordinator

Meriem Mesraoua, Grants Coordinator

Wesam Said, Grants Coordinator

Vanessa Paradis, Grants Assistant

Feature Narrative

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Whispering Sands

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Zanka Contact

Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Muayad Alayan

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Rami Alayan

Screenwriter / Producer



Contact

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A House in Jerusalem

'Bayt fi Al-Quds' / Palestine, Qatar / Arabic, English, Hebrew

Genre: Drama, Fantasy

Interests: Politics, Psychology, Social Issues

A Jewish American family finds it hard to adapt to their new home in Jerusalem after they discover the grave of a young Palestinian girl.



In the hope of fulfilling their life-long desire of living in the Holy Land, a Jewish American family move to Jerusalem, where they buy a house that was once the property of Palestinians. Shortly after they settle in, they discover the grave of a young Palestinian girl in their new garden, which dates to the 1940s. Their hopes for a utopian life begin to crumble as seven-year-old Rebecca finds it hard to adapt to her new home, and is increasingly haunted by the ghost of the dead girl.

Director's Note

I grew up driving with my father through the West Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Baq'a and Talbiya to get to school in the old city. My father used to narrate stories that painted in my imagination how life there was when Palestinians still lived there before 1948. Today, years after my father passed away, I still take that same road, and, like all Palestinians, I see the juxtaposition of life there today with what once was. It is here that the story of this film is set. It explores how the new residents of the Arab houses deal with the past and its phantoms through denial, rejection, cognitive dissonance, distortion and, in rare cases, acknowledgement. Questions about truth and justice are best answered by children because they are innocent and pure. Through the story of a young Jewish American girl who has just moved to Jerusalem with her family and her discovery of the ghost of a Palestinian girl of the same age, who lived with her family in the same house before 1948, the film explores the innocence with which children approach one another before they are corrupted by the fears and prejudices of their parents.

Director's Biography

Muayad Alayan is a film director, cinematographer and producer based in Palestine. His directorial debut 'Love, Theft and Other Entanglements' (2015), which he also produced, had its premiere in the Panorama section of the Berlin International Film Festival. It was nominated for the First Feature Award and has since been distributed in more than 20 territories. His first short film premiered at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in 2009 and went on to screen at more than 60 festivals. He also co-directed and produced the documentary 'Sacred Stones', which won the Al-Jazeera Channel Award in 2012.

Company Profile

Co-founded by Muayad Alayan and Rami Alayan, PalCine Productions is a film production company based in Bethlehem, Palestine. PalCine started out as a collective of Palestinian filmmakers and artists coming together to produce their own audio-visual collaborations and productions. It soon expanded to offer experience and skills to other local and international productions, non-profit organisations, communities and institutions seeking to produce audiovisual projects in Palestine. PalCine's projects range from documentaries and narrative films to commercials and music and educational videos, and several of its films have won international awards.

Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

hajooj kuka

Director / Screenwriter



Steven Markovitz

Producer



Contact

Big World Cinema

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A Kasha

Sudan, South Africa, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 72 min

Genre: Politics, Satire

Interests: War

An offbeat Sudanese love story set in a time of civil war.



Adnan is a revolutionary war hero whose love for fighting and his AK-47 are rivalled only by his feelings for Lina, his long-suffering sweetheart. When Adnan is late to return to his military unit after leave, the army commander launches a “kasha” to round up truant soldiers. Distracted by Lina, Adnan is caught off guard and makes a run for it. He joins up with Absi, a lover-not-a-fighter type who is dodging the kasha. Together, these two unlikely friends plot ways to reunite Adnan with his gun – and with Lina. Through a series of wry and humorous incidents over 24 hours, ‘A Kasha’ explores life and love in rebel-held areas of Sudan.

Director's Note

‘A Kasha’ is an offbeat and humorous love story set in a time of war – but the war is in Sudan and it is happening right now. In the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile region, our lives are saturated with the rhetoric and ideology of war and revolution. But the people here are also trying to live normal lives – there are gatherings and music, romance and laughter. I find the juxtaposition of big philosophical ideas around revolution with peoples’ simple lives very compelling; I want to explore the collision of these two worlds.

Director's Biography

hajooj kuka is a filmmaker from Sudan. kuka’s 2014 feature documentary, ‘Beats of the Antonov’, had its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it won the People’s Choice Documentary Award. The film has been broadcast on POV, screened at more than 60 festivals and won seven international awards. kuka also trains and works with young filmmakers across Sudan.

Company Profile

Led by Steven Markovitz, Big World Cinema was established in 1994 and has produced, co-produced and executive-produced short and feature-length fiction and documentary films. The company’s award-winning projects include ‘Stories of Our Lives’ (winner of the Teddy Award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2015); ‘Beats of the Antonov’ (winner, Toronto International Film Festival People’s Choice Documentary Award in 2014); ‘Viva Riva!’, which was selected for the Berlin and Toronto International Film Festivals; and ‘Congo in Four Acts’, which was selected for the Berlinale, the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam and the Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival. The company has an extensive production and distribution network across Africa.

Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Yahya Al Allaq

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Amerli

Iraq, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Road Trip

An epic journey. A daring escape. The story of two siblings who must walk through the mountains and forests of Northern Iraq and escape ISIS to find their way to safety.



Mosul, 2014. Ten-year-old Zainab and her 14-year-old brother, Yousif escape after ISIS militia attack their village and kill their parents in their house overlooking the Tigris. They try to escape by walking to Amerli, the city where their grandparents live. During their lengthy and dangerous journey, the siblings get lost in the mountains and valleys, and find themselves alone without shelter, food or water. Yousif grows frustrated with Zainab, who is unable to understand the gravity of the situation. Later, they are captured by an ISIS leader, who tries to sell Zainab in a slave market. Will Zainab be able to escape from this dark and dangerous situation? Will she and Yousif get to Amerli safely?

Contact

Iraqi Independent Film Center

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Director's Note

After I earned my Master of Filmmaking degree from the New York Film Academy in Los Angeles in 2014, I returned to Baghdad. With ISIS occupying the city of Mosul, I assisted displaced Iraqis and met many women and children on the run. Among them was a young girl, almost ten years old and all alone. Her name was Zainab. I asked her why she was on her own; she did not answer me and walked away. Later, someone told me that she was from Mosul, that her parents had been killed by ISIS, and that she was trying to reach Amerli, where her only living relative, her grandfather, lived. While she was travelling, ISIS captured her together with other women to sell them in the slave market, but she managed to escape. I was shocked by Zainab's story; I cannot imagine what she must have gone through.

Director's Biography

Yahya Al Allaq was born in Baghdad. In 2014, he obtained a master's degree in filmmaking from the New York Film Academy in Los Angeles. He has worked as First Assistant Director on Mohamed Al-Daradji's 'Ahlaam', 'Son of Babylon' and 'Iraq: War, Love, God and Madness'. He has directed three short films, including 'My Name Is Mohammed' (2010) and 'Cola' (2011), which won prizes at the Beirut International Film Festival and the Gulf Film Festival. More recently, he took part in the Iraqi 35mm Short Film Workshop, where he wrote and directed the short film 'War Canister' (2013).

Company Profile

The Iraqi Independent Film Centre (IIFC) is an institute based in Baghdad. The first organisation of its kind in the country, it is at the forefront of the establishment and development of the Iraqi film industry, bringing authentic, unique and thought-provoking cinema to international audiences while promoting honest storytelling aside from the international media. Since it was launched in 2009 by Mohamed Al-Daradji and Oday Rasheed, the IIFC has achieved international recognition and acclaim for its work. With various international co-producers and organisations, the IIFC has produced a variety of feature-length narrative and documentary films as well as numerous shorts, which have received many awards, accolades and nominations.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Kaouther Ben Hania

Director / Screenwriter



Habib Attia, Nadim Cheikhrouha

Producers



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Beauty and the Dogs

'Aala Kef Ifrit' / Tunisia, France, Sweden, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 95 min

Genre: Based on a True Story, Drama

Interests: Identity, Social Issues, Women's Issues

Mariam just wanted to enjoy her night out, but something terrible happens. What can be done when the perpetrator of a crime against you is also the arbiter of justice?



Mariam is a young Tunisian student, beautiful like a flower. One night, all she wants to do is dance in the disco with its shimmering lights, and get to know Youssef, a young man who was staring at her. But something terrible breaks her wings. Three policemen catch her on the beach, outside the nightclub, kissing Youssef. Claiming a routine check, they extort money from Youssef and rape Mariam repeatedly. Despite the trauma and pain, Mariam is adamant she wants to file a complaint before the evidence of the abuse that has stained her body disappears... Supported by the young man she just met, Mariam embarks in a showdown against all the guardians of the set order, fighting for her most basic right: the right to transcribe in black and white in an official report the facts of the crime that will allow her to prosecute the aggressors. Her task is to face the coldness of bureaucracy and the dishonesty of law enforcement. Filing suit will become for Mariam a matter of honour, integrity and tenacity.

Director's Note

Perhaps the hardest thing about a rape is for the victim to speak out loud in the hope of having their voice heard. Paradoxically, nobody listens; instead, they make accusations: "You are not a victim; you are as guilty as the assailants." Along with this grave issue, what also interests me is the "second rape" that is a result the legal proceedings - a form of institutional violence. 'Beauty and the Dogs' is a film made up of nine sequence shots. I feel that this formal constraint is advantageous for this film - it places the audience fully in the action in real time, which will make for an almost unbearable immersion in the events of the story.

Director's Biography

Tunisian director **Kaouther Ben Hania** studied cinema in Tunisia and in Paris at La Fémis and the Sorbonne. She has directed several short films, including 'Wooden Hand' (2013), which had a lengthy and successful run on the international festival circuit. Her documentary film 'Imams Go to School' had its premiere at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam in 2010 and was selected for numerous prestigious film festivals. 'Challat of Tunis', her first feature film, opened the ACID section of the Festival de Cannes in 2014. Her most recent film, 'Zaineb Hates the Snow', shot over years in Canada and Tunisia, premiered in the Official Selection of the Festival del Film Locarno in 2016, won a Golden Tanit at the Carthage Film Festival, and was named Best Documentary at Cinémed.

Company Profile

Since 1983, Cinétéléfilms has been one of the leading production companies in Tunisia and the Arab world. Its latest films have premiered at festivals in Cannes, Locarno, Toronto and Venice, and have been distributed in several countries. Habib Attia has been the managing director of the company since 2007. Working in a context of international coproduction, Attia develops new fiction and documentary projects dealing primarily with contemporary socio-cultural issues.

Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Mohammed Al Ibrahim

Director / Screenwriter



Mohamed Al Hamadi,

Khalid Al Jaber,

Bassam Al Ibrahim

Producers



Bull Shark

'Qirsh El Thor' / Qatar, Bahrain, USA / Arabic, English

Genre: Drama

An up-and-coming investment banker makes his mark in the Arab region's most prominent Islamic investment bank, only to find out that he has been caught in the middle of the costliest embezzlement scheme in Arab history.



'Bull Shark' is inspired by real events that took place during the second wave of economic growth in the GCC, from the late 1990s until 2011. At that time, a sharia-compliant standard for private-equity investment banking allowed for the development of hedge funds to facilitate the infrastructure of mega-cities and numerous other projects in all GCC countries and around the world. When an up-and-coming banker gets hints of foul play from his most loyal investors, he is compelled to attempt to topple a regime stifled by greed, excess and power.

Director's Note

With this film I intend to awaken audiences to a growing trend of malicious greed that destroys any notion of a just-world hypothesis, whether cultural or religious, especially in the Gulf region. Behind a veil of distorted Islamic rhetoric oozed a dark secret that represented the region's worst nightmare – Man's manipulation of a banking system ordained by God. The aftermath of this era dismembered hundreds of families, sparked an attempted revolution, and led to losses in the billions of dollars. The tone of 'Bull Shark' will be one of looming paranoia, akin to classic film noir, with viewers' allegiances repeatedly shifting to the character seen in the best light in any given situation. Finally, the audience wonders whether this is the work of a single powerful man, or that of a collective conspiracy gone awry.

Director's Biography

Mohammed Al Ibrahim's 2010 narrative short 'Land of Pearls' screened at a number of events, including the Gulf Film Festival, the Doha Tribeca Film Festival and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival. He participated in the FEST Training Ground in Portugal. In 2013, he wrote and directed the short film 'Bidoon', which was named best short narrative at both the Abu Dhabi and Gulf Film Festivals. He is currently majoring in Film and Media at the University of California, Santa Barbara. 'Bull Shark' is his first feature-length project as a director.

Company Profile

Innovation Films is a film and television production company whose main vision is to create a solid film industry that exports world-class filmmaking. Past productions include the feature film 'Lockdown: Red Moon Escape', as well as several successful short films; the company also co-produced the American indie title 'KillCam'. Innovation prides itself on creating and nurturing local talent, both in front of and behind the camera, and most crew members working with Innovation are local film professionals or trainees. We actively contribute to local expertise by having interns shadow industry professionals on set and placing trainees on commercials, and short and feature films. Innovation also conducts scriptwriting, producing and directing classes, and weekly acting workshops overseen by Academy Award nominee Scander Copti.

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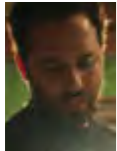
Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Nelson Carlo de los Santos Arias

Director / Screenwriter



Fernando Santos Díaz,

Lukas Valenta Rinner

Producers



Contact

Guasábara Cine

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Cocote

Dominican Republic, Argentina, Germany, Qatar / Spanish / 2017

Runtime: 100 min

Genre: Drama

Alberto travels to his hometown to attend the funeral of his father, who has been killed by a policeman. Upon arrival, his family expects him to participate in rituals contrary to his new religion - and avenge the death of his father.



Alberto, a gardener who works in the city, travels to his hometown to attend the funeral of his deceased father, who has been killed by a policeman. Upon arrival, he finds that there is to be no burial, but instead a three-day ritual to mourn and celebrate his father's death. Now a devotee of the Protestant church, Alberto considers this ritual, with its Catholic and African roots, to be satanic and immoral and wholly against his new belief system. Over the course of the celebrations, Alberto faces setback when his family announces their true desire: that he avenge his father's death. Overwhelmed, Alberto becomes lost in the repetition of small town life, his thoughts confront different ideas of God and the notion of murder presents itself as the only solution that will restore order.

Director's Note

I have always been interested in the origin of the violence in my country - a strange, lurking violence that is almost silent. When speaking about violence or about a crime, it is impossible not to mention morality. In my country, I feel the need to explore the sources of the values that are driving our society at the present time. Where is it? What is it that we are confronting every day? To face a country whose majority has struggled to conceive of itself through social sciences such as anthropology and sociology, among others, I find it necessary to open a conversation analysing our religions - fundamental institutions in the production of morality and values that are always in conflict with each other and themselves. 'Cocote' becomes a platform for the confrontation of these religions, and their attempt to defend themselves.

Director's Biography

Nelson Carlo de los Santos Arias was born in the Dominican Republic in 1984. He attended the Ibero-American University in Mexico, the Universidad del Cine de Buenos Aires and the California Institute of the Arts. After making several short experimental films, his feature-length essay film 'Santa Teresa Y Otras Historias' (2015) had its world premiere at FIDMarseille, where it won the Prix Georges de Beauregard, after which it was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival, the New York International Film Festival, the Venice Film Festival and the Mar del Plata International Film Festival, where it was named Best Latin American Film. He is currently finishing his first fiction feature, 'Cocote'.

Company Profile

Guasábara Cine was created with the goal of producing films that capture Hispaniola - the island comprising the Dominican Republic and Haiti - from unique and authorial viewpoints, emphasising the development of new narratives and identity constructions that can question Latin American aesthetics and, hopefully, cinema in general.

Production Grant

Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2016

Koutaiba Al-Janabi

Director / Screenwriter



Sabine Sidawi Hamdan

Producer



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Daoud's Winter

'Khareef Dawood' / Iraq, Lebanon, The Netherlands, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 100 min

Genre: Based on a True Story, Drama, Road Trip, Thriller

Interests: Identity, Psychology

In war, there are only losers. In life, there is always hope. During the Iran-Iraq War, Daoud deserts his army base to return the body of his deceased friend to his family.



Iraq, winter 1988. Daoud, a young man from Baghdad, is drafted into the war with Iran. At the front, he is assigned a gruesome task at the morgue: sorting the arrivals of dead bodies and organising their transport to their final resting place. For the "martyrs", this means the family home; the "traitors" are dispatched to a mass grave in the desert. Among the dishonoured dead bodies, one man - Ali - is still breathing. When he finds the farewell letter Ali wrote to his beloved daughter, Daoud decides to save the man from this hell and reunite him with his family. He deserts the army and embarks on a dangerous journey to take his new friend home.

Director's Note

'Daoud's Winter' is a film about hope, in which one man decides not to be victim of war; instead, he sacrifices himself in order to save another's life. Set during the Iran-Iraq war of the early 1980s, the film shows the consequences of that meaningless conflict. It explores the effects of the war on ordinary people, on young soldiers and their mothers; it does not show front lines, battles and weapons, but rather the internal conflicts, fear, paranoia and grief that the situation caused for those in Iraq who were trying to carry on with their daily lives. The film is about life and death, about the injustice that marred a whole society. One of my objectives is to portray the importance of friendship, of people pulling together in times of great difficulty. In Iraq, the power that holds a nation together has vanished, and I intend to rediscover this power through hope.

Director's Biography

Koutaiba Al-Janabi was born in Baghdad and studied photography and cinematography in Budapest. He wrote his PhD thesis on the aesthetics of Arab cinema. He now lives in London and Baghdad. Al-Janabi has directed and produced several short films, documentaries and television programmes. Several of his films have won awards for his work as a director and cinematographer. His feature-length debut as a director, 'Leaving Baghdad' (2011), took first prize at the Gulf Film Festival and a British Independent Film Award, and was nominated for the Cinema for Peace Award in 2012.

Company Profile

Created in 2007 and managed by Sabine Sidawi, Beirut-based Orjouane Productions specialises in producing feature-length fiction and documentary films. The Orjouane team is composed of three dynamic women - Jinane Dagher, Renata Rahme and Sidawi. Since 2007, films produced or co-produced by Orjouane Productions include Maher Abi Samra's 'A Maid for Each' (2016), Mai Masri's '3000 Nights' (2015), Danielle Arbid's 'Peur de Rien' (2015), Robert Guédiguian's 'Une Histoire de Fou' (2015), Eric Baudelaire's 'The Ugly One' (2013), Cherien Dabis's 'May in the Summer' (2013), Rania and Raed Rafei's '74: The Reconstitution of a Struggle' (2012), Danielle Arbid's 'Beirut Hotel' (2011), Jihane Chouaib's 'Pays Rêvé' (2011), Maher Abi Samra's 'We Were Communists' (2010) and Dima el Horr's 'Everyday Is a Holiday' (2009). The company executive-produced Sophie Boutros's 'Mahbas' (2015), Olivier Assayas's 'Carlos' (2010), Hany Tamba's 'Melodrama Habibi' (2008) and Danielle Arbid's 'A Lost Man' (2007).

