
Grants Catalogue

2017

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

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**Film Funding
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Seven years since its inception, the Doha Film Institute's Grants Programme continues to be an unparalleled source of support for emerging filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond, and an important tool that contributes to the development of the regional film industry. It is a manifestation of a joint vision, ours and that of the filmmakers we support, to tell bold stories through films that present compelling insights on humanity.

Identifying and supporting emerging talents from across the world, and particularly voices from the Arab region, is central to our commitment to nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and contributing to the culture of storytelling. We support filmmakers from Qatar and the wider Arab region to highlight our distinct voices and cultural identity, and celebrate our values and our shared commonalities.

It gives us a sense of pride to be able to say that over the years we have supported 379 films representing 61 countries. We are humbled to have the Institute's name associated with an outstanding list of grantee alumni, whose works portray important issues with a strong directorial vision, and earned critical acclaim and numerous awards at leading global film events.

In 2017, the DFI Grants Programme added new members to our community of alumni with a carefully curated selection of 64 projects from 22 countries - by first and second-time filmmakers, as well as three established directors from our region: Merzak Allouache, Annemarie Jacir and Mohamed Zineddaine whose works inspire new talents.

I am delighted that this year includes eight new grants awarded to Qatari directors; a testament to the growth of young talents here, who are determined to make meaningful and quality films that add to the pride of our nation.

The diversity of submissions for the 2017 cycles has been exceptional, and we selected these 64 projects for their ability to engage with audiences anywhere in the world. With projects from Algeria to Somalia and Chile to

Iceland, the diversity of cinematic voices in these cycles' selection is truly distinct. For the first time, we have projects by filmmakers from Bahrain, Somalia, Indonesia, Hungary and Iceland.

All the chosen projects bring powerful tales to the fore - stories of hope, self-discovery, women empowerment, tales of family and of life in conflict zones - which present new and seldom-heard perspectives. The cultural diversity that these projects highlight is matched with an amazing presence of 38 women filmmakers among the grantees, making up more than half of 2017's pool.

By covering all genres and experimenting with narrative forms, the DFI Grants Programme recipients continue to push cinematic boundaries, contributing to the diversity of global cinema.

Through our Grants Programme, we are empowering talented young filmmakers from our region and beyond, to help fulfill their creative aspirations. We are proud to be supporting the next generation of Arab and international film talents, and we are delighted to see their numbers continue to grow every year.

I welcome the new Grantees to the DFI family and wish them all the best.

- Fatma Al Remaihi
CEO, Doha Film Institute

Doha Film Institute
Grants Team

Hanaa Issa, Director of Strategy and Development

Khalil Benkirane, Head of Grants

Meriem Mesraoua, Grants Senior Coordinator

Eliza Subotowicz, Grants Senior Coordinator

Vanessa Paradis, Grants Coordinator

Wesam Said, Grants Assistant

Feature Narrative

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Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Amin Sidi-Boumédiène

Director / Screenwriter



Fayçal Hammoum

Producer



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Abou Leila

Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 120

Genre: Drama, Road Trip, Thriller

Algeria, March 1994. Childhood friends S. and Lotfi travel through the Algerian desert looking for Abou Leila, a dangerous terrorist on the run.



Algeria, 1994. Terrorist attacks have ravaged the north of the country for the past two years. Childhood friends S. and Lotfi travel through the Algerian desert looking for Abou Leila, a dangerous terrorist on the run. Their search seems absurd, given that the Sahara has not been affected by the wave of murders and bomb attacks that have been sweeping through the rest of the country. Lotfi has only one priority: to keep S. as far from the capital as possible, knowing his friend is too fragile to face more bloodshed. As they approach the supposed hideout of Abou Leila, they learn of the mysterious plight in a nearby village, where three youths have been killed under terrible and suspicious circumstances. The Touareg inhabitants of the village believe the killer is a djinn, a desert spirit that ceaselessly roams the dunes. To S. the demon is Abou Leila.

Director's Note

The Algerian civil war of the 1990s claimed thousands of victims and has traumatised the Algerian people as a whole. This period is essential to me and to my generation because it constitutes the unsurpassable background of our youth. To understand the foundations of this tragedy, which are also the foundations of the violent events in history, we have to go beyond particular debates to embrace the root causes of this violence – which we got up close to and which, because of the trauma caused, has contaminated all of us in one way or the other. 'Abou Leila' is not a film about the Algerian Civil War; rather, it is about the fragility of a man lost in a violent world.

Director's Biography

Amin Sidi-Boumédiène was born in France in 1982. In 2005, he obtained his film-directing diploma from the Conservatoire libre du cinéma in Paris. He returned to Algeria in 2008, where he worked as a director's assistant, then in 2010 he directed his first short film, 'Tomorrow, Algiers?', which was selected for a dozen festivals around the world. His second short film, 'The Island', was filmed in Algiers in 2012. His short film 'Serial K.' (2014) screened at several festivals. Currently, Sidi-Boumédiène is preparing his first feature-length film, 'Abou Leila'.

Company Profile

Set up in January 2010, Thala Films is a film production company based in Algiers. Its ambition is above all to take an active part in promoting and preserving Algerian culture. Thala Films has produced two full-length documentary features to date, as well as six short films that have garnered numerous awards at national and international film festivals.

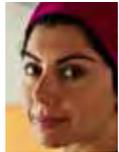
Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Sadaf Foroughi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Kiarash Anvari

Producer



Contact

Sweet Delight Pictures

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Sadaf Foroughi

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Ava

Iran, Canada, Qatar / Persian / 2017

Runtime: 102

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

Iranian seventeen-year-old Ava challenges the strict rules of her traditional upbringing and learns that her mother broke the rules as a young woman as well.



Ava's first visit to the gynaecologist with her mother is a traumatic experience for the young woman. Trauma gives way to anger when Ava discovers her mother's dishonesty and learns of the rules she broke when she was the age Ava is now. Bewildered and enraged, Ava attempts to commit suicide at school. To avoid being expelled, she accepts a deal to snitch on her classmates, but a guilty conscience is a heavy burden. Misunderstood by her parents and tormented by school, Ava decides on a third way forward.

Director's Note

'Ava' is a female-driven coming-of-age drama, which has the cinematic aesthetic of a country in which there are restrictions on portraying women. The film tells the story of a teenage girl who is banished from all social institutions simply because she wants to be different. My main inspiration in making 'Ava' is to examine the role and influence of women in society. In this respect, my point of departure is a mother and a daughter in a small society called home. Mistrustful and often overprotective, Ava's conservative mother exerts a lot of influence over the burgeoning young woman as she attempts to pass her firmly held traditions down. Written and directed in the form of a musical variation, 'Ava' pictures the possibilities in a society where external determination has become so overwhelming that the inner-motive forces have lost their weight..

Director's Biography

Sadaf Foroughi is an Iranian-born, Montreal-based filmmaker. She began her artistic career in 2003, creating and producing short films, documentaries and video art. Foroughi participated in the Berlinale Talent Campus, where she was selected to participate in the 'Why Democracy?' short film project. Her short documentary 'Féminin, Masculin' (2007) was nominated for the Best Non-European Film Award at the Grand Off-European Off Film Awards in Warsaw, and won the Best Short Film award at the Oxford Brooks University Annual Film and Music Festival. She co-wrote, co-produced, and appeared in Kiarash Anvari's feature-length film 'The Pot and the Oak' (2017), which had its world premiere in the Bright Future Competition Section of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Sadaf's debut feature film 'Ava' had its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017 where it received an honourable mention as the best Canadian debut feature film and awarded the Discovery Section FIPERSCI Prize. Foroughi graduated with an MA in Film Studies from the University of Provence, and obtained a degree in Film Production from the New York Film Academy.

Company Profile

Sweet Delight Pictures (SDP) is a Montreal-based company founded by Kiarash Anvari and Sadaf Foroughi. Since 2001, SDP has produced short films, documentaries and video art pieces, which have been showcased at various film festivals and cultural venues around the world, among them the Oberhausen Kurzfilmtage, the Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Arts in Rotterdam, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes. The first feature-length film produced by SDP, 'The Pot and the Oak', had its world premiere at the 2017 International Film Festival Rotterdam in the Bright Future Competition. 'Ava' is SDP's second feature-length film. Sweet Delight Pictures was nominated for the best Canadian Emerging Producer Award at the 2017 Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA) Indie Screen Awards.

Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Mohammed Al Ibrahim

Director / Screenwriter



Bassam Al Ibrahim

Producer



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Beneath the Dunes

Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 100

Genre: Drama, Social Issues

When two cousins venture the landscape of the Inland Sea to escape the city, they come across a car echoing screams from the inside. The rescue mission changes their lives.



Khalifa and Nasser are two cousins who have one bonding ritual: they camp out every weekend at the Inland Sea; scouring the desert, day and night, acting as a rescue team for anyone in need of help. When they come across an old four-wheel drive nestled deep beneath a dune with screams echoing out of it, the duo finds themselves becoming more of a source of trouble than a source of help. What begins as a rescue mission to save a woman's life spirals into a dangerous feat of survival that will change the lives of everyone involved.

Director's Note

This film is intended to be a study of the human condition after the occurrence of a traumatic incident. The desolate lawlessness of the desert is the setting, and the vulnerability arising from the differing ideologies of the characters become our test subjects.

Just as the grains of sand that lie on the surface of a sand dune are susceptible to being blown away from the 'whole' that is the dune, so too are the inhabitants of trauma susceptible to being cut off from their moral compasses, into a state of moral ambiguity.

The question becomes: Can love prevail over hatred? Each is plausible. Each has its justifications. Each leads to a specific set of consequences; guided from above, directed by those below.