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

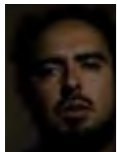
Kiro Russo

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Gilmar Gonzales

Screenwriter



Pablo Paniagua

Producer



Contact

Socavón Cine

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Dark Skull

'Viejo Calavera' / Bolivia, Qatar / Spanish / 2016

Runtime: 79 min

Genre: Coming of age, Docufiction, Drama

When his father dies, a troubled young man must return to his Bolivian mountain village and try to find a life working in the mines.



After his father dies, Elder is forced to live with his grandmother – far away from the city – and learn to be a worker. His godfather, Francisco, helps Elder find his place in a mining company, and the two end up working together. Elder, however, skips work daily. Francisco grudgingly endures this, and his co-workers mock him because of Elder's behavior. They also seem to know some dark secrets about Francisco's relationship with Elder's deceased father – and Elder is curious to know more. When Francisco finds Elder lost in a tunnel that is about to be blasted, he leaves him there – but because Elder survives, the miners see him as good luck. When the miners have to travel far away, the conflict between Elder and Francisco unravels.

Director's Note

I wanted to film a story that presents a portrait of the people I have met in the mines of Huanuni, and of their concerns, not just through its themes, but presenting images taken from their daily life. 'Dark Skull' is an exploration of narrative values with sensory means at a loss in the darkness.

Director's Biography

Director, producer and scriptwriter **Kiro Russo** was born in La Paz, and studied directing at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires. He made the short films 'Enterprise' (2010), 'Juku' (2012) and 'New Life' (2015), winning prizes at significant film festivals including the Festival del Film Locarno, the San Sebastian Film Festival, IndieLisboa, the Festival Internacional de Cine Unam, the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival and the Kaohsiung Film Festival, among many others. Russo's earlier works have a very close relationship to his first feature-length film 'Dark Skull', which is now in post-production.

Company Profile

Founded in 2009 and based in La Paz, Socavón Cine is active in introducing and supporting fresh gazes, new narrative forms and experimental films in Bolivia. In recent years, the company has produced Bolivia's most celebrated short films, including Kiro Russo's 'New Life' (2015), which won a Jury Mention at the Festival del Film Locarno 2015 and was named Best Short Film at the San Sebastian Film Festival, where it also won four other prizes; and Carlos Piñeiro's 'Amazonas' (2016), which had its premiere at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Davy Chou

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Claire Maugendre

Screenwriter



Charlotte Vincent

Producer



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Aurora Films

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Diamond Island

Cambodia, France, Germany, Thailand, Qatar / Khmer / 2016

Runtime: 105 min

Genre: Drama

Bora leaves his home village for the worksites of Diamond Island, a contemporary playground for the rich outside Phnom Penh. There, he finds his mysterious older brother Solei, whom he has not seen in years.



Diamond Island is a symbol of Cambodia's future, a sprawling, ultra-modern paradise for the rich on the river in Phnom Penh. Like many other country boys, 18-year-old Bora is lured from his village to work on the construction of this property developers' dream. There, he forges new friendships and is even reunited with his charismatic older brother Solei, who disappeared five years ago. Solei introduces Bora to the exciting world of Cambodia's privileged urban youth, with its girls, its nightlife and its illusions.

Director's Note

There were two main drives behind the screenplay of 'Diamond Island'. The first was to film the youth of present-day Cambodia, and more specifically, their intense yet cruel relationship with the myth of modernity in a country that, after decades of extreme poverty, is now enjoying the strongest economic growth in Southeast Asia. The second drive was very concrete, and stems from my fascination with Diamond Island, a place under construction that is the perfect symbol of the Cambodia of the future. Every evening, thousands of young people head for this man-made construction that is devoid of memories and is rising up in the midst of one of the poorest countries in the world. And between these two desires was a wish to paint a picture of contemporary Cambodia, of what is actually happening there, which is light years away from the preconceived notions we might have.

Director's Biography

Davy Chou is a French-Cambodian filmmaker born in 1983. 'Golden Slumbers' (2012), a documentary about the birth of Cambodian cinema in the 1960s, and its destruction by the Khmer Rouge, was his first feature-length film. His short film 'Cambodia 2099' (2014), which takes place entirely on Diamond Island in Phnom Penh, was selected for the Director's Fortnight at the Festival de Cannes. He recently completed the feature-length 'Diamond Island' (2016), which had its premiere in the Critics' Week at the Festival de Cannes, where it won the SACD Award.

Company Profile

Aurora Films was founded by Charlotte Vincent in 2002. Since then, Vincent has specialised in making French and international co-productions, including Patric Chiha's 'Domaine' (2009), featuring Beatrice Dalle; Valérie Mréjen and Bertrand Schefer's 'Iris in Bloom' (2011); Leila Kilani's 'On the Edge' (2011); Chiha's 'Boys Like Us' (2014); Evangelia Kranioti's documentary 'Exotica, Erotica, Etc.' (2015); Wissam Charaf's 'Heaven Sent' (2016) and Davy Chou's 'Diamond Island', Aurora's first Cambodian co-production. Aurora Films invests heavily in developing new talent and promoting debut directors.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Bogdan Florian Mirică

Director / Screenwriter



Elie Meirovitz, Marcela Ursu

Producers



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Dogs

'Câini' / Romania, France, Bulgaria, Qatar / Romanian / 2016

Runtime: 104 min

Genre: Docufiction, Drame, Satire

Interests: Identity, Youth

A young man from Bucharest clashes with his late grandfather's vicious world of crime in the east Romania badlands.



Roman, a young man from Bucharest, comes to the countryside near the border with Ukraine with the firm intention of selling the vast but desolate land he inherited from his grandfather. He is warned by old man Hogas, the local cop, that his grandfather was a local crime lord and that his "boys", led by the charismatic and cruel Samir, will not let go of the land – or their smuggling business – without a fight. Roman doesn't give up and the three men clash in a triangle of violence.

Director's Note

Violence has always fascinated me. Not its manifestation per se – that is merely a consequence – but rather the psychological triggers along with a particular set of moral standards that lead certain people to commit actions labelled "crimes". Set in rural Romania, where the law is an abstract, hinted-at notion, 'Dogs' is an emotional and moral labyrinth that has at its core a conflict of biblical proportions, perhaps the oldest of them all: man against man. The story relies on a triangle of men, each in a different stage of moral corruption. All three are imbued with an aggressive, masculine pride that will ultimately lead them to perdition. These three men are only different facets of one character. A story where space, visualised by endless barren fields, is of pivotal importance, 'Dogs' aims to capture a glimpse of a decomposing world devoid of any humanity; a world that revolves around a single entity: the self.

Director's Biography

Bogdan Florian Mirică studied Screenwriting at the University of Westminster, London. In 2011, Mirică wrote and directed his first short film, 'Bora Bora', which was named Best European Short Film in Premiers Plans (Angers, France), and was selected for the Festival del Film Locarno and the Warsaw and Thessaloniki International Film Festivals, among others. Mirică's debut feature-length script, 'Dogs', was selected for L'Atelier du Festival at the Festival de Cannes, TorinoFilmLab's Script & Pitch, and Cinelink, where it won the ARTE Award. The film had its premiere in the Un Certain Regard section of the Festival de Cannes in 2016.

Company Profile

Director and screenwriter Corneliu Porumboiu set up Bucharest-based 42 Km Film in March 2004 to produce cinema, video and television programmes. The company's first autonomous production was Porumboiu's '12:08 East of Bucharest' (2006), which won the Camera d'Or and Label Cinema Europe at the Festival de Cannes, as well as numerous other national and international prizes. 42 Km Film went on to produce Porumboiu's 'Police, Adjective' (2009), which won the Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI Award in the Un Certain Regard section of the Festival de Cannes; 'When Evening Falls on Bucharest or Metabolism' (2013), which screened in the Festival del Film Locarno; the documentary 'The Second Game' (2014), which had its premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival; and 'The Treasure', which won the Un Certain Talent prize in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes and was selected for numerous prestigious international film festivals. Bogdan Mirică's 'Dogs', the company's latest co-production, premiered in Un Certain Regard at Cannes in 2016.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Hicham Lasri

Director / Screenwriter



Mickaël Clouet, Rita El Quessar

Producers



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HEAdbANG Lullaby

'Dharba Fi Alras' / Morocco, France, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 111 min

Genre: Comedy, Drama

A policeman is sent by his dissatisfied superiors to spend a day on a bridge between two warring neighborhoods, where he is charged with ensuring the security of a hypothetical royal procession.



Casablanca, June 11, 1986 – the day of the World Cup. After yet another blunder, embittered cop Daoud is sent by his dissatisfied superiors to spend the day on a bridge between two warring neighbourhoods in order to protect the hypothetical passage of a royal procession. A prisoner of the bridge, Daoud will be transformed by contact with the inhabitants of both villages. He will learn maturity after spending time with a five-year-old child and a mother who upheld her dignity, despite having had her head shaved by the secret police. This apparently normal day made up of absurd waiting, improbable encounters and brutal poetry takes place under the giant shadow of a messianic monarch whose passage disturbs the delicate balance of a motley population.

Director's Note

Time for a day of waiting. Life will be turned upside down for Daoud at the touch of a beautiful five-year-old child, while his mother and the other villagers await the passage of the king as if it were an event of cosmic significance. Unlike my previous films, the unifying thread in 'HEAdbANG Lullaby' is a World Cup victory, an event I experienced very young and which continues to be a happy memory in the otherwise blocked remembrances of Morocco of that time, when the country was like an open prison with very little possibility of escape – except in dreams. I made this film in order to live this hope, to leave this prison where we were kept in mental hibernation, and also to finish up my examination of this period and start a new film series.

Director's Biography

Part of the new generation of Moroccan cinema, writer-director **Hicham Lasri** won critical attention with 'The End' (2011), his first feature-length film, which showed in the ACID Programme at the Festival de Cannes in 2012. 'They Are the Dogs' (2013) looked at the Arab Spring in an atypical way, won 32 awards and acclaim from critics, and also screened in the ACID Programme. 'The Sea Is Behind' (2014) was selected for numerous significant international film festivals, including the Berlin and Dubai International Film Festivals, and screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. 'Starve Your Dog' (2015) had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and was also screened in the Panorama section at the Berlinale. Together with 'They Are the Dogs' and 'Starve Your Dog', Lasri's 'Jahilia, Here, We Drown the Dogs' (currently in post-production) represent a trilogy about Moroccan politics of the recent past. 'HEAdbANG Lullaby' is his upcoming feature.

Company Profile

Launched in 2008, Pan Production is based in Casablanca and has ambitions of producing independent Arab films and reviving the Moroccan cinema and television landscape. Associate producers Rita El Quessar, from Morocco, and Mickaël Clouet, from France, met filmmaker Hicham Lasri in 2009 and produced his short film 'Android' (2011). A few years later, they began to develop feature films like 'The Sea Is Behind' (2014) and 'Starve Your Dog' (2015), which brought them to international attention. After four years of writing and development, the company presents Lasri's 'HEAdbANG Lullaby', a comedy about the absurdity of Arab societies and humanity shattered by fear, subservience and the wait for a king who might pass by. From this premise arises a poetry of sadness and hope arises – hope that does not exclude the joy of being alive.

Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Sara Al Obaidly

Director / Screenwriter



Ania Wójtowicz

Producer



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Hitch 60 (working title)

Qatar, UK, Turkey / English

Genre: Arthouse, Based on a True Story, Road Trip

Interests: Coming of age, History, Identity, Politics, Social Issues, Youth

Two mod girls from South East London embark on a dream holiday but end up on the journey of a lifetime, crossing continents and cultures, and growing up on the road.



Two mod girls from South-East London embark on a journey across continents, travelling away from their peers and the hedonism of 1960s Europe, into unknown territories in the Middle East and beyond. Maureen and Sherry face poverty, treacherous terrain, lecherous men and a transformative education at the university of life while on the road to becoming adults.

Director's Note

What forces decide who we are? Where we go in life? Who we could become, if we made choices outside the path well-trodden? This film is based on the real-life journey of my mother and her best friend, who have inspired me with their stories since childhood. Only now, as an adult wanting to understand more about the world that I live in, have I truly come to understand the significance of their unique, cross-continent expedition in 1963. What strikes a chord with me personally, amid the devastating, war-torn climate of the Middle East today, is the mass destruction of the territory my mother once dreamed of reaching as a young adult; the place she would later return to, to marry my father. While I am deeply saddened that I may never be able to follow exactly in her footsteps, I aim to celebrate this unique moment in history through the medium of film, igniting a passion for cultural exploration and exchange within the hearts and minds of the audience; illustrating how experiences shape who we become; and celebrating those friendships which, once built, can last a lifetime.

Director's Biography

Sara Al Obaidly started her career as a portrait and landscape photographer. Her work has been exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery, London, and was selected by 'TIME' magazine's Lightbox in the best portraits of 2014. Storytelling and poetic imagery are at the heart of Al Obaidly's work. She prefers to shoot in real locations using natural light. Her background in photography has given her a clear understanding of people, as well as human interaction and emotion. Based on the story of her 17-year-old British mother, who had a dream of reaching the Middle East, 'Hitch 60' (working title) will be her first full-length feature film as a director.

Production Grant

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2016

Kasem Kharsa

Director / Screenwriter



Alice Ormieres, Jessica Landt, Falk Nagel

Producers



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I Dreamt of Empire

'Hilimt Bimbritoriya' / Egypt, Germany, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Drama

An Egyptian professor travels back and forth through time in an attempt to save his only son and reclaim the past.



Cairo, 1980. Musa, a brilliant Egyptian professor, cannot move past the grief of losing his only son, Yusuf, an officer who died fighting the Israelis in 1956. Musa has been developing a method to travel through time in order to save his son from death. He succeeds and wakes up during the war – but unexpectedly finds himself in the body of an Israeli soldier named Ben. It's as if Musa has woken up in a nightmare. While Musa looks for his son, Ben takes over Musa's life in 1980s Cairo. Musa increasingly loses his grip on his own identity. Should he stay in the present and reclaim his life, or return to 1956 to complete his mission?

Director's Note

This story is inspired by loss in my own family. During the 1956 War, my grandfather received news that his son, an Egyptian army officer, had been killed in the Sinai by the Israeli army. He suffered a stroke and was never quite the same – it was as if he had lost a part of himself out in that desert. 'I Dreamt of Empire' is also a story about a father who has lost his beloved son, but here he has the unique opportunity to do something about it. This film intentionally starts off with two natural enemies pitted against one another, and could easily become a grand political allegory. But as the story continues we learn that Musa's greatest adversary is not his Israeli double; rather, it is himself. 'I Dreamt of Empire' is ultimately about a man coming to terms with what he has lost, learning to surpass his state of victimhood and grief.

Director's Biography

Kasem Kharsa is an Egyptian-American filmmaker and visual artist based between the Middle East and the USA. His films are inspired by his own fragmented past and are centred around memory, identity and survivorship. His work has been supported by both regional and international funding bodies, and he is a fellow of the Rawi Lab, the Sundance Directors/Writers Lab, and Binger Filmlab.

Company Profile

Founded in 2009 and based in Hamburg and Berlin, Beleza Film is composed of Jessica Landt and Falk Nagel. We produce films and transmedia projects with a focus on personal, character-driven stories. In 2010, Beleza Film presented the film workshop One Day in the West Bank for 10 young filmmakers in Palestine in co-operation with the Goethe-Institut Ramallah. The company produced Eva Pervolovici's short film 'Little Red' (2011), which was nominated for the Berlin Today Award, and co-produced Ali Aydin's 'Küf' (2012), which had its premiere at the Venice International Film Critics' Week and won the Lion of the Future – Luigi De Laurentis Award for a Debut Film. In 2014, Christian Mertens's 'Peter Nagel', a documentary about the painter, was released in cinemas, and 2015 saw the premiere of Cosima Lange's 'Hello I Am David', a documentary about Australian pianist David Helfgott. Beleza Film's current production and development slate includes Mariana Jukica's 'Coke. Champagne.&Cigarettes.' and 'Zoe's List', Kasem Kharsa's 'I Dreamt of Empire', Lena Liberta's 'Play with Friends' and Anna Lott's 'Devilish Christmas'.

Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Mahdi Ali Ali

Director / Screenwriter



iPhone Memory

'Thakirat Al iPhone' / Qatar / Arabic, French

Genre: Docufiction

Interests: Social Issues

In Paris, a Frenchman battles cancer while his wife wants an abortion; a Romani girl looks for someone to adopt her sister; a Syrian immigrant boy tries to survive by acting in the cinema.



This docu-fiction uses the device of a stolen iPhone to depict the struggles of several Parisians, both born-and-bred and immigrants, whose layered gazes generate a map of the multi-faceted French capital. He discovers images of the owner and his pregnant wife preparing to welcome their child into their world. In a teenage gypsy girl's hands, the iPhone captures snaps of her bohemian family's lifestyle in Paris - but then the phone is stolen again. Now it is in the possession of a teenage Syrian refugee, who plunges us into his universe as he documents his wanderings around the arrondissements with spontaneous images of himself and those he meets along the way. These photos and short videos unveil the mysterious lives of the people of Paris, as well as the refugees who have settled in Paris to find a better life.

Contact

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Director's Note

By examining events through the eyes of a juvenile, and setting this feature away from the ground zero of today's Syrian tragedy, I hope to approach this emotional issue from a fresh perspective. The simplicity of the narrative structure is designed to allow the audience to grasp the parallels between the experiences of the characters in the Champs Elysées. My vision for the aesthetic is inspired by the French New Wave, in particular the work of Jean-Luc Godard. The cinematography will be inflected and interpretative throughout, and include flights of surrealism to signal that this is a symbolic exploration of the tragedy rather than a factual representation.

Director's Biography

Mahdi Ali Ali is a Qatari filmmaker who is charged with the training and education of filmmakers. Since joining the Doha Film Institute, he has successfully worked to provide filmmakers in Qatar with comprehensive learning initiatives led by the industry's major players. He is the executive producer and supervisor for more than 30 short films that have been produced by the Institute. He holds an MFA from EICAR, the International Film School of Paris, and has made short films including 'Champs Elysées, I Love You' (2009) and 'The Gulf Habibi' (2011), as well as others for Al Jazeera Documentary Channel and Al Jazeera Children's Channel.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Heinrich Sabl

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Philippe Bober

Producer



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Memory Hotel

Germany, France, Qatar / German / 2018

Runtime: 95 min

Genre: Animation, Drama

Interests: History

In a Red Army hotel in post-World War II Germany, the orphan Sophie grows up. She marries a paratrooper before escaping with another man. An emotional journey through European history.