Director's Biography

Mohammed Al Ibrahim's 2010 narrative short 'Land of Pearls' screened at a number of events, including the Gulf Film Festival, DTFF, and ADFE. He also wrote and directed the short film 'Bidoon' in 2013, winning best short narrative at ADFE and GCC Film Festival. He is a Film & Media graduate from the University of California, Irvine.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Sofia Djama

Director / Screenwriter



Serge Zeitoun, Patrick Quinet

Producers



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The Blessed

'Les bienheureux' / Algeria, France, Belgium, Qatar / Arabic, French / 2017

Runtime: 100

Genre: Drama

Algiers, a few years after the civil war. Amal and Samir have decided to celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary at a restaurant, but the mood turns dark and becomes more volatile as the night wears on.



Algiers, a few years after the Civil War. Amal and Samir have decided to celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary in a restaurant. While on route to their destination, they trade their views on Algeria: Amal speaks of lost illusions and Samir about the need to cope with them. Meanwhile, the couple's son Fahim and his friends are wandering about in a hostile Algiers, the city that is about to steal their youth.

Director's Note

I could not picture the civil war that hit us. I couldn't even tell precisely the date it began or ended. People have trouble saying the words "civil war", they call it "national tragedy" or "black decade". Instead, whenever they use the word "war", they do it reluctantly, almost timidly, as though they were afraid to talk about it, afraid to remember the dead. But war is on everyone's mind; everyone was affected by it one way or another, whatever our social background. My desire was to represent on screen this post-war state of mind, to observe how this conflict has built our perception, transformed our expectations, and influenced our sense of priorities. In the film, it takes shape through several protagonists, from different generations and social origins. All of whom paint a portrait of a country frozen in a disconcerting immobilism. For me, Algiers is the central character of the film hence the strolls through those crazy narrow streets, the shots of buildings that crush the characters with their overflowing history.

Director's Biography

Born in Oran, **Sofia Djama** moved to Algiers to complete her Bachelor's degree in Literature. In the early 2000s, she began writing a collection of short stories in which Algiers serves as the main protagonist of each plot. 'L'impromptu d'un samedi matin', an adaptation of one of these stories, was her first short film. It won wide acclaim and received two awards at the 2011 Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival. This encouraged Djama to pursue her ambitions in the film industry. From then on, she has devoted herself to writing her first feature film, 'The Blessed'.

Company Profile

Ever since Liaison Cinématographique was founded in 2003, the company has committed itself to developing an eclectic editorial line, favoring singular, diverse cinematic approaches, and combining artistic ambition and potential in the marketplace. For this, Liaison Cinématographique turned very early on to European co-productions, which has opened up a new window of opportunities for financing and distribution.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Soudade Kaadan

Director / Screenwriter



Amira Kaadan

Producer



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KAF

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The Day I Lost My Shadow

'Yom Adaatou Zouli' / Syria, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 100

Genre: Drama, Politics, Roadtrip, War, Women

Syria 2012; Sana takes a day off from her job to search for a gas cylinder. She is swept away in the war for two days and when she returns home, finds she has lost something of herself.



Sana is a young mother struggling to raise her eight-year-old child in war-torn Syria in 2012. Between water outages and power cuts, she decides to take a day off work to go in search of a place to buy a gas cylinder. Along the way, she meets Jalal and his sister Reem, who are also looking for gas, and they agree to share a taxi for the trip. At a checkpoint, the soldiers suspect their driver to be an activist. Fearing arrest, he takes off running, abandoning his passengers in a small village on the outskirts of Damascus. There, Sana discovers that it is normal for people to lose their shadows every day, as if they lose something of themselves once they experience the war.

Director's Note

This film was written in a country where tomorrow is an unimaginable thought. What is tomorrow if you are living under constant bombing? Alternating between the relief to be missed by the falling missiles and the grief it fell on someone else. That's why the film doesn't try to predict or talk about the future. It limits itself to three days of Sana's life, in a precise moment of Damascus' history. The film represents a woman's point of view of the war, away from orientalist clichés. They are neither saints, nor an object of desire. When men became soldiers, activists and prisoners, they left empty houses; women were alone facing security agents, death and bombing. They became strong and took decisions they never dared to take before. When men come back, their homes won't be the same. We all changed in this collective experience and lost a lot, but in Syria, we are now used to losing a shadow every day.

Director's Biography

Soudade Kaadan studied theatre criticism at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Syria, and graduated from Institut d'études scéniques, audiovisuelles et cinématographiques (IESAV), at Saint Joseph University, Lebanon. She has received international awards for her documentaries, including the Martine Filippi Award - URTI Grand Prix for Author's Documentaries, Monte-Carlo Television Festival, and the Muhr Arab Documentary Award in DIFF. Her latest documentary 'Obscure' premiered at the 2017 CPH:DOX Festival. Soudade is currently in post-production of her first feature fiction film, 'The Day I Lost My Shadow'.

Company Profile

KAF is a Syrian production house, founded in late 2008 by Amira Kaadan and Soudade Kaadan, specialized in fiction and documentary films. The company was born, on the one hand, from the necessity to make creative documentaries and fiction in a country where most production houses concentrate mainly on television series. On the other hand, it was crafted from the sisterhood and friendship of both founders and their desire to produce free, creative cinema. KAF has produced documentary films like 'Two Cities and a Prison', and was the executive producer for Al Jazeera Documentary Channel for films like 'Looking for Pink' and 'Damascus Roof and Tales of Paradise'. These productions have received international awards and have been aired on numerous TV channels.

Development

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2017

Saleh Nass

Director / Screenwriter



Paul Baboudjian

Producer



Days of Grace

'Ayam Min Al Na'aeem' / Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama

A young Syrian man has only a few days left in Beirut to find a way to avoid a dangerous journey back to a war zone.



A young Syrian man is faced with a dilemma: he has only a few days to leave Beirut to go abroad or must face a difficult existence in the city, with the ever-present threat of being deported to Syria hanging over his head. Challenged by problems at every turn, will Alaa do anything to leave a city that has taken in more refugees than it can afford?

Director's Note

'Days of Grace' arose out of my desire to highlight a human story away from the usual politics and war. In Beirut - the city that has taken in the most Syrian refugees who have fled their country - a heavy burden comes with dreams of a better life for the immigrants. Beirut is not a destination - just a half-way stopover, an impermanent place. But while they are there only temporarily, who knows for how long? On a human level, sometimes we want things to happen, but they often don't - or, rather, they don't come about the way we expect them to, and it's only through severe trials that we can hope to be led to safety. Our characters have dreams and ambitions but go through hell to try and achieve them.

Director's Biography

Considered one of the most promising talents to come out of the Gulf, **Saleh Nass** makes his feature writing and directing debut with 'Days of Grace'. A graduate in Television Production from the Bournemouth Media School, his award-winning shorts 'Game' (2012), 'Central Market' (2014) and 'Pick Up' (2014) have been Official Selections at more than 50 festivals worldwide.

Company Profile

Tharwa Productions is an independent film production company based in Dubai. Tharwa focuses on telling stories for today's market in unique ways, and on collaborating with like-minded creative partners worldwide. Tharwa is owned and managed by Paul Baboudjian, a film and television producer who has been working between Europe and the Middle East since 2002. Baboudjian has produced short and feature-length fiction films and creative documentaries within the Arab world.

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Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Sarah Francis

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Dead Dog (working title)

'Al Kalbou Mat' / Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Drama, Family, Immigration, Romance

When Farid, a 60-year-old man living abroad visits his wife, he learns that his beloved dog had died. Tensions arise and Farid confesses he's returning home for good.



When Farid, a 60-year-old man who lives abroad, visits his wife in their Lebanese mountain home, he learns that their 16-year-old dog died – but no one informed him. When the couple visits the location where the dog was supposedly buried, they discover the hill has become a granite quarry. Tensions soon arise as the old dynamics of the couple resurface, and Farid confesses he is returning home for good. When a boy helps him find the remains of his dog, he buries them in the garden. In the following days, Aida learns that Farid is planning to sell their main residence in Beirut due to financial problems. The couple explores their relationship for the first time in years, and Aida confronts her husband, not intending to let their city house go.

Contact

Sarah Francis

Footnote Productions

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Director's Note

Emigration has been the fate of many Lebanese families throughout generations. In many cases, the man works abroad, while the rest of the family stays in the country. As years go by, he often ends up living a strange double life; never really gone, never really here. I have been living with the characters in my mind for quite some time now, I have wondered how they experienced their successes and failures. To which extent are we capable of reinventing ourselves at their age, and what role does memory play in everyday life? What kind of images, often fixed in time or preserved by distance do we rely on to construct our lives? I am interested in observing areas of fragility and areas of strength, as well as to explore the notion of identity in the broader sense.

Director's Biography

Sarah Francis grew up in Beirut and graduated from IESAV at Saint Joseph University. Since 2005, she has worked as a freelance director and has participated in several workshops and labs. Her feature-length documentary 'Birds of September' (2013) screened at numerous international festivals and museums, and won several awards. Her work also includes short videos. She is currently developing a project with the support of the Asian Cinema Fund. With 'Dead Dog', her upcoming fiction project, she was a participant of Cinephilia Bound in collaboration with La Maison des scénaristes at the Festival de Cannes in 2017, and is also attending other major film labs.

Company Profile

Footnote Productions was founded in Beirut, and is dedicated to producing films from the region that reflect the diversity of human experiences and explore the boundaries of cinematic language and craftsmanship. Among our first projects, currently in development, is the feature-length narrative 'Dead Dog' (working title).

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Ali Asgari

Director / Screenwriter



Farnoosh Samadi

Screenwriter



Pouria Heidary Oureh,

Ali Sadraei

Producers



Contact

Three Gardens Film

Pouria Heidary Oureh

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Disappearance

'Napadid Shodan' / Iran, Qatar / Persian / 2017

Runtime: 88

Genre: Drama, Youth, Social Issues

One cold night in Tehran, a young couple go from one hospital to another in search for help. Soon, they will need to face the consequences of their careless mistakes.



On a cold winter's night in Tehran, a couple of young lovers run into a serious problem, and they have just a few hours to come up with a solution. They go from hospital to hospital in search for help, but none of the hospital authorities will admit the young woman to provide her with the medical attention she desperately requires. While they try hard to find a way to stop the woman's haemorrhage, they have to hide what is happening from their parents. Moreover, their relationship is facing a crisis.