Germany, 1945. World War II is nearing its climactic end. Five-year-old Sophie and her parents are refugees fleeing from the advancing Red Army. They hide in a hotel, where they encounter Nazi officer Scharf and Hitler Youth member Beckmann. As the Russians come closer, Sophie falls into a lift and is knocked unconscious. Meanwhile, Scharf accidentally kills Sophie's mother and Wassily, a paratrooper, kills her father. Time passes and teenage Sophie works for Soviet soldiers as a kitchen maid in the hotel. Food sometimes disappears, but Sophie finds the culprit: Beckmann, who has been hiding in a corridor beneath the hotel since the war ended. As an adult, Sophie reluctantly marries Wassily and develops a relationship with Beckmann. Decades go by; the Russians leave and Scharf takes over the hotel. Sophie convinces Beckmann to leave, and the pair head for the North Sea, turning their backs on the hotel and its memories.

Director's Note

November 1991, an anarchic time in East Germany. After a 46-year-long presence, the Red Army departs the country. I stroll through an abandoned Russian military airport near Berlin with my girlfriend. That walk was fascinating, but a few years were to pass before the enthusiasm I felt gelled into an idea. 'Memory Hotel' contains precise hints about its context – from the end of World War II until the time of German Reunification – yet in terms of space, the story is set in a hotel that could be any hotel anywhere in the world. The protagonist's main endeavour is to break out of the hotel into a new world that holds the promise of salvation. This story is rooted in a quite classical narrative structure. I have then put a lot of energy into bringing life to the "dead" material of the puppets, making them as credible as possible in order to hold the spectator spellbound until the final frame.

Director's Biography

Heinrich Sabl grew up in the former East Germany in the 1960s, in a small industrial town close to the Polish border, where he escaped the strictures of the world by immersing himself in the world of theatre. He settled in East Berlin during the mid-80s and started directing animated short films, which were screened in key film festivals including the Annecy International Animated Film Festival, the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival and in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival, winning several significant film and animation awards. Most of his films have been broadcast on German television and on ARTE. Currently, Sabl is considered one of the best stop-motion animation directors.

Company Profile

Founded in 1987 by French producer Philippe Bober, Coproduction Office produces and sells bold and award-winning films by directors with strong personal vision, maintaining long-lasting working relationships with groundbreaking European directors Roy Andersson, Thomas Clay, Michelangelo Frammartino, Jessica Hausner, Ruben Östlund and Ulrich Seidl. Coproduction Office's international sales company is one of Europe's best sales entities, differentiating itself through both its outstanding catalogue of carefully chosen gems and the broad exploitation of its films. In the field of film production, Coproduction Office is home to three companies – Essential (Berlin), Parisienne (Paris) and Coproduction Office (Copenhagen) – with which Philippe Bober has worked as a producer on 30 films. Nine of these were selected for competition at the Festival de Cannes, five for competition at the Venice Film Festival, two were in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival, and seven appeared in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes.

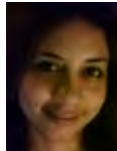
Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Nermeen Salem

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Multicoloured Bahtan

'Bahtan BelAlwan' / Egypt, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Animation, Children, Comedy, Fantasy

Emotionless Bahtan meets hyperactive Felfella and together they save the world from losing its emotions.



Emotionless Bahtan meets hyperactive Felfella and together they discover the secrets behind Bahtan's leather bag, and why he is devoid of feelings. They fight About Ghateet - a failed writer - who steals people's emotions in order to create his artwork. Upon defeating him, they free Bahtan's parents and return people's stolen emotions, thereby restoring the colour to their faces.

Director's Note

'Multicoloured Bahtan' is about emotions: what they are, how we control them and how much we need them. I have worked with children for 10 years as a teacher, and if there's anything that can define and summarise children, it is emotions. Working closely with children made me realise that they have become obsessed with the way they look, and that they lose their childhood too early. This film shows children how to value their emotions and how to be able to choose things based on their preferences rather than on brands.

Director's Biography

Nermeen Salem is a filmmaker and a co-founder of Rufy's Films Company in Alexandria. She studied filmmaking at the Jesuit Filmmaking Workshop, and Theology and Filmmaking at the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, as a Fulbright Scholar. She worked as a primary schoolteacher for 10 years and has written and directed several children films, as well as conducting filmmaking workshops for children at schools, institutions and centres, which resulted in several short children's films.

Company Profile

Based in Alexandria, Rufy's Film Company is an independent film production house that focuses heavily on the quality and the process of making a film, and not only on its commercial value. Our main motivation is our passion for the filmmaking process and our drive to learn.

Contact

Rufy's Film Company

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Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Humaid Alsuwaidi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



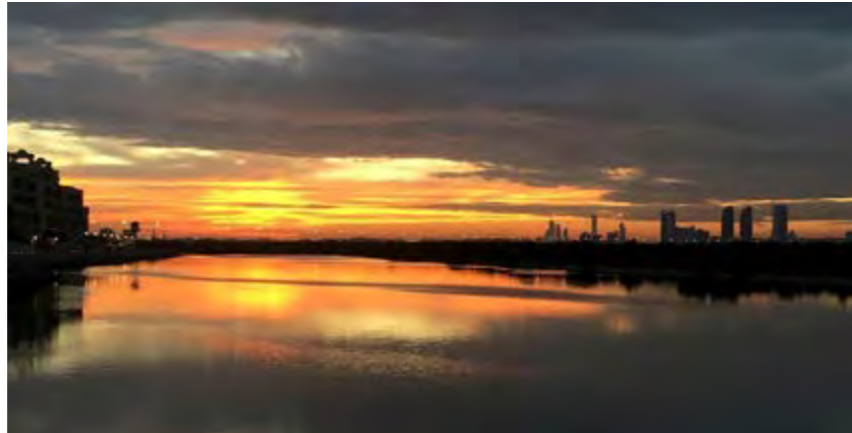
Musk

'Misk' / UAE, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Drama

Stuck between his dying father and his brooding 12-year-old son, Ahmed tries to overcome his inherent cynicism and save the family's crumbling perfume business.



After giving up a promising career in museum management to attend to his ailing father, Ahmed spends his days managing the family's dying perfume business. This sacrifice and his divorce have made him cynical about human nature and this manifests itself in his relationship with Abdulrahman, his aloof 12-year-old boy. Father and son do not see eye-to-eye, and it is as though they speak in different languages. Ahmed is also rather suspicious that his free-spirited sister is back from her travels in Europe to ensure she gets a nice chunk of the inheritance. Suddenly, Ahmed's ex-wife sues to deny him visitation rights, claiming she doesn't want her son to see his grandfather dying slowly.

Contact

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Director's Note

The idea with 'Musk' is to try to capture the universal struggle between fathers and sons. The film explores the theme of heredity, which is very prevalent in the Gulf, and follows the two main characters as they deal with it in their own ways. The intention, however, is to create a narrative that transcends its geographical setting. Letting the performances of the actors dictate the pace of the film and finding within these performances a universal truth is what I hope to achieve. Ever since I was a little boy, I have always wanted to be a father. Making this film - and especially working with the actors - has been the closest thing to having a family of my own that I have experienced.

Director's Biography

Humaid Alsuwaidi was born in Abu Dhabi in 1984. After working in a traditional office job for a few years, he enrolled in the New York Film Academy in 2010. Upon graduating, he worked on a number of short films, both on set and in post-production. 'Abdullah' (2015), his directorial debut, had its premiere at the Dubai International Film Festival. It tells the story of an Emirati boy who loves music while growing up in a very conservative family.

Company Profile

Based in the UAE, 1893 is Humaid Alsuwaidi's personal production company. It specialises in making independent feature films and also aims to expand to making TV commercials. Alsuwaidi's 'Abdullah' (2015) marks the launch of the company. Alsuwaidi aims to follow the style of his idol Francis Ford Coppola to create a family-like filmmaking environment of creative minds in order to tell unique stories. 1893 also provides music composition services for narrative films and television commercials.

Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Bassam Jarbawi

Director / Screenwriter



Shrihari Sathe

Producer



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Screwdriver

'Mafak' / Palestine, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Action, Drama

Interests: Identity

Driven to psychosis by the torture he underwent in an Israeli prison, an ex-basketball champ struggles to reassimilate into society. As reality blurs with his hallucinations, he cannot help but drive himself back into incarceration.



Young Ziad is the star of the Jalazon Refugee Camp basketball team in Palestine. When his best friend is shot dead by Israeli forces, Ziad and his teammates attempt to assassinate an Israeli settler. Ziad is captured and imprisoned, then released 15 years later. 'Screwdriver' is a haunting psychological thriller that follows a hallucinating Ziad as he struggles to adjust to his chaotic new world. Ziad's mental disorder halts his advances with two love interests – Salma, a young woman from the camp, and Mina, a Palestinian-American filmmaker. Ziad becomes suicidal when soldiers imprison a young basketball player; in the dead of night he hitches a ride that will return him to a more familiar life.

Director's Note

Defeating confinement requires breaking mental boundaries rather than physical structures. In this film, numerous real-life stories are woven into a universal narrative of torture and confinement, which magnifies the battle between one's image and its reflection. 'Screwdriver' is a haunting psychological thriller about Ziad, who battles to adjust to his chaotic new world after his release from prison. He is wrapped up in a Kafkaesque struggle of rehabilitation and feels on edge as he fails and unravels; his hallucinations increase until he becomes catatonic, and he grows into a master of self-imposed solitary confinement. His prison is his freedom. He reacts to his open-air confinement with surges of panic and rage, losing control until the line between reality and fantasy is dangerously and permanently blurred.

Director's Biography

Born and raised in Palestine, **Bassam Jarbawi** began working as a photographer during the second Intifada. His photographs produced several exhibits and still documentary *Frequency* (2004). Bassam completed his B.A. in Communication and Political Science at Macalester College, and earned his M.F.A. in Screenwriting/Directing at Columbia University. During his studies at Columbia, he produced and directed short films and music videos in Palestine, the United States and Jamaica. His short film 'Roos Djaj (Chicken Heads)' won Best Film at the Columbia University Film Festival, premiered at New York Film Festival, and won First Prize at Dubai's International Film Festival.

Company Profile

Founded by Yasmine Qaddumi and Bassam Jarbawi, Rimsh Film is a production company based in Ramallah. The company specialises in creating director-driven short and feature-length narrative and documentary films. At Rimsh we develop, finance and produce films, function as co-producers in the Middle East, and provide production services for international producers with projects shooting in the region. We value collaborations with established artists as well as fresh talent that result in visually stunning, award-winning titles. Our goal is to work across artistic platforms with partners in the Middle East to bring inspiring local content to our global audience.

Development Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Mehdi Hmili

Director / Screenwriter



Moufida Fedhila

Producer



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Solo

Tunisia, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama

Interests: Family, Social Issues

Amel is released from prison after an affair. In the lower depths of Tunis, she seeks her missing son, Moumen.



Amel works in a factory in Tunis. She lives with her alcoholic husband Tahar, a former local football star, and their only son Moumen, a talented teenage football player. To convince the boss of the factory to provide her with connections for her son, Amel betrays her fellow workers, who have been organising a strike. Amel meets the connection: Adel, a corrupt, wealthy businessman of ex-president Ben Ali's era, who takes advantage of the situation and abuses Amel. She surrenders to his advances in order to offer her son the opportunity of a lifetime. When the police catch them, the scandal goes viral, and Amel is imprisoned, accused of adultery and prostitution. After her release, she searches for Moumen in the lower depths of Tunis. During her journey, Amel has to face the fall of Tunisian society.

Director's Note

'Solo' is the entanglement of three themes that have always haunted me: family, guilt and redemption. Through these themes I seek to depict and translate the complexity of family existence in a minimalistic way. This story of a fallen family is a way to throw the spectator into the inner life of the Tunisian man of today in this society that is in freefall. 'Solo' is an uncompromising portrait of a society that is unable to get rid of the demons of its past. The context of this Tunisian post-revolutionary society shows how corruption, violence, obscurantism and criminality have taken possession of the mind of the individual. The film is also a way for me to go back to my past as a football player in Tunis, and to film three worlds that I went through furiously and noisily: family, football and the street.

Director's Biography

Mehdi Hmili was born in Tunis and graduated from the Paris Film School. While in France, he directed his trilogy in black-and-white about love and exile: 'X-Moment' (2009), 'Li-La' (2011) and 'The Night of Badr' (2012). His first feature-length film, 'Thala mon amour' (2015), a drama that takes place in the city of Thala during the Tunisian Revolution, was part of the official selection of the Carthage, Rome and Torino Film Festivals. Hmili is also a popular poet in Tunisia, known for his poems against the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. A former football player, Hmili recounts his own story in 'Solo', his second feature-length film currently in development.

Company Profile

Yol Film House is a Tunisian film production company that develops, produces and co-produces short and feature-length films. Our vision is to tell original and moving stories that provide a refreshing challenge for an international audience. The company plays an active role in supporting emerging Tunisian and international talents, and the projects we develop have strong potential for international co-production and distribution.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Narjiss Nejjar

Director / Screenwriter



Lamia Chraibi

Producer



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Stateless

'Bidoune Haouiya' / Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 110 min

Genre: Drama

Henia will give anything to find her mother, whom she has been separated from since 1975. She agrees to marry an old blind man – her chance to return to Algeria. To the old man, it's an opportunity to start over. To his son, it's a disgrace.



Henia will give anything to mend her broken past and find her mother, from whom she has been separated since the conflict between Morocco and Algeria during the Black Demonstration of 1975. After being given an opportunity to assist an elderly blind man, she accepts the offer and eventually finds herself agreeing to marry him. For Henia, this is a chance to get the necessary papers for her return to Algeria. For the old man, it's a chance to start over. For his son, it is a disgrace.

Director's Note

Being a filmmaker in Morocco and a woman puts two very distinct issues back to back. The first is to talk about one's country while looking directly in its eyes; the second to talk to oneself while looking into one's own eyes. It's difficult for me to accept that a man or a woman is a puppet subject to the decisions and pressures of a select few who decide what will be their fate. This is why I make films. My film can be summed up by this statement "The world is a nation in which the superior interests of states stop at the border of the inferior interests of people." This film puts onscreen characters who don't really have free will.

Director's Biography

Born in 1971 in Tangier, Morocco, **Narjiss Nejjar** has made numerous documentaries, authored a novel, directed a trilogy of short films and is a screenwriter. Her first feature-length narrative film, 'Les Yeux Secs' (2003), was selected for the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs at the Festival de Cannes and received numerous honours, including the Bayard d'Or for Best Screenplay. 'Wake Up Morocco' (2005) is her second feature-length fiction film. After participating in 2010 in the Terminus des Anges Collective, she directed 'L'amant du Rif' (2012), which was screened in official competition at several festivals.

Company Profile

Since its conception in 2007, La Prod has been developing fiction in its wider sense, combining imagination and rigour without contest. Initiating major projects with young directors, La Prod has produced various projects, including fiction and documentary films, and programmes, series, video clips and films for television. The company's credits include Hicham Lasri's 'The End' (2012), which screened in the ACID programme at the Festival de Cannes 2012; Mohamed Achaour's 'Un Film' (2011); Narjiss Nejjar's 'L'Amante du Rif' (2011); 'Terminus des Anges' (2011) by Nejjar, Lasri and Mohammed Mouftakir; and Michelle Médina's 'All I Wanna Do' (2011).

Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Bassem Breche

Director / Screenwriter



Ghassan Salhab

Screenwriter



Jana Wehbe

Producer



Contact

The Attic

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The Maiden's Pond

'Birket Al-'arous' / Lebanon, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama

Interests: Identity, Women's Issues

The story of two women trying to maintain and negotiate their lives - with and against each other.



'The Maiden's Pond' tells the story of two women trying to maintain and negotiate their lives with and against each other. Salma survived the difficultities of her past by letting go of any attachments, including those to her daughter. But the past did not let go of Salma, and has returned her daughter to her - defeated, divorced and pregnant.

Director's Note

'The Maiden's Pond' follows the relationship between Salma and Thuraya as it unfolds without culminating in a resolution or confrontation. What connects these two women is the inheritance of loss and pain, handed down through the generations despite action or rebellion. In such a context, verbal communication is impossible, apologies are not available, and forgiveness is not an option. Forgetting, ignoring and surviving might be all that is left - a lesson that goes against the grain in a present that is all too keen on resolutions, endings and moral lessons. Salma reluctantly returns to her state of motherhood, only to discover that option is not available any more. Thuraya returns to her past in search of a trauma that might be resolved, only to discover there is nothing there. Uttering the words "mum" and "daughter" does not end the conflict; it merely exacerbates it. Moving forward often requires letting go of the past, aborting it, and discovering a different self - one that can provide some comfort for the time that remains.

Director's Biography

Bassem Breche is an Emmy Award-winning scriptwriter. He began his career as an actor in Lebanon and the UK, appearing in John Furse's 'Blind Flight' (2003) and Antonia Bird's 'The Hamburg Cell' (2004). His first short film, 'Both' (2007), was selected for the Critics' Week at the Festival de Cannes. From 2009 through 2011, Breche worked on the Emmy Award-winning web-drama 'Shankaboot' as Lead Writer and Online Content Producer. He also worked as a scriptwriter on the award-winning web series 'Fasateen'. In 2013, Breche won the Robert Bosch Foundation Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival for his short film 'Free Range' (2014). He is the director of the screenwriters' collective Scenario Beirut.

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 '2½' (2010), which was screened at numerous film festivals and received a FIPRESCI Prize at the Dubai International Film Festival in 2010, 'Talej' (2012) and 'Revoltango' (2014), along with a series of corporate projects. Currently, The Attic is producing several other promising projects.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Mohamed Jabarah Al Daradji

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Isabelle Stead

Screenwriter / Producer



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The Journey

'Al Rihla' / Iraq, UK, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 82 min

Genre: Drama

Interests: Psychology, Social Issues, War, Women's Issues

As Sara stands on the cusp of committing an unthinkable act, time stands still, giving her an opportunity to witness the consequences of her action. But is this a second chance or an admission of guilt?



Baghdad, 30 December, 2006. Sara, an unassuming young woman, enters Baghdad's central train station with sinister intentions. On the edge of committing a destructive and heinous act, Sara finds her plans are drastically altered, complicated by an unwanted and awkward encounter with Salam, a self-assured and flirtatious salesman. In an unfortunate twist of fate, Salam becomes a hostage in Sara's confused and deluded master plan to blow up the station. Caught up in the chaos of a situation he cannot begin to comprehend, Salam desperately tries to understand Sara's motives and to sway her decision. In a moment of reflection, Sara is given the opportunity to learn about the lives she has been so willing to destroy for others.

Director's Note

The female suicide bomber is invisible, untouchable; an unsuspecting asset to extremist missions. Many are preyed upon by extremist factions operating in Iraq, throughout the Middle East and around the world. We start life innocently, so what changes a person and drives them to commit such extreme and atrocious acts? This film is not intended as a political statement, nor a condemnation or glorification of attacks. It will offer audiences the rare opportunity to engage with a woman swept up in something she and we cannot fully fathom, the implications of which are potentially disastrous. If we do not fully comprehend the causes behind these actions, there will be no end to suicide terrorism. I am fully aware of the sensitive nature of this film; it has been made with great respect for the troubling subject it deals with, detailing a very real and unfortunately frequent scenario of tragic events.