Director's Note

In this film, I wish to show a picture of the younger people of a semi-traditional society who are struggling hard to obtain their identity. Through a simple but intense story, I seek to demonstrate how family can impose limitations and may, sometimes, be even more dangerous and perilous than we might expect. Nowadays the majority of older Iranians are respectful of tradition, while at the same time the majority of the youth are trying to pass over these traditions. The differences between these points of view create a lot of conflict and stories that have always been important for me to talk about, especially because I myself have experience of this situation. In my previous short films, I tried to tell some of these stories; some of the characters in my short films are still alive, their stories as yet unfinished in my mind. I would like to explore them further.

Director's Biography

Ali Asgari is an Iranian filmmaker who studied cinema in Italy. An alumnus of the Berlinale Talent Campus 2013, his short films 'More than Two Hours' (2013) and 'The Silence' (2016) were both in competition for the Palme d'Or at the Festival de Cannes, and both screened at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival in Doha, while 'The Baby' competed at the Venice Film Festival 2014. His films have been screened at more than 500 festivals around the world, and have won more than 100 awards. Currently, Asgari is working on his first feature-length film, 'Disappearance', which was developed at the Cinéfondation Résidence, under the umbrella of the Festival de Cannes.

Company Profile

Three Gardens Film is a young Tehran-based production company owned by Pouria Heidary Oureh, who is also a filmmaker. The company started its activity by producing independent short and feature-length films and has to date produced three feature-length and three short films, all of which have seen success on the festival circuit. In association with Sana Sound Studio, Three Gardens Sound Studio has provided sound design, editing and mix for a number of films and television series. Three Gardens has also provided technical support, professional cameras and film equipment to more than 100 projects in Iran.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Merzak Allouache

Director / Screenwriter



Bahia Allouache

Producer



Contact

Les Asphofilms

Bahia Allouache

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Divine Wind

'Rih Rabani' / Algeria, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 96

Genre: Drama

Nour and Amine plan to launch an attack against an oil refinery in the Algerian Sahara, but things do not turn out as they expected.



Nour and Amine don't know each other. They meet in a house, near the city of Timimoun, in the Algerian Sahara. They are supposed to launch an armed action against an oil refinery. But things don't turn out quite as they expected.

Director's Note

In my latest films, I have been dealing with the scourge of violence, corruption, prostitution, drug abuse and radical Islamism. In the film 'Rih Rabani' ('Divine Wind'), I continue my observation of Algerian society and the emergence of a new generation of radicalized young people, feeding the terrorist maquis in certain regions of the country; young people who openly claim to be an 'Islamist internationale' led by ISIS. The recent discoveries of numerous weapons caches in southern Algeria, spectacular operations against oil bases (takeover of Tiguentourine hostages, the rocket attack on In Salah gas, etc.) are evidence of sustained activity by Islamist terrorist groups that move easily and cross the borders of the Sahel countries. Through the portrait of two characters: Nour and Amine, two young jihadists on the eve of a suicide operation, I try once again to film the psychology of despair that leads to the switch to fanaticism.

Director's Biography

Merzak Allouache was born in Algeria in 1944. He studied filmmaking in Algiers at the Institut National du Cinéma and subsequently at IDHEC in Paris. In 1976, he directed his first feature, 'Omar Gatlato'. Since then, he has been directing films in France and Algeria, and his films are frequently selected in prestigious international festivals such as the Festival de Cannes, Venice and Berlin International Film Festivals.

Company Profile

Les Asphofilms was founded in October 2015 in Paris, by the filmmaker Bahia Allouache. It is a production company which stands up for an open-minded cinema d'auteur rooted in current affairs, paying close attention to social issues and still aiming at high cinematographic quality for its productions. 'Tahqiq Fel Djenna' (feature documentary) and 'Divine Wind' (feature) are the first two films co-produced by Les Asphofilms.

Development

Feature Narrative
Spring Grants 2017

Nour Wazzi

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Daniel Fajemisin-Duncan

Screenwriter



Shirine Best

Producer



Contact

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Don't Tell a Soul

Lebanon, UK, Qatar / English

Runtime: 90

Genre: Thriller

Faris awakes; his wife and sick child missing, a dead body on the floor... he remembers nothing. Thrown into chaos, he suspects everyone... even himself.



Faris, a Lebanese Muslim living in the US, awakens to discover the dead body of his wife's ex-husband. The murder weapon is in his hand, but Faris has no memory of killing him. He tries to get hold of his wife and child, but they are nowhere to be found. Faced with the choice of turning himself in for a crime he is unsure of committing or searching for his missing family, Faris decides to dispose of the body and uncover the truth before it's too late. As rumours of his wife's infidelity and domestic abuse ripples throughout the local community, it is suspected that Faris may have committed an honour killing. Unravelling the events that led to this fateful night, Faris begins to fear that he is, in fact, responsible for both the murder and his family's disappearance.

Director's Note

This provocative thriller follows an Arab man thrown into chaos and his journey of discovering that his wife is not who he thought she was. Seen through a racially biased lens, the film unfolds against the backdrop of a small, predominantly white, town. As a Lebanese female filmmaker, I want to tell a story that has both an Arab in the lead and a complex female character at its core. I am passionate about thought-provoking stories with high stakes that keep viewers at the edge of their seat, while being equally moving and heartbreaking on a visceral level. I intend the film to touch the audience with a constant sense of dread that slowly tightens its grip, as our perception of reality crumbles and our own assumptions are challenged. With themes of self-preservation, deception, prejudice, mental health, family and forgiveness, the film's strength lies in inference and suggestion – where we load moments that we're also throwing away and leaving the audience with questions that resonate. Crafted with an omniscient and haunting complexion, 'Don't Tell a Soul' will be a gripping journey of uncertainty and mystery.

Director's Biography

Tipped as a future star on BBC's talent hotlist, award-winning filmmaker **Nour Wazzi** has worked in the industry for over ten years, collaborating on and developing short and feature-length films. She has won awards for a number of shorts, including 'Up on the Roof' (2013) which premiered at the BFI London Film Festival, was selected at over 30 festivals and named Best Short Film at the Naoussa International Film Festival. She has also won Best Foreign Short at the Mexico International Film Festival, where her short 'Shackled' starring Emilia Clarke ('Game of Thrones'), took the Golden Palm for Best Short Film in 2012. Based on a story by Academy Award nominee Ari Folman ('Waltz with Bashir'), 'Habibti' (2010) starring Hiam Abbass ('The Visitor') and Yasmine Al Massri ('Caramel'), was selected for more than 40 international festivals, won five awards and was broadcast on the BBC in 2012. Most recently, Nour directed two episodes of the BBC short film series 'The Break'. She is currently co-writing her debut feature-length film, based on her recent short thriller, 'Baby Mine' (2016) starring Alexander Siddig ('Kingdom of Heaven').

Company Profile

With over ten years' experience in the industry, award-winning filmmaker Nour Wazzi set up UK-based Panacea Productions with the intention of making distinctive, thought-provoking and compelling films with strong commercial potential. Panacea has made a number of award-winning shorts that have found VOD, airline and international TV distribution, and is currently building an exciting slate of genre features and television shows with emerging talent. Wazzi's debut feature-length films, 'Don't Tell a Soul' (thriller) and 'Chimera' (horror/sci-fi) are the current focus on her development slate.

Finished Films was founded by producer Shirine Best, who is currently in post-production on her feature 'Westwood', about the life of iconic fashion designer and activist Vivienne Westwood, with Academy Award-winning producer John Battsek and Dogwoof handling international sales. Best has amassed credits on more than 20 feature-length films since starting in the industry in 2001. She has produced more than ten short films, including a fashion film starring Lilly Cole and a number of fiction films that star Emilia Clarke, Jonathan Rhys Meyers and Alexander Siddig, among others.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Mohamed Zineddaine

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



The Healer

'Mbarka' / Morocco, Italy, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 110

Genre: Drama

Abdou lives with his adoptive mother and traditional healer, Mbarka, in a small mining town. There he meets a cynical pickpocket, who suffers from a skin disease. Abdou convinces him to seek treatment from his mother, and their three lives become irreversibly interwoven.



16-year old teenager Abdou lives on the outskirts of Khouribga, a mining town exploiting phosphates. He is helpful and caring, simple and down to earth, incapable of harm, and is anxious to regain the gift of human dignity through learning how to read and write. His adoptive mother Mbarka, a midwife and the neighbourhood's healer, protects her privileged status with ways that the laws of obscurantism allow her. Ch'Aayba, a thirty-year-old man, uncontrollable and ferociously cynical, is an eccentric pickpocket. Suffering from a skin disease, Abdou convinces him to come see Mbarka in order to get treatment for it: that's how the fate of these three will entangle, twirling on the carousel of illusion.

Contact

Ouarzazate Films

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Director's Note

The need to make this film has been dictated to me by the universality of a theme that has been with me for a long time: the many manifestations of power. Individual, pervasive, all-knowing power; not necessarily in its global, political or military expressions, but in the more personal, indirect ones, which are embodied in the influence of an individual over others and in the balance of power between people. Beyond the Moroccan reality - of which I am soaked with, due to my identity and my existential journey - I have been able to see, through personal experience and my readings and travels, that this theme is linked to the universal instincts that transcend individual countries and manifest themselves in different forms but with similar dynamics and feelings, anywhere in time and space. I like to think that the protagonist of this film is a repositioning of the legendary figure of Medea, updated and adapted to the Arab world.

Director's Biography

Mohamed Zineddaine was born in the small village of Oued Zem in Morocco. In 1983, he left Morocco to study a course in computer studies in Nice, France. Mohamed quickly realized that this was not for him, and he moved on to Italy where he gained great experience in life doing several jobs. Doomed to failure in his scientific studies, he was conducted to literary works by a secret hand and now devotes himself to reading extensively.