Director's Biography

Mohamed Jabarah Al Daradji

studied in Iraq and the Netherlands before travelling to the UK to complete his Masters degree in Cinematography and Directing at the Northern Film School in Leeds, where he won the prestigious Kodak Student Commercial Award for Cinematography. In 2003, he returned to Iraq to make his first feature film, 'Ahlaam', which screened at more than 125 international film festivals and received more than 30 awards, as well as Academy Award and Golden Globe consideration. His multi-award-winning 'Son of Babylon' (2010) screened at Sundance and the Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the Amnesty Film Award and the Peace Prize. Al-Daradji was named 'Variety' magazine's Middle Eastern Filmmaker of the Year after his documentary 'In My Mother's Arms' (2010) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and won the Asia-Pacific Screen Academy Award for Best Documentary. 'In the Sands of Babylon' (2013) screened at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, where it won the award for Best Arab Film.

Company Profile

After the international success of films including Mohamed Al Daradji's 'Ahlaam' (2004), 'Son of Babylon' (2010) and 'In My Mother's Arms' (2010), production company Iraq Al-Rafidain established the Iraqi Independent Film Centre (IIFC) in 2010, with the intention of encouraging and supporting a new generation of filmmakers, while actively pursuing the re-establishment and development of the Iraqi film industry. The IIFC has produced 12 short films by young filmmakers, which have screened at the Toronto and Berlin International Film Festivals, among numerous other prestigious festivals. In 2014, the IIFC produced Al Daradji's 'In the Sands of Babylon', a prequel to 'Son of Babylon'. Al Daradji's 'The Journey' is the second feature-length film to be produced by the IIFC.

Production Grant

Feature Narrative
Fall Grants 2016

Suha Arraf

Director / Screenwriter



Čedomir Ckolar, Marc Baschet

Producers



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The Poster

'Almshor' / Palestine, France, Germany, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 95 min

Genre: Satire

Interests: Social Issues

In Reith, a Palestinian village in Israel, a poster appears on the village walls, accusing the women of the village of moral dissolution.



A poster appears on the walls of the Palestinian village of Reith, accusing the local women of moral dissolution. This causes a stir among the inhabitants and forces the local council to make a difficult decision: should they call upon the Israeli authorities to investigate, or abandon the accused women to their fate?

Director's Note

As a woman, I've always been fascinated by the unique, private world of women. I grew up in a world fed by rumours, and I have long understood what a rumour could actually do to a woman. I knew that it could ruin her life, not only in my own village, but in the many villages and cities I have visited since. Behind every rumour lies a much more awful truth. Whenever there are rumours about a family's honour, all it takes is a little bit of digging to realise that the murmurings are merely camouflage for something much larger; something people are desperate to hide. This film is a desperate cry for the truth - the real truth - to step out from behind the shadows and veils so it can be heard at last. It is the truth of villagers who live in a bubble, isolated from the world. It is the truth of people who refuse to confront the harsh reality of occupation and the truth of a world in which Arabs are second-class citizens. These are pressing issues that deserve to be heard. They are truths so harsh that it is often easier to hide them and focus instead on gossip about women and their honour.

Director's Biography

Suha Arraf was born in the Palestinian village of Melia, near the border with Lebanon. She began her filmmaking career as a documentary producer. Her most recent film as a producer, 'Women of Hamas' (2010), received 13 awards at international film festivals. Arraf's first two screenplays, 'The Syrian Bride' (2004) and 'The Lemon Tree' (2008), both directed by Eran Riklis, won international acclaim, with the latter winning the prize for Best Screenplay at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, and a Best Screenplay nomination at the European Film Academy Awards. In 2014, Arraf was one of 'Variety' magazine's Top 10 Screenwriters to Watch.

Company Profile

Before launching the independent production company ASAP Films along with Danis Tanović in 2003, Čedomir Kolar and Marc Baschet worked together from 1992 to 2002 as producers at Noé Productions in Paris. Among many other films, they produced Milcho Manchevski's 'Before the Rain' (1994); Carmine Amoroso's 'As You Want Me' (1997); Idrissa Ouedraogo's 'Afrique mon Afrique' (1994) and 'Kini and Adams' (1997); Radu Mihaileanu's 'Train of Life' (1998); Aktan Abdykalykov's 'The Adopted Son' (1998) and 'The Chimp' (2001); Giacomo Campiotti's 'Il Tempo dell'Amore' (1999); Tanović's 'No Man's Land' (2001) and his contribution to the omnibus film '11/09/01' (2002); and Tom Tykwer's 'Heaven' (2002). Independent since its birth in September 2003, and endowed with the producers' years of experience within other structures, ASAP promotes auteur films in a spirit of cultural dialogue by setting up international co-productions. Kolar and Baschet were nominated for the Academy Award for Best Film for 'Before the Rain', and shared that award with Tanović for 'No Man's Land'.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Álvaro Aponte-Centeno

Director / Screenwriter



Maite Rivera Carbonell

Producer



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The Silence of the Wind

'El Silencio del Viento' / Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, France, Qatar / Spanish / 2017

Runtime: 87 min

Genre: Drama

Rafito finds he cannot mourn the death of his sister because of his continued involvement with human trafficking, bringing immigrants from the Dominican to Puerto Rico by sea.



Rafito deals in smuggling undocumented people from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico, a territory of the United States. After his sister is murdered, he takes care of his family and the human-trafficking business. On his current journey, he will face death after the collapse of a craft filled with hopeful migrants. A story about daily survival in the contemporary Caribbean, 'The Silence of the Wind' seeks to contemplate this netherworld without judgement.

Director's Note

Who are they? Where and how do they live? Do they have family? How is their family? How is their daily life? Are they loved? What are their emotions? How do they feel about life? How do they feel about death? All of these questions point to what interests me about people who are behind certain of the social problems of our world today. I am trying to get closer to the universe of each of them without judging, instead questioning things, seeking a better understanding of the world in order to be able to change it. In 'The Silence of the Wind', I approach the main theme of loss and death for one man, then from the specific I move to the general, exposing as a sub-theme the issues surrounding migration among the islands of the Caribbean, a topic that applies all around the planet - one that in this particular region has taken place for decades with not very happy endings.

Director's Biography

Álvaro Aponte-Centeno

obtained a Master's degree in Communications from the University of Puerto Rico. He directed the award-winning short films 'Luz' (2010), 'Mi Santa Mirada' (2012), which was selected for the Official Competition of the Festival de Cannes, and 'Yahaira' (2015). With his first feature-length project film, 'La mar', he participated in the second IBERMEDIA Workshop of Film Projects of Central America and the Caribbean, where he won first prize. He is a recipient of funding from the prestigious international film funds Aide aux Cinémas du Monde and IBERMEDIA.

Company Profile

Created in 2012 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Quenepa Producciones is an independent production company that is dedicated producing narrative and documentary film projects, with high technical and creative skills. The company also develops new ideas to encourage international co-production. Executive producer Maite Rivera Carbonell has been working in the film industry for over 15 years. She developed her career in Spain and won two Goya awards as a sound designer. She produced and directed the documentary 'Las Carpetas' (2011) and is now developing several film projects in Puerto Rico. Currently, Quenepa is in post-production with 'La Ruta', a feature film shot in Europe, and young director Álvaro Aponte-Centeno's 'The Silence of the Wind'.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Faouzi Bensaïdi

Director / Screenwriter



Saïd Hamich

Producer



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Volubilis

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 106 min

Genre: Drama

Abdelkader and Malika have just married and are madly in love. One day, however, Abdelkader experiences a violent and humiliating incident that will turn the couple's destiny upside-down.



Abdelkader is a security guard and Malika is a domestic employee. Recently married, they are madly in love; they dream of moving in together and of living their love to the full, despite the financial difficulties they face. One day, however, Abdelkader experiences a violent and humiliating incident that will turn the couple's destiny upside-down.

Director's Note

Despite the security of their true love, Abdelkader and Malika, a young couple, have a difficult and frustrating everyday life. He is a security guard in one of those brand-new malls, those great symbols of a contemporary world ruled by consumption and finance; she is a domestic worker in the city's posh neighbourhoods. They are some of the "little people" who have always moved me. I want to tell their story, as well as pay tribute to their dignity. As a result of ruthless class struggle, Morocco is rotten - a country caught up in a class war, a country that is ready to explode. Over the last several years, we feign not seeing a growing societal hatred of the elite. People who are excluded from the system begin to reject culture, language, all the symbols of "modernism". 'Volubilis' is a film about the human being who has been created by the madness of the early part of this new century: its contradictions, its flaws, its fears and its confusions.

Director's Biography

Faouzi Bensaïdi directed 'La Falaise', his first short film, in 1997, for which he received 23 awards. In 2000, he directed two short films: 'Le Mur', which won an award at the Festival de Cannes, and 'Trajets', which won a prize at the Venice Film Festival. In 2003, his first feature 'Mille Mois' won two awards at Cannes. In 2013, he directed 'Death for Sale', which won an award at the Berlin International Film Festival. Throughout his career, Bensaïdi has also worked as an author and actor with great directors including Nabil Ayouch, André Techiné and Nadir Mocknech. All of his films have received critical acclaim and have been distributed around the world.

Company Profile

Barney Production is an independent company created in 2010 by Saïd Hamich. In 2012, the company received the Jean-Luc Lagardère Foundation Grant for Film Producers. With the ambition of developing auteur cinema, Barney Production has already produced 14 short films, and also co-produced Nabil Ayouch's 'Much Loved' (2014), Faouzi Bensaïdi's 'Volubilis' (coming 2017) and Walid Mattar's 'Northern Wind' (coming 2017). The company is currently working on four short films and developing several feature-length films.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Berni Goldblat

Director / Producer



David Bouchet

Screenwriter



Faïssol Fahad Boladé Gnonlonfin

Producer



Contact

Les Films du Djabadjah

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Wallay

Burkina Faso, France, Qatar / Dioula, French / 2017

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Comedy, Drama

Interests: Youth

While sliding down the slippery slope towards delinquency, Ady, a French-Burkinabe adolescent, is sent by his father to the family village in Burkina Faso. It is the first time he treads the soil of his paternal ancestors.



While he slides down the slippery slope towards delinquency, Ady, a French-Burkinabe adolescent, is sent by his father to the family village in Burkina Faso. This will mark the first time the youth has trodden the soil of his paternal ancestors, and he is eager to go. The welcome he receives from his Uncle Amadou is a rough one, however – and what Ady had imagined would be a holiday abroad will soon turn into a forced stay...

Director's Note

Ady is a teenager of mixed race. France is his home country, but his skin is dark – a colour inherited from his father. But, in more profound terms, where does it really come from? Ady does not know what to do with the heritage he is wearing; perhaps he doesn't even know whether he ought to be doing anything about it – he is, after all, essentially from a culture he knows nothing about. 'Wallay' relates the quest for identity that Ady must resolve, whether he likes it or not. The film focuses on a moment of upheaval; an instant when a life can be turned upside-down. It is almost a coincidence that brings about this change in Ady – a sudden decision taken abruptly by his father. Wallay is the coming-of-age story of a mixed-race French teenager who loses himself in Burkina Faso and finds out who he really is.

Director's Biography

Since 1999, **Berni Goldblat** has been directing, producing and distributing films, primarily documentaries in West Africa. In 2006, he established Les films du Djabadjah, an independent production company based in Burkina Faso. Since 2007, Goldblat has been a member of the jury of the African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), the African equivalent of the Academy Awards for African films held annually in Nigeria. Since 2011, he has been training documentary screenwriters. He has organised and led six international documentary writing workshops for young African authors in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso. Since 2012, Goldblat has been President of the Association de Soutien du Cinéma au Burkina Faso (ASCBF), which is saving Bobo-Dioulasso's Ciné Guimbi.

Company Profile

Created in 2006, Les Films du Djabadjah is an independent production and distribution company based in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Nacer Khemir

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Whispering Sands

'Hams Alrimal' / Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 92 min

Genre: Road Trip

Interests: Identity

An encounter in the desert between a woman haunted by her family's tragic past, and her guide, who discovers his own family's dark future.



A Canadian woman of Arab descent undertakes a trip and hires a guide to help her find a specific place in the Tunisian desert. To encourage her to reveal her secret, the guide tells her Sufi stories inspired by his childhood. Once in the heart of the desert, the woman reveals the reason behind her voyage. The lighthearted guide learns during the trip that his sons have left the country. He must catch his boys before they engage in a dark and fatal future.

Contact

Wallada Production

Nacer Khemir

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Director's Note

With 'Whispering Sands', the spectator travels into two worlds that occasionally overlap, but often interact - a trip between the visible and the invisible. It is only upon arrival that one realizes the purpose of it all. Some dreamlike images, issued from the male protagonist's memory, contrast with those of the film's two main characters - a foreign woman and a local guide who undertake a voyage through the desert of Tunisia - which are realistic and contemporary. It is a "non-violent" film that caters to audiences of all ages - each and every viewer will find something that will thrill them: love, happiness, endearing memories and wisdom. But also sadness, anger and shadows of an uncertain future. 'Whispering Sands' leads one to meditate and, I think, creates in one's heart a deep sentiment of loss.

Director's Biography

Born in Korba, Tunisia, **Nacer Khemir** is a filmmaker, writer, calligrapher, painter and storyteller. From an early age, Khemir was fascinated by classical Arabic culture and by storytelling, and has cited 'One Thousand and One Nights' as a particular influence. Through his work, Khemir has thrown bridges between shores, between North and South, East and West. He has written and directed numerous films, which have won several international awards. Among them are his famous desert trilogy: 'The Wanderers of the Desert' (1984), 'The Dove's Lost Necklace' (1990) and 'Bab'Aziz, the Prince Who Contemplated His Soul' (2005). Khemir's literary work comprises a dozen publications and his output is still growing. His plastic art work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, among others.

Company Profile

Wallada Production was created by director Nacer Khemir in 2009 to produce his own films after he co-produced his feature 'Bab'Aziz, The Prince Who Contemplated His Soul' (2005). Since its launch, the company has produced numerous feature-length narrative and documentary films, including Khemir's 'En Passant avec André Miquel' (2010), 'Sheherazade' (2011), 'Looking for Muhyiddin' (2012), 'Yasmina and the 60 Names of Love' (2013) and 'Where to Start?' (2014). Wallada Production is currently producing Khemir's feature 'Whispering Sands'.

Production Grant
Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2016

Amjad Abu Alala
Director



Yousif Ibrahim
Screenwriter



Hossam Elouan
Producer



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You Will Die at Twenty

'Satmoot Fel Eshreen' / Sudan, Egypt, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Adaptation, Coming of age, Drama
Interests: Women's Issues, Youth

In a world where extremism rules, a young man has to choose between life and death.



In a Sudanese village, a mother gives birth to Muzamel, a boy cursed by a Dervish prophecy that he will die at the age of 20. Muzamel grows up surrounded by looks of sympathy that make him feel dead before his time, until Suliman, a cinematographer who has worked in the city, returns to the village. Suliman's old cinema projector opens a window onto a whole new world for Muzamel. His personality starts to change with Suliman's presence, and slowly he comes to doubt the truth of the prophecy. His mother desperately attempts to prevent the prophecy from coming to pass. After many defeats, including losing his father, Muzamel begins to dig his own grave. When the day of his 20th birthday arrives, he is torn by doubt and left with the choice between death and a bus to the world he is eager to know about.

Director's Note

After 14 years of making short films, I felt puzzled about how to choose my first feature film. I wanted to tackle one of Sudan's cinematically undiscovered stories, but I hesitated due to their sheer number and diversity until I read 'Sleeping Under the Mountain's Feet' by Arab Booker Award nominee Hammour Ziada. Despite its simplicity, Ziada's short story depicts a lot of grief and pain for those communities who are drowning in ignorance and belief in imposters and their superstitions. 'You Will Die at Twenty' might appear to be a melancholy film about death, superstitions, ignorance and poverty, yet it is not. When we dive into the absurdity of the story, we might see the comedy hidden beneath the darkness that has been imposed upon the protagonist and the other characters. The film is inspired by folk drama along with fantasy and a rich visual language.

Director's Biography

Amjad Abu Alala is a Sudanese filmmaker who was born and raised in the UAE. He studied media at United Arab Emirates University. As a producer and director, Abu Alala has made numerous short films that have been shown at film festivals, including 'Tina' (2009), 'Coffee and Orange' (2004), and 'Feathers of the Birds' (2005), which is considered to mark the return of cinema in Sudan. His 'Studio' (2012) was supervised during a workshop conducted by Abbas Kiarostami. In 2013, Abu Alala won the Best Arabic Theatre Script Award from the Arab Authority for 'Apple Pies'. Currently, Abu Alala is Head of the Programming Committee of the Sudan Independent Film Festival.

Company Profile

Transit Films is an independent, Cairo-based production company established by producer Hossam Elouan. The company specialises in producing Egyptian and Arab art-house films that have the potential to break into the international film market. Transit Films focuses as well on fresh, new talent who can become a source of innovation both for the film industry as well as for alternative cinemas in Egypt. Transit Films recently came on board with Sherif Elbandary's 'Ali, the Goat and Ibrahim' (2016), written by Ibrahim El Batout and Ahmed Amer; Hala Elkoussy's 'Cactus Flower'; and Khaled Hafez's 'All Time Idlers'.

Production Grant

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Ismaël El Iraki

Director / Screenwriter



Saïd Hamich

Producer



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Zanka Contact

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama

Interests: Music, Social Issues, Women's Issues

Casablanca. The romantic idyll and eventful odyssey of a has-been rocker and a singer with a golden voice. Their love will turn underground and dangerous Morocco upside-down.



Casablanca. Larsen, a self-destructive has-been rocker, meets Rajae, a singer with a golden voice and a bad temper. They're both running away: he from the heroin monkey on his back, she from life on the streets. Through their common passion for music, they fall madly in love. Rajae confides in Larsen, and he writes a rock anthem that tells her party-girl life better than she ever could. Their adventure rumbles and tumbles in this little-known, underground and dangerous Morocco, filled with music-buff pimps, torturer cops and pit-bull-raising ladies of the night. When Rajae breaks free by fighting back against her most cruel and powerful client, the lovers flee south, towards redemption. But they are being followed and their freedom spree might end in a bloody mess... Can their romance survive it?

Director's Note

Ever-changing, farcical and sometimes revolting, Casablanca is a formidable playground for a filmmaker. In an old country tempted by traditionalism, the city is like a rebellious teenage girl at the age when everything still seems possible. Like a teen, it is violent, contradictory, ugly and beautiful at the same time. The city of the richest and the poorest; the cradle of radical Islam and the birthplace of anti-establishment movements; home of subversive rock and traditional chaabi; such is Casablanca in 'Zanka Contact'. If it seems to move from realism to genre, if it feels like a roller-coaster between fun and drama it is because that mixture of tones is my most honest way of portraying the city as I see and love it. My Casablanca is a land of fiction, a collective hallucination of sorts; a raw cocktail of dream and reality.