Company Profile

Ouarzazate Films is a production company based in Casablanca, Morocco. Their fiction work includes 'The Healer' ('La guérisseuse') (2018), 'Wrath' ('Colère') (2013) and 'Under August Sky' ('Sous le ciel d'août') (1999). They have also produced the documentaries 'After Silence' ('Après le silence') (2005), 'Gorizia' ('Gorizia au delà des confins') (2006), and 'Looking Far Away' ('Le regard ailleurs') (2002).

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Leila Kilani

Director / Screenwriter



Emmanuel Barrault

Producer



Contact

DKB Productions

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Joint Possession

'Indivision' / Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 105

Genre: Action, Drama, History, Women, Youth



Tangier topography is in turmoil. Pharaonic real estate projects surround the Mansouria, a land-locked family estate that is up for sale and coveted by Amina and her heirs.

Director's Note

I spent my summers in homes with a history, homes with entire floors that were closed up as though they were unvisited vaults. As a young adult, my ears hummed with a worn-out tune, one that all Moroccans know well. Nightmares have a name: joint ownership. The same old story where irrational bonding to a property is motivated by financial gains, genuine affection and fake solidarity. Money, cash or dough. Mixing old and new. My parents have passed away, my mother's house has been emptied. I always come back to Tangier – not the mythical, bohemian chic Tangier, but a Tangier that seems to change constantly without being nurtured. Reinvent: this is the keyword. One cannot escape rewriting one's family history: events can be shifted, names changed, scandals borrowed from other families – and yet nothing changes in substance. But a cataclysm, a real drama, a revolution of the land could happen just as easily.

Director's Biography

Leila Kilani was born in Morocco in 1970. A director and a producer, she divides her time between Paris and Tangier. In 2000, she began to make documentaries, including the acclaimed 'Tangier, The Burners' Dream' (2003) and 'Our Forbidden Places' (2009). 'On the Edge', her first feature-length narrative film, was released in 2011. Her second feature-length narrative 'Joint Possession' is currently in post-production.

Company Profile

To date, DKB Productions has mainly created commercials and corporate films; the company is now beginning to produce politically committed films with high artistic standards.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Dominga Sotomayor

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Rodrigo Teixeira, Omar Zúñiga,

Sophie Mas

Producers



Late to Die Young

'Tarde para morir joven' / Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Netherlands, Qatar / Spanish / 2018

Runtime: 110

Genre: Coming of age, Drama

In an isolated community, Sofia, Clara and Lucas prepare for New Year's Eve. They may live far from the dangers of the city, but not those of nature.



The summer of 1990 in Chile. A small group of families lives in an isolated community right below the Andes, among dry dirt roads and dusty trees, building a new world away from the excesses of the distant city. Sixteen-year-old Sofia and Lucas, and 10-year-old Clara struggle with parents, first loves, and fears, while they prepare a big party for New Year's Eve with the hope of some new beginnings. 'Late to Die Young' is a portrait of a group of people who try to isolate themselves from the dangers of the city, but are instead confronted by those of nature.

Contact

Cinestación

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Director's Note

'Late to Die Young' is a coming of age story inspired by the loss of innocence, both in the kids and their community, in a country that was aching after dictatorship. The film portrays a group of families who have chosen to live away from the city in a natural environment, but are simultaneously threatened by it. They are confined in this self-imposed exile, where they are faced by their own fragility. I want to explore the uneasy relationship between generations, between classes, to capture the wisdom of children and the foolishness of adults, the strange melancholy of growing up. I'm interested in how what's familiar can become threatening and foreign at the same time. I am also interested in the sense of belonging, and the illusion of property we have over relationships, people, and nature itself. The story puts this under the spotlight, casting doubt over everything, reminding us that nothing really belongs to anyone.

Director's Biography

Dominga Sotomayor was born in Santiago de Chile in 1985. Her first feature film, 'Thursday Till Sunday' (2012), was developed at the Cinéfondation Résidence, won the Tiger Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and was named best film at IndieLisboa, New Horizons, and the Valdivia International Film Festivals. She co-directed 'The Island' (2013), which also claimed a Tiger Award. In 2015, her medium-length film 'Mar' had its premiere in the Forum section at the Berlin International Film Festival, and she also released 'Aqui, Em Lisboa', a collective film directed with Gabriel Abrantes, Denis Côté, and Marie Losier.

Company Profile

Cinestación is a creative platform for auteur filmmaking in Latin America. With a growing catalogue of films and directors, we tell stories with strong points of view, collaborating with global partners and supporting audacity and quality. Among other films, Cinestación produced Dominga Sotomayor's Rotterdam Tiger Award-winning 'Thursday Till Sunday' (2012), and her medium-length 'Mar' (2015), which premiered in the Forum section of the Berlin International Film Festival. Our work has been recognised by world-class film festivals, including the Berlinale, the Festival de Cannes, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Valdivia International Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival. In 2018, we will shoot Omar Zúñiga's feature debut, 'Los Fuertes', and premiere two films as minority co-producers, 'Die, Monster, Die' by Alejandro Fadel, from Argentina, and 'Cascos Indomables' by Neto Villalobos, from Costa Rica.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Ognjen Glavonić

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Stefan Ivančić, Dragana Jovović

Producers



Contact

Non-Aligned Films

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The Load

'Teret' / Serbia, France, Croatia, Iran, Qatar / Serbian / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Based on a True Story, Drama, Politics, War

During the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, Vlada is driving a truck. He does not know what the load is, but his cargo slowly becomes his burden.