Director's Biography

Ismaël El Iraki was born in Morocco in 1983 and emigrated to France in 2001. After studying Philosophy and Cinema at the Sorbonne, he joined the Directing Department of La Fémis in 2004. All of his short films concern Morocco and are linked to the Nayda artistic movement in Casablanca. El Iraki's two latest shorts were both noted successes: 'Carcasse' (2007) won the Short Film Corner Prize at the Festival de Cannes, and 'H'rash' (2009) won a Special Mention at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival. Today, El Iraki is developing two feature-length films, including 'Zanka Contact'.

Company Profile

Barney Production is an independent company created in 2010 by Saïd Hamich. In 2012, the company received the Jean-Luc Lagardère Foundation Grant for Film Producers. With the ambition of developing auteur cinema, Barney Production has already produced 14 short films, and also co-produced Nabil Ayouch's 'Much Loved' (2014), Faouzi Bensaïdi's 'Volubilis' (coming 2017) and Walid Mattar's 'Northern Wind' (coming 2017). The company is currently working on four short films and developing several feature-length films.

Feature Documentary

A Comedian in a Syrian Tragedy

City of the Sun

House in the Fields

I Used to Sleep on the Rooftop

Listen to the Silence

My Friend Gadhafi

On the Hillsides

Ouaga Girls

Plot 35

Republic of Silence

The Desert, 1000 Days

The Forgotten

This Is Congo

Trophy

Feature Experimental or Essay

Experimental Summer

From a Palm Tree to the Stars

On Trials

Ouroboros

The Insomnia of a Serial Dreamer

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2016

Rami Farah
Director / Screenwriter



Signe Byrge Sorenson
Producer



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A Comedian in a Syrian Tragedy

'Hikayat Mumathil Kharaj 'an Alnas' / Syria, Denmark, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Comedy, Creative Documentary

Interests: Immigration, Psychology, War

An intimate portrait of Syrian actor Fares Helou, who calls for freedom of speech, is forced to flee his home country, and experiences the absurdities of existence in exile.



This chronicle of an uprising and of exile begins in the early months of the Syrian revolution, when director Rami Farah decides to follow Syrian actor Fares Helou, one of the first Syrian stars to take a public stand against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad. Helou participates in a demonstration, he and his family receive threats, and he worries about Al Bustan, an art centre he is trying to establish as a free space for artists of all kinds. After Al Bustan is destroyed by the regime, Helou leaves Syria for France. Farah follows with Helou's wife and children, believing they will soon be back in Damascus. He expects the revolution will be a success. But Syria falls apart, and neither actor nor director has a script for this new chapter in their lives: exile.

Director's Note

Like all Syrians of my generation, I have known about Fares Helou since I was a child, through television dramas and comedies. Fares was not only cherished for his talent and incredible humour, but also for his generosity and his social commitment. When the revolution broke out, Helou was in the process of creating the Bustan, an independent art space for young artists in Damascus. When the revolution erupted, Helou was one of the first famous artists to speak out against the regime. Soon after, he had to go undercover, until finally he had to flee to France in 2011. Two months later, I followed him with his wife and his two daughters. At first, I thought I would be there for a week, but before long I realised that a new chapter had begun in Helou's life, in my life, and in my film: exile.

Director's Biography

Rami Farah was born in Syria in 1980. After studying dance at the Higher Institute of Arts in Damascus, he attended numerous training courses and workshops in contemporary film and dance. His first films and videos blend dance and audiovisual material. 'ZamKan' (2004), unfolds as a dialogue between a ceiling fan and a chair in a silent room. It was followed by 'Point' (2004), a short video that was screened in several exhibitions and festivals. In 2006, Farah shot and produced a 35-minute documentary about the Golan Heights entitled 'Silence'.

Company Profile

Final Cut for Real is a film production company based in Copenhagen. The company was founded in 2009 by producers Signe Byrge Sørensen and Anne Köhncke, editor Janus Billeskov Jansen and director Joshua Oppenheimer. Since then, producers Monica Hellström, Maria Kristensen and Heidi Elise Christensen have joined the company. Dedicated to high-end creative documentaries for the international market, Final Cut for Real's policy is to be curious and daring, and seek out directors with serious artistic ambitions. With no limits on subject or location, we look for interesting stories, great characters and in-depth social analysis – and try to give films a twist of humour. We cover a wide range of development and production expertise – and work with younger talent as well as established filmmakers to create a productive mixture of experience and new approaches to documentary filmmaking. Our films have won Danish, Nordic and international awards and have been screened at numerous festivals around the world.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Documentary

Spring Grants 2016

Rati Oneli

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Dea Kulumbegashvili

Screenwriter



Jim Stark

Producer



Contact

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City of the Sun

'Mzis Qalaqi' / Georgia, USA, The Netherlands, Qatar / Georgian / 2017

Runtime: 100 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

A surreal vision of the lives of the few inhabitants of Chiatura, Georgia – a post-Soviet ghost town.



The lives, dreams and destinies of several extraordinary characters unfold amid the grand ruins of once-“glorious” Soviet architectural and technological achievements in the semi-abandoned mining town of Chiatura. Zurab, a music teacher, is on a quest to destroy gigantic buildings to keep his sanity and provide for his family; Archil, a miner-turned-actor, has to make a life-altering choice between quitting the theatre and giving up his dream, or feeding his family by keeping his job in the mines and as a result becoming miserable; and two malnourished champion athletes have to overcome the odds and win the next Olympic games in order to survive.

Director's Note

'City of the Sun' is a meeting point between documentary form and my subjective impression of the place where the events unfold. The City is a fantastical space where time is frozen and people live in a hypnotic state. It is a living organism, where air-cable cars crisscross like blood vessels. It reminds us of an alien outpost, a colony where enslaved humans provide fuel for the mother ship. The City and the characters exist in a timeless dimension, rather than a specific locale in a post-Soviet territory. 'City of the Sun' stands as a testament of human extremes: our mixed desire for architecture and destruction. The city carries a seed of both universal suffering and hope in its DNA. No matter where we go in the world, we encounter similar endeavours of human ingenuity and carelessness – grand experiments without regard for the human toll.

Director's Biography

Rati Oneli was born in Tbilisi. He lived in New York City from 1999 to 2014, when he moved to Georgia in order to make his documentary 'City of the Sun'. He specialised in Middle East Studies and International Affairs at the Free University of Tbilisi and at Columbia University in New York. Currently, he is pursuing his PhD in Philosophy at the European Graduate School. In 2014, he produced and co-edited Dea Kulumbegashvili's 'Invisible Spaces', a short film that premiered at the Festival de Cannes. In 2016, Rati Oneli produced Dea Kulumbegashvili's second short film, 'Lethe', which had its premiere in the Director's Fortnight at Cannes.

Company Profile

Founded in 2014 by Rati Oneli and Dea Kulumbegashvili, OFA is an independent production company based in Tbilisi. The company specialises in producing author-driven films, and exploring the film medium through personal, authentic vision. Work produced by OFA includes Kulumbegashvili's award-winning short film 'Invisible Spaces' (2014), which had its premiere at the Festival de Cannes. In February of 2016, OFA produced Kulumbegashvili's second short film, 'Lethe', which had its premiere in the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes. OFA is currently developing 'Daisi/Red Sunset', a feature-length film co-written by Kulumbegashvili and Oneli that won the Grand Prix for Best Pitch at the Sofia Meetings. Most recently, OFA produced Oneli's feature-length documentary 'City of the Sun', which had its premiere in the Forum section of the Berlin International Film Festival in 2017.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2016

Mahmoud Lotfy
Director / Producer



Randa Abo-Eldahab,
Essam Esmail
Producers



Experimental Summer

'Saif Tagreby' / Egypt, Qatar / Arabic, French / 2017

Runtime: 70 min

Genre: Docufiction, Dramedy, Satire

Interests: Identity, Youth

Mahmoud and Zeinab are making a documentary about 'Experimental Summer', an independent Egyptian film produced in the mid-1980s whose makers are unknown.



Both Mahmoud and Zeinab join in the search for the original version of an Egyptian film that was made back in the 1980s, all copies of which were confiscated for unknown reasons by the government film agency at the time. 'Experimental Summer' is a fantasy journey into the world of filmmaking.

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Director's Note

I was always a lover of films as well as filmmaking, which could be the reason I made 'Experimental Summer' – as a tribute to this passion and to the original filmmakers of Egypt. Though this may be a fiction film with a set beginning and end, it was not really based on any previous conception of a fiction film's form or rhythm. I always followed my feelings and I did not set limits to experimentation. What we eventually came up with is a film with its own character, a tale full of details and a varied storyline forming an endless algorithm, blurring the lines between the film and the process that produced it.

Director's Biography

Mahmoud Lotfy is an independent Egyptian director. He previously participated in the making of several independent films, and is one of the founders of Otaku Digital Film. 'Experimental Summer', his first full-length fiction film, took over three years to shoot.

Company Profile

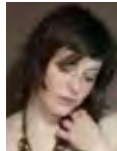
Otaku Digital Film is a film production and distribution company based in Cairo. It was founded in 2013 by a group of Egyptian filmmakers.

Production Grant

Feature Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2016

Leila Albayaty

Director / Screenwriter



François-Pierre Clavel

Producer



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From a Palm Tree to the Stars

'D'un Palmier Aux Etoiles' / Iraq, France, Germany, Qatar /
Arabic, French / 2017

Runtime: 80 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

Leila, a French-Iraqi artist, is trying to find her lost Arabic origins. Through music transmitted by her Iraqi father, she draws a parallel between her family's history and the tragedies of Iraq.



'From a Palm Tree to the Stars' portrays an encounter between Western and Arab cultures via the story of a French-Iraqi family. Abdul was a co-founder of the Ba'ath party in Iraq. Threatened by the Iraqi authorities, he had to flee the country. In 1970, he met Simone in Paris, where they fell in love and started a family. Now they spend half their time in Egypt and the other half in France. A musician and filmmaker, their eldest daughter Leila began filming her family in 2001. Recently, she felt the need to return to her Arabic heritage after rejecting it for most of her life, and she tries to learn the language and culture through songs written by her father. This in turn gives him the opportunity to speak about the tragedies taking place in Iraq, and to witness the fractures of an exiled family who, in spite of everything, still believe in hope and freedom.

Director's Note

This story is my story. The story of my families and my countries, and of people who were obliged to leave their homes to find new ones - to carry on with their inner culture as their only roots. Now that I am working on this film, I believe we only truly understand something when we have the distance to see it completely. Is exile perhaps the best way to understand and see where we come from? Through music, my father and I connected with each other as we never have before. With this modest language, I fulfilled my body with the sounds I am singing. Singing Arabic songs is like drinking in my father's culture; no words, no explanations are as powerful as music for telling a story and conveying a culture. 'From a Palm Tree to the Stars' is about this culture of mine that is sleeping inside me. This culture has to wake up now that I need it to reach higher personal horizons.

Director's Biography

Based in Berlin, **Leila Albayaty** is a French-Iraqi singer-songwriter, film director, writer and actor. Her award-winning films have premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival, the Dubai International Film Festival, Indie Lisboa and numerous other international festivals. Albayaty combines music, cinema and autobiographical inspirations in her artistic works to reveal her profound unease of being cut away from her Arab roots and culture even as she witnesses the terrorism that strikes as a consequence of international interventionist politics.

Company Profile

KIDAM is a French production company. Since 2010, it has focused its interest on art-house and mainstream short, mid- and feature-length fiction, documentary and concert films.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Tala Hadid
Director / Producer



House in the Fields

'Tigmi Nigren' / Morocco, Qatar / Amazigh / 2017

Runtime: 85 min

Genre: Coming of age, Creative Documentary

In a village in the High Atlas Mountains, at the crossroads of tradition and change, two sisters experience the last seasons of childhood.



'House in the Fields' examines the life of a rural Amazigh community isolated in the High Atlas Mountains. For the most part, the 1,000-year history of the Amazighen in Morocco has been preserved and recounted in oral form and transmitted to today's pastoral Tamazight-speaking communities by storytellers and bards. This film continues the tradition of transmission in audio-visual form in an attempt to document and present a faithful portrait of a village and a community that has remained essentially unchanged for hundreds of years despite being confronted with the rapidly changing socio-political realities of the nation at large. We follow the lives of two teenage sisters, one who must give up school to prepare for her wedding, and the other who dreams of becoming a lawyer.

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Director's Note

A portrait of an individual is also a portrait of a family, of a community, a people and a nation. In the remote communities of the Atlas Mountains, what is key is the social body of the "village". Yet within the heart of each person in this body politic lie dreams and aspirations, fears and regrets. 'House in the Fields' is at once a tableau of a rural community and a series of intimate portraits of individuals. Living with and filming these farmers over the course of five years meant participating in their daily lives. In turn, they participated in constructing their own representations. Realities, as documentary filmmaker Jean Rouch points out, are always co-constructed; the presence of the camera, like the presence of the filmmaker, naturally stimulates, modifies and catalyses. People respond by revealing themselves, and they eventually begin to participate in the telling of their own stories.

Director's Biography

Tala Hadid made her first film about Pier Paolo Pasolini. Her work has screened at festivals around the world, including the Berlin International Film Festival and the Venice Film Festival and, among other venues, at the Museum of Modern Art and the Lincoln Center in New York City, the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, the Cinémathèque Française in Paris and the Photographer's Gallery in London. Her films have received numerous awards, among them an Academy Award. In 2015, Hadid's 'House in the Fields' was selected to screen as a work-in-progress at the Venice Film Festival, where it was awarded two prizes. It premiered in 2016 at the Berlinale, where it was nominated for the Glashutte documentary award.

Company Profile

Founded by Tala Hadid, Kairos Films is dedicated to developing, producing and marketing original, artistically rigorous, innovative and socially conscious films in Morocco and internationally. The company's first film, 'House in the Fields', was awarded various post-production prizes at the Final Cut in Venice workshop at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Kairos is currently developing its first feature-length film, which it hopes to launch in 2017. Besides its own productions, Kairos will also develop a wide range of high-quality film, visual art and theatre productions in Morocco in collaboration with film professionals and other cultural producers.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2016

Angie Obeid
Director



Jad Abi-Khalil
Producer



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I Used to Sleep on the Rooftop

'Sayf 2015' / Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 75 min
Genre: Creative Documentary

Twenty-seven-year-old Angie, a Lebanese filmmaker, hosts a 53-year-old Syrian woman in her small apartment in Beirut. There, they wait endlessly for an opportunity to reach a better place.



Nuhad, a 53-year-old Syrian woman, had never left Syria until the war made her reconsider her existence in a country where she didn't belong. In 2015, she made the decision to leave Damascus. Her destination was Beirut and Angie, a 27-year-old Lebanese woman – Nuhad's son's friend, the only possible host. Angie's house becomes Nuhad's refuge, an antechamber leading to indefinite asylum destinations. Angie observes the older woman projecting her own life onto the confines of the small apartment, and finds intersections between her own life and Nuhad's: both are vainly trying to move out of their own walls to find the right place in which to exist. Unsatisfied, Angie is waiting as well, living vicariously through Nuhad's experience.

Director's Note

At 27 years of age, I had never had an urgent reason to leave Beirut, nor a defined destination to move to. Still, I could not put aside the idea of leaving for good. I was still in that state of searching when Nuhad, the 53-year-old mother of a friend of mine, left Syria and came to seek refuge in my home. We were going through the same process; we were waiting for something that was undefined. Nuhad's multiple attempts to leave made me realise how passive I have been. I found myself witnessing this woman's changes throughout that period. I started to observe her, and us. Which of us was living the age of which? I began filming simply for the sake of the singularity of this situation. The power of every moment made me realise that my first independent feature documentary was in the making.

Director's Biography

Born in Beirut in 1988, **Angie Obeid** obtained a bachelor's degree in Film Directing and Scriptwriting from Notre Dame University – Louaize. Since 2009, Obeid has worked as a producer, assistant director and editor on numerous documentaries for Al-Jazeera Documentary Channel, in addition to several independent documentaries. 'I Used To Sleep On The Rooftop' is her first feature-length documentary as a director.

Company Profile

Beirut DC is a Lebanese cultural association, created in 1999 by a group of filmmakers and arts advocates. The association's main activities are producing independent documentaries; organising capacity-building workshops with young Arab filmmakers; and staging the biennial Beirut Cinema Days film festival as well as several Arab film weeks in Europe and in the Arab world. Beirut DC's latest productions include 'Seeing the Self' (2015), 20 short videos by Syrian and Lebanese youngsters; and Bassem Fayyad's 'Diaries of a Flying Dog' (2014), Zeina Sfeir's 'All About My Father' (2010) and Simon Al Habre's 'The One-Man Village' (2008), three feature-length documentaries. In 2015, the association held the Beirut Cinema Platform, three days of meetings, training and pitching for 15 Arab producers and 25 industry experts.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Documentary

Spring Grants 2016

Mariam Chachia

Director



Nino Jincharadze, Nikolas Voigt

Producers



Contact

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Listen to the Silence

'Mousmine Sichumes' / Georgia, Qatar / Georgian / 2016

Runtime: 85 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

Interests: Children

Nine years old and completely deaf, Luka dreams of dancing on stage. He follows his dream and learns Georgian folk-dancing, after which his life changes completely.



To have a dream is natural and easy for all of us – but to follow one's dream, especially when no one else believes in it, is the fate of only a few. Nine-year-old Luka dreams of stepping onto the stage, because for him, dancing is the only way he can take his place in the world. The only environment he knows is the public school for deaf children where he studies and lives. Although it is very difficult for him to understand and learn the rhythm of the music, Luka never gives up. 'Listen to the Silence' observes Luka's life in the hidden world of a deaf society, following his journey as he overcomes failure, frustration and disappointment to realise his dream at last.

Director's Note

One day I had the fortune to discover a silent world separated from society: Public Boarding School 203 for the Deaf. The children's world is contained within the walls of this school; this is where they live, learn and grow. However, each of them has a wish to break down the borders to the outside world and to interact and integrate with wider society. Here I met nine-year-old Luka, who is unable to communicate with his parents because they do not speak his language and he cannot hear theirs. Luka has a dream to dance on stage to music. Even though he faces difficulty understanding the rhythm of songs he is unable to hear, he never gives up on his dream. The few square metres of wood that we call a stage represent for him a magic place where he can communicate with his parents without restrictions.

Director's Biography

Mariam Chachia was born and raised in Tbilisi, and studied Directing Drama at Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgian State University. 'Listen to the Silence' is her first feature-length documentary.

Company Profile

OpyoDoc is a not-for-profit organisation that works to bring about social change through making documentary films that highlight real social problems. We run social initiatives that work with marginalised groups to help give them a voice and allow them to integrate into wider society, as well as training programmes for budding documentary filmmakers in partnership with Doc Monde. Since 2014, we have had a strong connection with various European companies and broadcasters. OpyoDoc has been invited to Eurasiadoc co-production meetings on a number of occasions, and OpyoDoc's project 'Abastumani, The Last Resort' was selected for Doc Leipzig and PitchDoc. In 2016, the project was selected for the Hong Kong Financial Forum, where OpyoDoc started building new relationships within the Asian market.

Development Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Rafik Omrani
Director / Producer



My Friend Gadhgadhi

'Sadiki Al Gadhgadhi' / Tunisia, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Animation, Creative Documentary, Docufiction

Interests: Politics, Social Issues

Kamel Gadhgadhi, the most infamous terrorist in Tunisia during the years 2013 and 2014, turns out to have been a close friend of the director at college. The latter begins to reflect on terrorism.



A few days after the assassination of left-wing Tunisian militant Chokri Belaïd in early 2013, the Tunisian media started to talk about a prime suspect, a certain Kamel Gadhgadhi. Two weeks later, director Rafik Omrani stumbles upon a picture of the alleged killer. To Omrani's great surprise, Gadhgadhi is a friend from his university days. A kind of patchwork emerges, one that defines a more finely textured image of Gadhgadhi... Tuesday, 4 February, 2014: The Tunisian Minister of the Interior announces that Gadhgadhi was killed during security operations.

Contact

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Director's Note

Tunisia's most infamous terrorist was my friend 15 years ago. Should I be discreet? Should I remain unconcerned? Chokri Belaïd, assassinated by my one-time friend, was an activist, a lawyer and a human rights defender, who frequently pleaded in trials during Ben Ali's regime. Belaïd was a charismatic man and a remarkable leader, but especially a poet and a great intellectual. His murderer is someone I know, a man the same age as me. There is an awkwardness that I can't define: the awkwardness of being the friend of the killer of my idol. It is proven that it doesn't only happen to others! This film is research work into the phenomenon of religious extremism and the creeping radicalisation of Tunisian youth. It's not a bio-pic of a terrorist. Based on a personal story, this is a film about the damaging effects of religious extremism on the minds of our young people.

Director's Biography

Rafik Omrani is a director and film editor who resides in Tunisia. He began his career with a marketing and communication oriented scholarship, then accumulated experience in fiction, documentary and short animation filmmaking in parallel with his work as financial director. In 2011, he decided to devote himself entirely to cinema. 'Fallega 2011' (2011), his first medium-length documentary film, was shown at numerous international festivals, demonstrations and art institutions around the world, and won five awards including the First Work Award from the Tetouan International Mediterranean Film Festival and the Osman Sanban Award from the Festival of African Cinema in Marseille. 'White Doves', his first feature-length documentary, was produced in 2016. Omrani has produced a number of documentaries for television and for the benefit of many Tunisian and international organisations. In 2012, he was elected a member of the executive board of the Association of Tunisian Filmmakers.

Company Profile

Majez Films is a Tunisian film production company that produces and supports films that are actively engaged in society. Majez passionately supports creative projects with original aesthetics and innovative form.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Abdallah Badis
Director / Producer



On the Hillsides

'Sur les Collines' / Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Creative Documentary, Road Trip

Interests: Identity, Social Issues, Youth

A journey sketching real life in Algeria today through an encounter between urban youth and people living deep in the countryside.



A wind of liberty called the Arab Spring has been blowing in this part of the world. Algeria remains uninvolved. Does this mean everything is all right there? How is the Algerian populus? How do they live? Seven young men and women aged between 20 and 30 ask themselves: What does it mean to be Algerian? They leave Wahran, their home city, to go deep into the countryside. Their journey, in the most beautiful season, will take the pulse of the real nation of Algeria.

Contact

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Director's Note

How is life in Algeria? Many young people in the country stands somewhere between good and evil, between submission and the temptation for clandestine exile – for one inevitably ends up knocking at one of these doors when one is denied existence, is stifled, is looking for a reason to live; when one is wandering around in nothingness. As I met with some of these young people and placed my fantasised Algeria up against their real-life Algeria drowning in dreams of elsewhere, it dawned on me that there was plenty beyond the loss of joie de vivre to dig up, to explore and bring to light in a film. Beyond the oft-repeated “y'en a marre” (“we're sick and tired”), beyond the expected, I realised I could film from inside and be open to surprises, capturing material for a buoyant and grave film that could tell a story of our days.

Director's Biography

After graduating from high school, where he majored in science and biology in 1971, **Abdallah Badis** started his working life as a steelworker in Lorraine, then engaged in other pursuits until 1979. Whether in theatre or film, he always tries to lend a voice to unnamed people, the world he comes from, staging common folks and their special ways: their gestures at work and in daily life, their ordinary words and silences. This led Badis quite naturally to feel the strong need to bear witness to the lives, mutations and upheavals of our times through storytelling in cinema.

Company Profile

In love with cinema, when it offers a perspective on our lives, when it pushes us, moves us, and open us up to others, we created Cactusco Films in 2012 and we wish to bear the responsibility of producing films with certainty, enthusiasm and exigency. We like features that push the boundaries of cinema and that offer new ways to tell stories, for we believe cinema is derived from the individual perspective. Cactusco Films produced Abdallah Badis's first feature-length film, 'The Foreign Son' (2015) and is currently working on his second feature, 'On the Hillsides'.

Production Grant

Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2016

Jasmina Metwaly, Philip Rizk

Directors / Producers



On Trials

'En Mohakamat' / Egypt, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 75 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

In an attempt to question the legal realm, 'On Trials' explores the performative aspect of the law in Egypt through performances by judges, lawyers, defendants, journalists and law students.



The enacted. The robe. The absurd. Failed precedents. 'On Trials' is a film about realms of law that people encounter on a daily basis. In Egypt the legal system is a labyrinth of enactments carried out by appointed actors. Judges in their robes. Lawyers wearing suits. Prisoners in white, blue and orange. Guards in dark uniforms guarding the courts. Cameramen taking quick shots of the ongoing performance. Tailors never running out of business. 'On Trials' is a work-in-progress that visits different threads of what makes up this realm of the law.

Contact

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Director's Note

In our recent film 'Out on the Street', performers re-enacted scenes from their own experiences and en-acted improvised scenes that brought into effect a new imagined reality created through the performance itself. This terminology of enactment comes from the legal realm to describe how laws receive their legitimacy through the very act of being spoken. In 'On Trials', we want to explore further the creative power of enactment. The law is in itself a performance, where different actors are given roles of judge, lawyer or cameraman, each playing their theatrical part in accordance with pre-determined rules. Unlike other theatres, this performance creates a reality that has very serious implications on life as we know it, determining legal from illegal, right from wrong and deciding between life and death. In 'On Trials', we want to explore the realms where performance-making and law-making overlap.

Director's Biography

Born to an Egyptian father and a Polish mother, **Jasmina Metwaly** is a Cairo-based artist and filmmaker, and member of the Mosireen collective. She works in video and film, with people and their histories, texts, archives, images, scripts and drawings. She is interested in how stories create stories, and how they leave the space of one reality and enter another, intertwining the boundaries of both. Rooted in performance and theatre, her works focus on process-based practices that have a social function that generates tension between participants and audiences.

Philip Rizk is a filmmaker and writer based in Cairo. Together with Jasmina Metwaly, he directed the feature film 'Out on the Street' (2015), which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and was part of the German pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Rizk is a member of the Mosireen video collective. His texts have appeared online, in journals and in collected volumes, including 'Uncommon Grounds - New Media and Critical Practices in the Middle East and North Africa' (IB Tauris, 2014). He is currently working with Metwaly on a new project entitled 'On Trials'.

Company Profile

Seen is a Cairo-based film house that produces and supports film and media work, fulfilling an active role in society's ongoing social and political discourse. Seen endeavors to work for the full representation, self-realisation and positive engagement of all groups who are marginalised, whether due to gender, urban centrism, economic restriction, or religion. Seen is interested and involved in the development, implementation, presentation and distribution of creative projects reaching beyond the common aesthetics and confinements of the moving image. Seen aims to open up cinema and filmmaking to innovative forms of interaction with the public, dealing with topics and stories that are either needed or suggested by society. We believe that cinema is the art of the visual story, and all our attention is tuned to promoting aesthetic quality and art in the stories we produce.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Theresa Traore Dahlberg
Director



David Herdies
Producer



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Ouaga Girls

'Du courage' / Burkina Faso, Sweden, Qatar / French / 2017

Runtime: 80 min
Genre: Coming of age, Creative Documentary
Interests: Identity, Social Issues, Women, Youth

A group of young girls from Burkina Faso meet in Ouagadougou to study to become car mechanics. 'Ouaga Girls' is a poetic story of sisterhood, life choices and the struggles of finding your own path.



The sun shines over an open garage in Burkina Faso's capital, where Bintou is lacquering a car door. She is attending a feminist-initiated education centre for women who have been ostracised by society. The centre aims to strengthen these women's independence by teaching them a profession traditionally reserved for men – that of the car mechanic. Bintou isn't sure this is the vocation for her, but she has a four-year-old daughter and the school is a way to secure income. In the shade outside, Chantalle waits her turn. A good student, she is proud of her future profession, but the disappearance of her mother triggers recurrent panic attacks and the school is now her only refuge. During their last year at school, Bintou and Chantalle and their friends become increasingly complex and mysterious, drawing us deeper into the large and small choices that will shape their lives.

Director's Note

All transitions are fragile. With this film, I seek to capture that trembling time before choices are made, the time before everything will change – when dreams, desires and courage get mixed up with opinions, fears and society's expectations of what a woman should be. The feeling of no longer being a child, but not yet owning your life – and still feeling like you are on top of the world on a Saturday when you are out with your friends. Your friends are your everything, and life keeps happening to you while you are trying to figure yourself out. With 'Ouaga Girls', I want to capture an intriguing and inspiring growing-up story with warmth, laughter and depth.

Director's Biography

Theresa Traore Dahlberg was born in 1983 and spent her childhood on the Swedish island of Öland and in Burkina Faso. She studied at the New School in New York and at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts. Her groundbreaking graduation film, 'Taxi Sister' (2011), about a female taxi driver in Dakar, was screened at festivals worldwide. Dahlberg has been active in several film and art projects around the world and is constantly pushing the boundaries of art, sculpture and filmmaking. She is now studying for an MFA at the Royal Institute of Art in Sweden. 'Ouaga Girls' marks her feature-length filmmaking debut.

Company Profile

Momento Film was founded in 2011 by director and producer David Herdies. Since its start, Momento Film has established itself as one of Sweden's most vibrant independent documentary production companies, producing numerous short and feature-length documentaries and establishing a strong international network. To date, the company has produced 15 films, which have premiered in some of the most prestigious film festivals in the world, among them the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival, CPH:DOX and the Gothenburg Film Festival, and has successfully moved into producing fiction films, with Simón Mesa Soto's short film 'Madre' premiering in the Official Competition at the Festival de Cannes.

Production Grant

Feature Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2016

Basma Alsharif

Director / Screenwriter



Mohanad Yaqubi,

Emilie Dudognon, Eyal Sivan

Producers



Ouroboros

Palestine, France, Qatar / Arabic, English / 2017

Runtime: 73 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

Interests: War

Death as birth, history as the present, the end as the beginning...



Diego Marcon is a man with a broken heart who journeys into the heart of the human condition on a single day that stretches from Native American territory, to the ancient city of Matera, to a castle in Brittany, and the ruins of the Gaza Strip. Ouroboros is an homage to Gaza and to hoping beyond hopelessness.

Contact

Idioms Film

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Director's Note

As a Palestinian, a nomad, someone from nowhere and everywhere, I am deeply invested in making work that challenges nationalism, radically confronts us with the future, and questions how we define humanity in the modern age. This film is an attempt to reconcile the passage of time, the disappearance of nature and the renaming of cities; a succession of suppressions and reinstatements of borders, governments, truces and failures in peace agreements; and a failure to prevent a humanitarian crisis. My subjective experience of statelessness and constant migration fuels my work. As a director of predominantly short films, through my work I question the concept of knowledge through a phenomenological approach to the Palestinian question. The incarnation of an absence of identity is a manner of looking beyond a singular experience and of exploring the repercussions of history or politics in daily life, as well as the changes in geopolitics that we carry from the past to the future.

Director's Biography

Basma Alsharif is an artist and filmmaker of Palestinian origin who developed her practice nomadically. Her films and installations centre on the human condition beyond nationalism. Her major exhibitions include Les rencontres de la photographie d'Arles; Les Modules at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Here and Elsewhere at the New Museum, New York; The Jerusalem Show Al Ma'amal Foundation in Palestine; Videobrasil; and Manifesta 8. She has won a Jury Prize at the Sharjah Biennial, the Fundacion Marcelino Botin Award and the LOOP Fair Prize.

Company Profile

Idioms Film was established in Ramallah in 2004 with the intention of developing the cinematic capacity of independent film production in Palestine by improving accessibility to production facilities, international film markets and financing. Recent titles include Mohanad Yaqubi's 'Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory' (2015); 'Suspended Time' (2014), a programme of nine short films marking the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Agreement; Ramzi Hazboun's 'Pink Bullet' (2014); and Khaled Jarrar's 'Infiltrators' (2012).

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Eric Caravaca
Director



Laetitia Gonzalez
Producer



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Plot 35

'Carré 35' / France, Qatar / French / 2017

Runtime: 90 min
Genre: Creative Documentary

Wishing to reinstate the memory of an ill sister he never knew, director Eric Caravaca takes us into the heart of a fascinating human quest.



Plot 35 is a place that was never mentioned in my family; it is where my elder sister, who died aged three, is buried. The sister about whom I was told nothing, or nearly nothing, and of whom my parents had oddly never kept a single photograph. It was to make up for the missing images that I decided to make this film. Thinking that I would simply chronicle a forgotten life, in fact I opened up the hidden door to a past that I was unaware of, to the subconscious memory that lies inside each of us and who makes us what we are.

Director's Note

Above all, 'Plot 35' is the story of a secret sister. Christine was my parents' firstborn; she arrived before my brother and me. Her existence and her death were hidden from us. Then, as happens in any family, secrets bubble to the surface. At some point in my life, it became clear to me that I bear a sadness that is not my own. But whose is it? Why has this sadness reached out to me? This is what I have tried to discover in writing this film. Through this very personal story, it is indeed about all of us that I wish to speak. This is why my own search follows unexpected detours that lead to a wider, more universal reflection on life and death, on images and memory, on privacy and on history.

Director's Biography

Eric Caravaca was trained at the School of Performing Arts in Rouen and at the Actor's Studio. He appeared in plays directed by Phillipe Adrien in the 1990s before being noticed onstage. His first major role in a feature-length film was in Diane Bertrand's 'Un samedi sur la terre' (1996), a singular work about fate. Caravaca went on to work with several great directors like François Dupeyron ('The Officers' Ward', 2001), Patrice Chéreau ('His Brother' 2003) and Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud ('Chicken with Plums', 2011). He directed his first feature-length film, 'The Passenger' in 2004; it was selected for the Critics' Week at the Festival de Cannes and the Venice Film Festival. His upcoming feature-length documentary, 'Plot 35', is slated for release in 2017.

Company Profile

Les Films du Poisson is a French cinema production company created by Yaël Fogiel and Laetitia Gonzalez in 1995. Since 2006, under the guidance of producer Estelle Fialon, the company has developed its production of documentary films for both television and the cinema on an international scale. The company has a catalogue of more than 100 titles, which have been released and sold in France and around the world. Among them are Mathieu Amalric's 'On Tour' (2010), Julie Bertuccelli's 'Since Otar Left' (2003) and 'The Tree' (2010) and Michale Boganim's 'Land of Oblivion' (2011). Les Films du Poisson has displayed a strong commitment to an exacting cinema that has earned both popular and critical success and won a string of international awards, including five Césars, Best Director and Caméra d'Or awards at the Festival de Cannes, and Jean Vigo and Louis Delluc Awards. Always curious to discover new talent, the company continues to collaborate with renowned directors like Amalric, Bertuccelli and Emmanuel Finkiel, while still producing the work of first-time filmmakers, and exploring new media and original television series.

Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Diana El Jeiroudi
Director



Orwa Nyrabia, Camille Laemlé
Producers



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Republic of Silence

Syria, Germany, France, Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Biography, Creative Documentary
Interests: Immigration, Politics, Social Issues

She grew up in a land of dictators and surveillance. Today, from her exile, she is reclaiming the images and sounds of Syrians, half of whom are scattered around the world.



She grew up in the lands of dictators and surveillance, where images are censored, photos are burned, thoughts are discreet, and mouths are kept shut. Forty years later, from her exile in Germany, Diana El Jeiroudi is a documentary filmmaker reclaiming the images and sounds of the Syrian land and its people, half of whom are scattered around the world. In this emotionally charged carefully crafted film, El Jeiroudi presents a first-person account of how she ended up in Berlin, how she grew up to internalise a world of silence and oppression, how she learned to negotiate her existence and well-being in the face of a mutating enemy, how she bore witness and became involved, how she revolted and claimed herself – and how cinema has saved her life.

Director's Note

Throughout my life, I have enjoyed playing around with people's obsessions with stereotyping each other according to religion, ethnicity, gender, nationality or language. Because people are rarely able to locate me within a religion or ethnicity, I have had a safe space in which to breathe and exist, but still remain unnoticed. Unlike the majority of people around the world, I enjoyed staying unidentified: I was anonymous. Today, I am a Syrian – and that is all I am for everyone, Syrians and non-Syrians alike. The sense of rage I feel today is immense, for, once again, I must negotiate a space where I can exist and breathe – a necessity that means struggling against the stereotypes created by everyone around me. It is my individual responsibility today to show that Syria is not a YouTube video, nor is it a newsflash; it is neither the cradle of civilisation, nor a flag, nor a symbol of radicalism, war or liberation.

Director's Biography

Diana El Jeiroudi is a Syrian director and producer who has resided in Berlin since 2013. In 2002, she co-founded Proaction Film, the first independent production company in Syria after the Damascus Spring. Her filmography includes 'The Pot' (2005), which was selected for the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, and 'Dolls, A Woman from Damascus' (2007) and 'Morning Fears, Night Chants' (2012), both of which screened at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam. In 2008, she co-founded the DOX BOX Film Festival, followed by the DOX BOX Association in Berlin. El Jeiroudi's work has been recognised through various awards, including an EDN Award and a Katrin Cartlidge Award. She has served as a juror for several film festivals and funds, including Sundance, the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam and One World, and she sat on the jury of L'Oeil d'Or, the first documentary award at the Festival de Cannes, in 2015. She is a member of the Deutsche Filmakademie.

Company Profile

No Nation Films is a film production company that specialises in creative documentary films for the international market, founded in Berlin in 2014 by Orwa Nyrabia and Diana El Jeiroudi. Over the years, the company has co-produced films with partners from Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany and Yemen. Its award-winning documentaries encompass a variety of topics, including women's rights, cultural identity, radicalisation and life in the midst of war. No Nation Films productions have been released theatrically in Austria, France, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain and the UK, and have been screened in more than 150 film festivals around the world, including at Amsterdam, Busan, Cannes, Locarno, London, New York, Sundance and Toronto. Its films have been broadcast worldwide on numerous television networks, as well as on premium VOD platforms. No Nation Films' productions have won a considerable number of awards, including a Grierson Award and a Sundance Grand Jury Prize.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Saeed Al Batal,
Ghiath Al Haddad
Directors



Saeed Al Batal
Screenwriter



Mohammad Ali Atassi
Producer



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The Desert, 1000 Days

Syria, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 120 min

Genre: Biography, Creative Documentary, Road Trip

Interests: Identity, Immigration, Politics, Social Issues, War, Youth

Two artists become entwined in the affairs of the besieged city of Gouta in this personal story about a group of young people in Syria.



'Al Sahra' is a feature documentary that follows art students Saeed and Milad, who decide to leave Damascus and go to Douma, a suburb under rebel control. Over more than four years, the film depicts the two friends and their acquaintances as they go about their daily lives, capturing the transformation of the city of Douma and its people as they go through liberation, war, siege and hunger. More than 500 hours of footage was shot, and the men face grave questions about life and death, revolution and armed struggle, dreams and doubts, fear and love, and the use of art in a world facing destruction. Saeed and Milad try to launch a graffiti art project in Douma, but things in the besieged city take a turn for the worse after a chemical attack on eastern Gouta. After he loses one of his friends, Milad decides to revive the art project with the help of his friends by painting colourful graffiti on the grey, devastated walls of the city. Saeed and Milad finally get out of Douma and seek refuge in Beirut, where they face loss, exile and hope.

Director's Note

The conflict that followed the uprising in Syria changed the life of every Syrian in a most extreme way, but the stories of individuals are lost among news reports. 'The Desert, 1000 Days' provides unique access to a place on the frontline: the besieged city of Douma – a revolution stronghold – which has witnessed the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. The spectator is thrown into the world of the Syrian revolution as seen through the eyes of a small group of friends; the film becomes a prism for their dreams, fears, loves, wars and battles between life and death. We see how they struggle to make their art exist in a world undergoing destruction. As Saeed Al Batal, one of the main subjects and co-director of the film, says: "The image is the last defence line against time; it is my defence line against reality, my tool for preserving my balance and a way to elude the question: What are we doing?"

Director's Biography

Saeed Al Batal was born in Tartous, Syria, in 1988, and is a citizen journalist, photographer and filmmaker. He is a founder of Humans of Syria, the online gallery Sam Lenses, and many other projects. He has worked as a reporter for several radio stations, including NPR and Denmark Radio.

Ghiath Al Haddad was born in Syria in 1989 and graduated from the faculty of Fine Art at the University of Damascus in 2013. A videographer and sound recordist with directing and producing experience in Syria and Lebanon, Al Haddad has worked with local and international NGOs, teaching visual communication and art therapy to refugee children in Lebanon. He has also been involved with numerous non-profit organisations, such as Humans of Syria, with graphic design work and short films that have been featured on websites and in exhibition spaces around the world.

Company Profile

Launched in early 2013, Bidayyat for Audiovisual Arts is a civil company that specialises in producing short and feature-length documentaries made by emerging Syrian filmmakers who wish to question and reflect on the reality they witness from their own distinct points of view. As a platform for exchange and education, Bidayyat seeks to contribute to the re-emergence of a documentary cinema in the Middle East that relates to and interacts with its societies. Bidayyat develops and produces its film projects through its own funding, as well as by acquiring regional funds and through international co-production.

Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2016

Ghada Terawi
Director



May Odeh
Producer



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The Forgotten

'Al Mansi' / Palestine, Qatar / Arabic, English, Japanese / 2018

Runtime: 90 min
Genre: Biography
Interests: History, Identity

A look at the life of Kozo Okamoto, a Japanese freedom fighter who gave up his life in Japan after joining the movement to liberate Palestine.



A journey in the life of Kozo Okamoto, a Japanese freedom fighter and member of the Japanese Red Army, who gave up his life in Japan to join the Palestinian liberation movement. The film knits together a map of Okamoto's journey through stories of Palestinian and Japanese people who passed through Kozo's life. Living the romantic dream of being a "world revolutionary" was a stage in Okamoto's life, but being the lone surviving perpetrator of the Lod Airport Operation in 1972 was a turning point. Interrogation in Israeli jails, a trial and 13 years in Israeli prisons marked his whole life and formed the person he is now. Being freed from prison after a prisoner-exchange deal between Israel and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1985 took him on another journey, where he faced loss, insecurity, guilt and betrayal. 'The Forgotten' seeks to reveal Okamoto's life journey, which is full of contradictions: ups and downs, waiting and hope, pain and frustration.

Director's Note

As I am the daughter of two Palestinian militants, the idea of revolution was part of my childhood, history and personality. I was born in Beirut during the 1970s, a period when the idea of "liberation" was dominant. Contrary to what I see now in the eyes of those who lived and worked with the liberation movement, I remember how proud, enthusiastic, active the Palestinians were when I was young. Most of those people - my father included - now feel helpless and are very pessimistic. This made me think about our situation as Palestinians, how lost and forgotten we have become. This is reflected in the situation of Kozo Okamoto, a Japanese man who also left his family, country and life for the sake of a liberation movement, and who ended up forgotten in a foreign country. I thought maybe it was time to rediscover the compass we have lost, and to try to answer some questions to which most Palestinians do not have answers.

Director's Biography

Ghada Terawi was born to Palestinian militants in Beirut in 1972. She grew up between Beirut, Tunis and Cairo, and graduated from the American University of Cairo with a BA in International Relations. She currently lives in Palestine. Terawi began working in the field of documentary filmmaking in 1998, and produced her first film, 'Staying Alive', in 2001. Her other films include 'What's Next' (2003), 'The Way Back Home' (2006), 'The Last Station' (2007), 'Golden Pomegranate Seeds' (2009), 'On Air' (2011) and 'The Storyteller' (2013).

Company Profile

Odeh Films is an independent film production company based in Ramallah. The company focuses on producing creative documentary and author-driven narrative films. Odeh Films also provides production services for filmmakers shooting in Palestine, as well as distribution for independent films.

Post-Production Grant

Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2016

Mohamad Soueid

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Pamela Ghanimeh

Producer



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The Insomnia of a Serial Dreamer

'Hanine Al Ghoobar' / Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 90 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

A personal essay of dreams, images and clouds, built from visual materials filmed over the last 15 years in different formats and locations.



Facing his insomniac nature, the author of this film meets with several people, asking each one of them to tell him a story that will help him sleep – but this attempt goes on for years. After 15 years of shooting, interrupted on numerous occasions, none of the rushes – which were supposed to be edited and shaped into coherent, unified stories – have found their way into the intended film. Over the course of time, those rushes became dreams that have haunted the director over the years. As dreams have no end, so a film might have no end as well. Instead of making a film about a director's attempt to cure himself of insomnia, the project becomes a film essay on a director's voyage in time and a yearning for dreams made up of images and recollections gathered over the passing years.

Director's Note

I have always seen my city from an archeological point of view, piecing together history, metropolitan architecture, society, politics, culture, humans, wars and countless other things melded together in a chaos of harmony and delusion. This archeological mode I have been interested in exploring through my films is an overarching structure that cherishes us, and yet from which we have inherited our existing agony. In my new film, I would like to be removed from my images to try to look at this place I live in – this Beirut I love and frequently leave just to go back again – as it looks to me: a present in the past tense. 'The Insomnia of a Serial Dreamer' is a film about my past as well.

Director's Biography

Born in Beirut in 1959, **Mohamad Soueid** is a Lebanese writer, director and producer. Currently, he is Head of Documentary at Al Arabiya News Channel. As a director, he has made several films, including 'Tango of Yearning' (1998), 'Nightfall' (2000), 'Civil War' (2002) and 'How Bitter, My Sweet' (2010). In addition, Soueid has written the books 'Postponed Cinema – Lebanese Films During the Civil War' (1986), 'O Heart – A Film Autobiography on the Late Movie Theatres of Old Beirut' (1996) and the novel 'Cabaret Souad' (2004).

Company Profile

PM Productions was established in 2017 and is dedicated to the production and co-production of creative/auteur documentaries made by Arab filmmakers.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2016

Daniel McCabe
Director



Geoff McLean
Producer



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This Is Congo

USA, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Qatar / English, French, Lingala, Swahili / 2017

Runtime: 88 min

Genre: Creative Documentary

Interests: Environment, History, Social Issues

An unfiltered look into the lives of three people who are surviving amid the most recent cycle of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo - the M23 rebellion.



'This Is Congo' is an unblinking, unfiltered look into one of the world's longest-standing ongoing wars and those who are surviving within it. With over three years of heart-stopping footage, this feature-length documentary challenges the Western idea of the Congo, never shying away from the violence and atrocities that cycle through this breathtaking landscape. With the powerful voices of three fearless characters - a mineral dealer, a national army commander and an internally displaced survivor of war - we begin to see the paradox of the Congo: beauty and brutality illuminated under darkness.

Director's Note

In late 2008, I travelled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a photographer during the CNDP rebellion. After experiencing firsthand the complexity of the situation on the ground, I began drafting an outline that explored the cycles of violence that plague this country and the components that support them. I returned in 2011 to team up with veteran Congolese field producer Horeb Bulambo. We cast a wide net across the Kivu region, searching for stories that would help us understand the cause and effect that perpetuates these cycles of conflict. In 2012, the M23 rebellion ignited and during this time we met the four people that would later form the backbone of the film's narrative. Mama Romance, Hakiza, Mamadou and Colonel Kasongo, all of whom live the story of a country plagued by instability and exploitation. Their dedication and desire to share their stories despite the risk is bold, and I hope 'This Is Congo' does them the justice they deserve.

Director's Biography

Daniel McCabe is a cinematographer, photographer and director based in New York and The Democratic Republic of Congo. His work has appeared in National Geographic, The New York Times, BBC, Al Jazeera and CNN among others. 'This Is Congo' is Daniel's first feature-length documentary. Daniel is represented by Redux Pictures for his photo-graphic work.

Company Profile

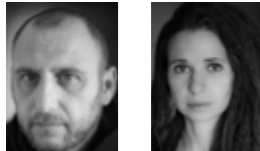
Vision Film was founded in 2006 by producer Geoff McLean and has since produced content for almost every major American record label and advertising agency. Clients include brands such as Lexus, Mercedes, Jeep, Adidas, Powerade, Budweiser and Coca-Cola, and artists including Rihanna, Kanye West, Drake and Lana Del Rey. Having won numerous awards and accolades in various short-format genres, including a Grammy Award nomination, Vision is now focusing on creating independent narrative feature films and feature-length documentaries that revolve around social and political issues.

Post-Production Grant
Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2016

Trophy

USA, UK, Qatar / English / 2017

Shaul Schwarz, Christina Clusiau
Directors



Runtime: 90 min
Genre: Creative Documentary

'Trophy' takes an in-depth look at the controversial multi-billion-dollar big-game hunting industry, unravelling the complex and often misrepresented consequences of imposing economic value on animals.



'Trophy' takes an in-depth look at the multi-billion dollar industry behind big-game hunting, animal farming and breeding, both in Africa and the USA. The film explores the complex consequences of imposing economic value on wild animals, in particular rare and threatened species such as the lion, elephant and rhino. Is it cruel or wrong to treat wild animals as commodities? Or does breeding, farming and hunting them perhaps provide the only certain way to protect them?

Shaul Schwarz
Screenwriter



Julia Nottingham
Producer



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Director's Note

Endangered African species, like the elephant, rhinoceros and lion, march ever closer to extinction every year. Their devastating decline is fuelled by a global desire to collect and consume these majestic animals. 'Trophy' investigates the powerhouse industries of big-game hunting, breeding and wildlife conservation. Through the eyes of impassioned individuals who drive these industries, the film grapples with the complex consequences of imposing economic value on animals. What are the ethical implications of treating animals as commodities? Do breeding, farming and hunting offer some of the few remaining options to conserve these animals before it is too late?

Director's Biography

Shaul Schwarz is a documentary film director, cinematographer and award-winning photojournalist. His feature-length documentary 'Narco Cultura' (2013) premiered at Sundance and screened at film festivals worldwide, including the Berlinale and the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival. He has shot and directed content for TNT, the Discovery Channel, the History Channel and CNN. Schwarz also regularly contributes photography to 'TIME' magazine and 'National Geographic'. Based in New York City, he is currently producing short film content for online publications while developing his third feature-length documentary.

Christina Clusiau is a documentary filmmaker, cinematographer and photojournalist based in New York City. In 2013, Christina co-founded Reel Peak Films, a production company that specialises in short and long-form documentary films, commercials and television content made with cinematic quality and journalistic integrity. Clusiau shot the Emmy-nominated web series 'A Year in Space', in partnership with 'TIME' magazine's Red Border Films, as well as the feature documentary 'Aida's Secrets', which had its premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival in 2016.

Company Profile

Pulse Films excels in producing fiction films and music documentaries that are provocative and redefining in their approach. We work with the world's leading directors and talent and collaborate with some of the most influential figures in film to create eventful, genre-defying theatrical releases and television. Pulse's film division began by redefining the music doc genre, giving documentaries like Will Lovelace and Dylan Southern's seminal LCD Soundsystem film 'Shut Up and Play the Hits' (2012) a cinematic edge that opened the band up to new audiences, while Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's Nick Cave documentary '20,000 Days on Earth' (2014) won two Sundance Awards and a BAFTA nomination. Marc Silver's 'Who is Dayani Cristal?' (2013) won two awards at Sundance, and Lovelace and Southern's Blur doc 'No Distance Left to Run' (2010) was nominated for a Grammy Award. Dan Cutforth and Jane Lipsitz's 'Katy Perry - Part of Me 3D' (2012) was the fourth-highest-grossing music documentary of all time. The company's recent credits include Rob Egger's 'The Witch' (2015) and Michal Marczak's acclaimed documentary 'All These Sleepless Nights' (2016), both of which won Best Director Awards at Sundance, and Andrea Arnold's 'American Honey' (2016).

Short Narrative

Born in the Maelstrom

Clouds

Disruption

Green Eyes

Kashta

The Dog's Children

The Key

The President's Visit

To the One Who Didn't Give Me Life

Short Experimental or Essay

I Have Been Watching You All Along

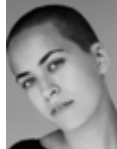
Production Grant

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

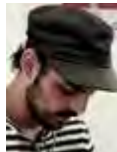
Meryam Joobeur

Director / Screenwriter



Hany Ouichou

Producer



Born in the Maelstrom

Tunisia, Canada, Qatar / English / 2017

Runtime: 25 min

Genre: Adaptation, Coming of age

Interests: Identity, Social Issues, Women

Rebecca, an 18-year-old biracial girl, searches for liberation from an imaginary world shaped by her black mother's painful past.



Inspired by the novel 'Naissance de Rebecca à l'ère des tourments' by Québécoise author Marie-Claire Blais, 'Born in the Maelstrom' is an impressionistic coming-of-age story of an 18-year-old biracial girl named Rebecca and her struggle against racism, oppression and the karmic ties that haunt the human spirit. The film follows Rebecca as she endures her last days on an all-female commune with her black mother Vénus.

Contact

Art & Essai

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Director's Note

What drew me to adapting the story of 'Naissance de Rebecca à l'ère des tourments' was the chance to reflect on the human condition through the perspective of women of colour. There is a tendency in cinema to view historical events through the lens of patriarchy, connecting them to a man's journey to fight or survive injustice. I wanted to explore Rebecca's reality as a young, biracial woman, the fears she inherited from her mother, and her personal hopes.

Director's Biography

Meryam Joobeur is a Tunisian filmmaker based in Montreal. She is a graduate of Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema in Montreal. Her first documentary, 'Gods, Weeds & Revolutions' (2012), explores themes of memory through Alzheimer's and the Tunisian revolution, and was screened internationally, winning several awards, including the Best Canadian Documentary prize at the DOXA International Documentary Festival. Joobeur has been a participant of the Producer's Network of the Carthage International Film Festival, the Berlinale Talent Lab, the Rawi Screenwriter's Lab and the TIFF Talent Lab.

Company Profile

Founded in Montreal in 2012, Art & Essai aims to offer creators the means to express their vision of cinema and life. We strive to develop unconventional and provocative films that will retain their relevance many years from now. To date, Art & Essai has produced a dozen short films and three feature films that have been well-received in Canada and internationally.

Production Grant

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Muzna Almusafaer

Director / Screenwriter



Stephen Strachan

Producer



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Clouds

'Ghoyoom' / Oman, Qatar / Jibali / 2017

Runtime: 17 min

Genre: Short Narrative

Interests: History, Politics

A leopard hunter in a traditional village in the mountains goes through a transformation.



In 1978, in the south of Oman some time after the Dhofar Rebellion, Ghafali is a widower and war veteran who lives with his daughter and son in a traditional village on Samhan Mountain. Ghafali faces pressure from his tribe to kill a leopard that has threatened the village – pressure that becomes all the greater when he decides not to kill the animal, instead setting it free.

Director's Note

'Clouds' is set in 1978, two years after the Dhofar rebellion in the south of Oman. The project reflects my fascination with the culture of the south – my dearest childhood remembrance is of visiting the mountains every summer, loving the closeness I experienced with the inhabitants. I always wished in those days that I could become a Jibbali myself. For me, this film is a journey that takes us inside a tribal society that is undergoing a transformation, and an opportunity to explore Oman cinematically from a new angle.

Director's Biography

Muzna Almusafaer was born in Muscat. Her admiration for images began at an early age through her father, a painter and photographer. She graduated from Kuwait University majoring in Mass Communication with a minor in Political Science, and studied Swedish Cinema and Television Culture at Stockholm University. Her first short film, 'Niqab', won the student competition short at the Gulf Film Festival in 2010. 'Cholo' (2013) won the Best Script prize at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, had its premiere at the Dubai International Film Festival, and was screened at several festivals and institutes. 'PASHK' and 'The Goats of Dana', two creative documentaries that Almusafaer collaborated on, were screened in the DOX Film festival in Copenhagen and KIFAK in Tunisia, and at the Women Deliver World Conference. In 2016, Almusafaer participated with her project 'Clouds' at the Robert Bosch Foundation in the Amman Project Market.

Company Profile

Based in the UAE, Europe and the USA, Film Solutions is a group of experienced creative producers who share the goal of creating premium films and television content in the Middle East. The company likes to work with the best and brightest creative minds and loves investing its time and energy to nurture up-and-coming directors, writers and producers. Veteran producer Paul Miller and Stephen Strachan have been working in the Gulf region for the past six years. They met at the Doha Film Institute, where Paul was Director of Film Financing and Stephen ran a creative development team dedicated to helping Qatar's filmmakers tell their stories. Both wanted to invest more time in the Middle East, and they set up Film Solutions in early 2016. They have since been joined by Canadian producer Sahar Yousefi in the UAE. Miller and Strachan will produce 'Scales', Saudi director Shahad Ameen's first feature-length film, in the spring of 2017.

Production Grant

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Feyrouz Serhal

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Lara Abu Saifan, Felipe Lage Coro, Stefan Gieren

Producers



Contact

Roummana

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Disruption

'Tshweesh' / Lebanon, Germany, Spain, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 14 min

Genre: Based on a True Story, Thriller

Interests: War

The World Cup begins and the people of Beirut are excited - but the highly anticipated event is disrupted by strange audio waves that make way for a much bigger live event.



Today, the FIFA World Cup championship begins. The people of Beirut have eagerly anticipated the big event, but for some reason the signal of the match is disrupted on all channels. Meanwhile, the city is engulfed by strange, increasingly violent sounds. Soon the people realise an Israeli attack is in progress, but instead of running away and hiding, they find they now have the opportunity to witness a much bigger live event from the tops of buildings. The people on the various roofs are in a good position to watch the attack, while those lower down try to find spots higher up. While Israel sends messages to leave the city, a happy song plays on the radio and a girl of 10 is on a swing, flying between the balcony and the open air.

Director's Note

Life moves non-stop, and that is what defines it. Movement is also what defines cinema. Like life, cinema moves; it does not end when the credits roll. In Beirut, Lidia continues the walk begun in Milan in Michelangelo Antonioni's 'La Notte' in 1961; just as she felt nostalgic in an old neighbourhood in Milan then, now Lidia walks and fears for the old buildings of Beirut. When she looks up and sees the planes over Milan in 1961, she does not know that, many years in the future, she will walk in Beirut and look up to see Israeli planes. In 'Disruption', I accompany Lidia, as a human being and an artist, as she leads me into myself, and into the resilient city that has always faced the worst fears.

Director's Biography

Feyrouz Serhal obtained her Master's degree in Film and Screen Studies from Goldsmiths College University of London, after having worked extensively as director and producer at some of the most prominent Arab television channels in the Middle East. She has also written and directed several independent short video works. Serhal is now the managing director of Roummana, a newly formed production boutique based in Beirut. She is currently developing 'I Am Here But You Can't See Me', her first feature film as a director. She is also working on producing her most recent short film, 'Disruption'.

Company Profile

Roummana is a burgeoning production boutique with a revolutionary flair. Its intent is to scout out and provide quality content and production services for filmmakers, independent visual artists, independent musicians and broadcasters in the Middle East. Roummana's mission is to research and acquire progressive ideas from the MENA region and to facilitate their development into various formats for cinema, television and the web. The focus is on making this content viable and accessible to Arab audiences without compromising quality.

Production Grant

Short Narrative
Spring Grants 2016

Abdullah Al-Mulla

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Mohammed Shibly

Producer



Green Eyes

'Al-'Ouyoon Al-Khadraa' / Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 10 min

Genre: Drama

The tireless struggle of a coma patient in the oceanic depths of his own reality, as he faces off against his own ego and the mysterious monster that lives within.



A blue-eyed coma patient swims from the end of a pier to the deepest point of the ocean of himself, where he meets his long-lost, yellow-eyed ego in a battle of wit and brawn – for control, for resolution, for truth. A daemon lingers about them whispering, slowly taking control, until he reveals himself. Now, the protagonist must make a decision. Will he rot on the ocean floor? Or will he soar through the ocean and up to the sky with the help of ego?

Contact

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Director's Note

I love films that contain within them the heart and blood of a writer – films that love all their characters and do not belittle any of them, rather giving them their due; films that respect the viewer and do not dumb things down or altogether neglect the existence of the audience. In shooting a film, I love to make it a process in which all the team is involved, so that they have a stake in working hard and making something beautiful, and that allows actors to express their characters as they themselves have come to know them.

Director's Biography

Abdullah Al-Mulla grew up in Qatar until moving abroad to pursue his university studies. He became involved in film through the Doha Film Institute, where he has worked on numerous short films since 2013. He wrote and directed the short film 'Old Airport Road' (2014), which explores the theme of care, and 'Yellow Nights' (2015), a seven-minute, single-shot film. Currently, Al-Mulla is working on 'A Journey to/from Love', a screenplay related to the cosmic sense of a relationship, which received a grant from the Qatari Film Fund and is now in post-production.

Production Grant

Short Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2016

Rawda Al-Thani

Director / Screenwriter



Kamal Aljafari

Producer



Contact

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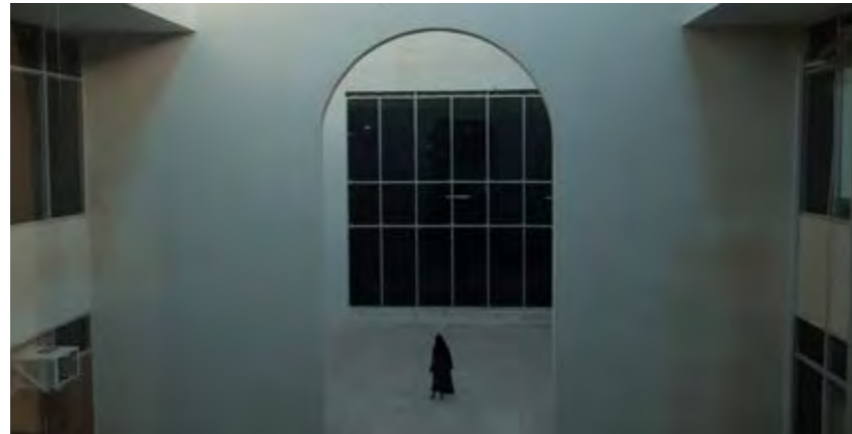
I Have Been Watching You All Along

'A'tarif Anany Baqeit Uraqibuk Taweelan' / Qatar / No Dialogue / 2017

Runtime: 10 min

Genre: Arthouse

A girl explores the forgotten memories of an abandoned cinema through a trancelike journey into its past.



A young woman wanders about an abandoned cinema, rummaging through its storerooms and curiously exploring the mechanical and celluloid detritus that has been left behind. A sense of transgression is in the air - the woman is, after all, trespassing - and she finds herself constantly being watched by several men who, we assume, oversee the disused property. This vague threat notwithstanding, she projects scraps of old footage, creating a freeform narrative all her own, breathing new life into forgotten artifacts.

Director's Note

This film is a result of my explorations into and curiosity about the beginnings of cinema in Qatar. While I know the cinema was present during my childhood, it rapidly lost its popularity when I was very young so I only vaguely remember its existence. I only have the slightest memory of its location. What I do know is that it was a magical place that used to open its vast doors for the sole purpose of engulfing patrons in its screens, so I set out to find out why those doors are now locked.

Director's Biography

Rawda Al-Thani likes to spend her time exploring places in Qatar where the nation's past and present landscapes have merged to form its current state. Through these explorations she finds inspiration for her short films and art projects. She studied Communications at Northwestern University in Qatar, where she focused on Experimental Filmmaking, Art Directing and Middle Eastern Studies. Her first short film was shot in Doha's abandoned Gulf Cinema and portrays the search for an answer to the explorer's questions of identity through her journey into that forgotten space.

Production Grant

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

A.J. Al Thani

Director / Screenwriter



Jaime Siordia

Producer



Kashta

Qatar / Arabic / 2016

Runtime: 12 min

Genre: Coming of age, Drama, Road Trip, Thriller

Interests: Children, Youth

A father takes his two sons out on a trip to the desert to go hunting, but the results are not quite what he was expecting.



Out in the beautiful quiet of the windswept dunes, a man teaches his young sons the traditional desert skills of tracking and hunting. Frustration leads to an apparently harmless struggle between the two brothers – but then carelessness brings about sudden disaster. Alternating calm with calamity, adolescence with adulthood, and knowhow with panic, 'Kashta' captures a seemingly simple story about an innocent plan gone horribly wrong.

Contact

The Film House

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Director's Note

This project is a film I've been wanting to make for a long time and I am very happy and lucky to finally be doing it. I think we can all be tough on our siblings from time to time, and to see how putting aside differences by working together to solve a problem, and exploring the different layers of these characters to make them be compelling and work together was the most fun I've had working on any project to date.

Director's Biography

A.J. Al Thani is a Qatar-born filmmaker. Her love for movies and moviemaking began at the age of six when she saw 'Star Wars' (1977) in the cinema in 1999. She began to pursue her dream of being a filmmaker with the launch of the Doha Film Institute. Her relationship with the Institute began in 2010 when she participated in one of its first film workshops, which opened the door for many local filmmakers to pursue their passion. For almost six years she has been developing her skills with the help of the Institute. 'Kashta' was made through a grant from the Doha Film Institute.

Company Profile

Made up of talented, experienced and creative storytellers, documentarians, animators, photographers and filmmakers, The Film House is an award-winning Doha-based film, video and multi-media production company unlike any other in the region. With a wealth of local knowledge and with Qatar's community in mind, the company is primed to foster local talent and to redefine visual storytelling in the region. We are a home for high-calibre international productions and local productions. At The Film House, it is our ambition to raise the bar – technical and artistic – for the film production industry in Qatar.

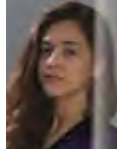
Production Grant

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Layan Abdul Shakoor

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Reem Saad

Producer



Contact

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The Dog's Children

'Atfal Alkalb' / Saudi Arabia, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 15 min

Genre: Drama

An abusive Saudi father assigns his innocent and imaginative eight-year-old son the gruesome task of killing the rabid neighbourhood dog.



In Jeddah during the economically transformative year of 1973, a rabid neighbourhood dog catalyses the implosion of a disintegrating family. Fifty-year-old Adel is perpetually enraged by The Dog's piercing barking, but more significantly, he fails to tame his temper in order to keep his family together. His 18-year-old daughter Khadija is gradually going deaf, her only source of sensory pleasure the faint howling of The Dog, while his eight-year-old son Faisal is timid and naive, unfortunately finding himself stuck smack in the middle of a looming family war. When a bitter family argument erupts out of bottled-up frustration, Adel bargains to kill two birds with one stone: he will toughen up his crybaby of a son by teaching him how to fire a gun in order to kill The Dog. Will Faisal choose to silence his father's wrath, or to preserve his sister's only source of joy?

Director's Note

I was staying in Istanbul. For five consecutive nights, two rabid neighbourhood dogs excessively barked at daybreak. I was sleepless until the sixth night, when suddenly the dogs stopped barking. I stood next to my window, only to see a young boy yelling at them with aggressive hand gestures. How did he learn such violence? Why does he need to be so intimidating? Those questions echoed in my head for months. What further inspired 'The Dog's Children' was hearing my community's stories of domestic violence. What interests me most, however, is how violence is often expressed through emotional torment, not through physical abuse, and this is what the film's triangular father-daughter-son relationship aims to demonstrate. The father is an intimidating presence lurking above both children, keeping them on edge in their own home. Ultimately, the film's undertones suggest that with the persistence of such unfortunate familial environments, violent youth – just like that young Turkish boy – are inevitably born of circumstance.

Director's Biography

Layan Abdul Shakoor is a Saudi filmmaker based in the Arabian Gulf. Hailing from a multicultural background, she aims to encompass and empower the melting pot of Arabian culture and its divergent roots in her films. Having recently graduated as valedictorian with a BSc in Media Industries and Technologies from Northwestern University, Abdul Shakoor worked as an assistant editor on Danielle Beverly's feature-length documentary 'Dusty Groove' (2016), interned with The Film House as a Production Assistant, and co-produced a short web-based ad for Ooredoo. In 2015, Layan received grants to produce Mariam Mahsud's short film 'Lor', which featured in the Short Film Corner at the Festival de Cannes in 2016, and for 'The Dog's Children', which is now in production. Currently, Layan is applying for various Master's programmes in production and development, and working as a freelancer while pursuing her lifelong passion of learning to play the piano.

Production Grant

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2016

Ghassan Jaradat

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Georg Neubert

Producer



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The Key

'Fathi Moftah' / Jordan, Germany, Qatar / Arabic, English / 2017

Runtime: 10 min

Genre: Animation, Drama, Fantasy

Interests: Children, Identity, Social Issues

Fathi Moftah, a child refugee who is obsessed with collecting keys, finds a hidden door in his father's key shop.



Fathi Moftah, a child refugee, is obsessed with collecting keys. One day, while he is working at his father's locksmith shop, he finds a hidden turquoise door behind the keys that cover the walls of the shop. The discovery of the mysterious door transforms Fathi's collection into magical keys that give him access to many fantastical worlds. He goes on a journey, alternating between fantasy and reality, that causes chaos and havoc for his family. He unknowingly opens the wounds of his father, destroys what is dear to his mother, and steals what is left of home from his grandmother, all in the process of learning of his right to return to his homeland.

Director's Note

'The Key' is a poetic exploration of the struggles and anxieties of displacement across several generations, as well as what constitutes a home within such circumstances. Through the utilisation of the fantastic, we follow the journey of a child refugee becoming aware of the individual's right to freedom, and of the right to return to one's original homeland. The film presents a metaphor and an intricate web of symbols to portray a universal experience, a journey, that every refugee born in displacement goes on – a journey marked by hope and despair, by freedom and imprisonment, and by fantasy and reality.

Director's Biography

Ghassan Jaradat is a director and screenwriter based in Amman. He is currently a resident writer and director at Writers' Cell, a Middle Eastern creative writing and creative content company, as well as a freelance assistant director for Telemax Productions. He specialises in creative directing and conceptual design, and has turned many conventional projects into pieces of commercial art for prominent companies. He received his bachelor's degree in Media Arts and Culture from Occidental College in Los Angeles. During his studies he gained valuable experience from studying abroad in Prague.

Production Grant

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2016

Cyril Aris

Director / Screenwriter



Mounia Akl

Screenwriter



Valerie Martinez, Marc Fadel

Producers



Contact

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The President's Visit

'Ziyarat Alra'ees' / Lebanon, USA, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 18 min

Genre: Comedy, Drama, Satire

When the men in a fishing village learn of the secret upcoming visit of their country's president to its local soap shop, they embark on a never-ending struggle to maintain the perfect image of their town.



In a small coastal fishing town where time stands still, Nino, a lonely 30-something who recently inherited his father's well-known artisanal soap shop, receives a dodgy yet very confidential phone call: The President of the Republic, currently on a cleansing campaign to purify the country from corruption, greed and bribery, will grant him a surprise visit to buy his handmade soaps. For security reasons, the when and how cannot be disclosed, and the information must remain top secret. After Nino mistakenly leaks the exciting intel to his uncle, the entire town learns of the ever-so-disruptive news, and so they embark on a maddening struggle to keep their village spick and span - literally and metaphorically - for the visit of His Excellency.

Director's Note

"To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it" - Charlie Chaplin. It is that bittersweet pain of caring too much for a country we call home that drives the story of 'The President's Visit', set in Lebanon's political deadlock, during which time the Presidential seat had been vacant for more than two years. This absurdity is something you cry at, play with... and eventually laugh at. I find it inherently Lebanese to play with contradictions, so adopting a contrasting tone to the subject matter is truthful to both place and identity. Comedy becomes a self-imposed remedy to make a situation more bearable, while our lives simply pass by. But in this film, the townsfolk eagerly overdress and over-prepare for the coming of the President - for a better future, for a better life. Because this time, change is coming... Maybe tomorrow is, indeed, a better day.

Director's Biography

Lebanese director and screenwriter **Cyril Aris** obtained an MFA from Columbia University. The last short film he produced, 'Submarine' (2016), was in the official selection of the Cinéfondation competition at the Festival de Cannes, as well as the Toronto International Film Festival, and won the Jury Prize at the Dubai International Film Festival. The last short he directed, 'Siham' (2013), won a Jury Award for Best Short at the Palm Springs International ShortFest. He is currently in post-production with his first feature-length documentary, 'The Swing'; his previous credits include the television series 'Beirut, I Love You' (2011-12) and the Yahoo web series 'Fasateen' (2012), as well as various other short films. Aris has taught Filmmaking and Film History classes at Columbia University, NHSI at Northwestern University, and Barnard College.

Director's Biography

IndieFlip is a creative development and production company dedicated to films that champion stories from diverse and underrepresented groups, characters of unlikely backgrounds and situations, and content that crosses cultures. Our mission is to creatively collaborate with a milieu of talents and work together to deliver strong films with quality content. We strive to protect the artist's creative vision and integrity, putting stories first. We develop original content and are heavily involved in the creative process from inception all the way to distribution. Our films are set in different parts of the world (the U.S., the Philippines, Spain, Indonesia and Lebanon) and have played in several festivals worldwide and won numerous awards and grants (Directors Guild of America, Entertainment Partners, National Board of Review, Caucus Foundation, Katharina Otto Bernstein, DFI, Film Independent).

Production Grant
Short Narrative
Spring Grants 2016

Wassim Geagea

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Gabriel Chamoun

Producer



Contact

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To the One Who Didn't Give Me Life

'Illa Alati Lam Tahibni Alhayat' / Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 25 min

Genre: Docufiction, Drama

Interests: Children

When his mother unexpectedly dies, a nine-year-old boy kidnaps a statue of the Virgin Mary in order to blackmail Jesus into returning her.



'To the One Who Didn't Give Me Life' tells the story of Wassim, a nine-year-old boy born and raised in a religious Christian family in Lebanon. When his mother dies, Wassim's father explains that Jesus needed her more than Wassim. Wassim responds by kidnapping a statue of the Virgin Mary to blackmail Jesus into returning her. Eventually, Wassim realises that his mother will not return, so he makes the statue look like his mother, then buries it. The grave becomes a shrine he visits whenever he wants to talk to his mother. The movie is an intimate narrative of loss, based on a true story and complemented by real-life testimonies throughout the film.

Director's Note

What is death? Why do we have to die? Where do we go after we die? Is there life after death? Questions that left their impact on my childhood and turned my life upside down. Through this film, I want to dig deep into the psychological world of that boy, as an attempt to get to know him better. I want to accompany his psychological state and all the suffering he went through when faced with this ordeal. This is my challenge: building a character from scratch that would be a small portrait of me, a character that I complete, discuss and clash with. I speak to it about itself and it speaks to me about itself. It tells me about its struggles so I bring it to life so that it will voice what I could not say myself. I want this character to cry, struggle, hurt, question... speak. It is a simple human story, telling and expressing a major event that I lived through in my childhood. It is time for me to speak of it and to confront it.

Director's Biography

Born in 1989, **Wassim Geagea** is a Lebanese journalist, writer and filmmaker. He obtained a BA in Audio-Visual Studies from the Lebanese Institute of Fine Arts in 2011. His first short film, 'My Grandfather's Photo' (2011), won the best short film prize in Lebanon's European Film Festival and was screened at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. 'To the One Who Didn't Give Me Life' is his second short film.

Director's Biography

With offices in Beirut, Cairo, Casablanca, Dubai and Riyadh, The Talkies has been producing award-winning commercials since 1988. After the success of its first feature film, Amin Dora's 'Ghadi' (2013), the company created a new content department to produce feature films as well as digital and television 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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