Vlada works as a truck driver during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. Tasked with transporting a mysterious load from Kosovo to Belgrade, he drives through unfamiliar territory, surrounded by the ravages of the war. When his mission is over, Vlada will need to face the consequences of his actions.

Director's Note

In 2001, on the outskirts of Belgrade, several mass graves were discovered, containing the bodies of more than 700 Kosovo-Albanian civilians. They were transported there using refrigerated trucks during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. This was a state-organised operation, one that included the participation of the army, the police, and regular citizens. 'The Load' follows Vlada on his new job, driving such truck through Serbia, but it also tracks a journey through the darkness of a society at a specific moment in its decay. This film is not an attempt to explain the atrocities of the conflict in question; rather, I am interested in the position of the Everyman within such events – his intimacy and his self-doubt, not his heroics. A man whose decisions will prove to be his burden for many years, but which will also reverberate through his surroundings and his family.

Director's Biography

Ognjen Glavonić was born in 1985 in Pančevo in the former Yugoslavia. His short films have been selected for more than 50 international film festivals. 'Zivan Makes a Punk Festival' (2014), his first mid-length documentary, had its premiere at Cinéma du Réel and has been screened at more than 40 international film festivals, among them the International Film Festival Rotterdam, CPH:DOX, IndieLisboa. His feature-length documentary 'Depth Two' (2016) had its premiere in the Forum section at the Berlin International Film Festival, and was named best film at DokuFest Prizren, Message to Man St. Petersburg, OpenCity Docs London, the Festival dei Popoli Firenze and Kassel Dokfest, among others. 'The Load' is his feature-length narrative debut.

Company Profile

Founded by young directors Ognjen Glavonić and Stefan Ivančić, together with producer Dragana Jovović, Non-Aligned Films is a production company based in Belgrade. The idea behind the company is to act as a platform for producing the films of an upcoming generation of Serbian filmmakers. The company's first production was the documentary 'Zivan Makes a Punk Festival' (2014) directed by Glavonić. Its international premiere was at Cinéma du Réel in Paris, and to date it has been screened at more than 45 international film festivals, including the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Non-Aligned Films produced three short films in 2014: Stefan Ivančić's documentary '1973' and his fictional 'Moonless Summer'; as well as the experimental documentary 'Heavens', directed by Jelena Maksimović and Ivan Salatić. 'Depth Two', a documentary by Glavonić, had its world premiere in the Forum section at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2016. 'The Load' is the company's debut feature-length fiction film.

Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Hinde Boujemaa

Director / Screenwriter



Imed Marzouk

Producer



Contact

Propaganda Production

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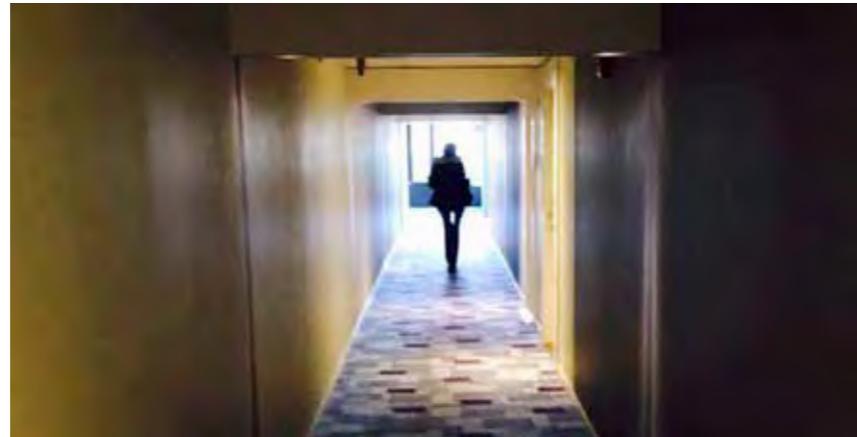
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Noura Dreams

'Noura rêve' / Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic

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

Noura struggles to raise her three children alone while her husband is in jail - until she meets Lassaad. Their plans to be together, however, are jeopardized by the impending release of her husband, and the two decide to flee.



Noura meets the love of her life, Lassaad, while her husband, Sofiane, is in jail. She raises her three children alone and works in a laundry to make ends meet. A few days before the divorce Noura requested is granted, the new lovers' dream of living together is jeopardised by Sofiane's imminent release. Noura and Lassaad decide to flee.

Director's Note

I see women, circulating in the popular districts of Tunis, with a personal 'lid' over their heads, a concrete topping, a bit like the famous wet cloud that follows certain cartoon characters. The lid wouldn't be made of cement or another material, but of looks, judgements, intolerance. And there, facing me, a woman in a pink velvet tracksuit, in a hurry, crosses the street, and in her eyes, there is a glimmer that gets to me. It's Noura. Instinctively, I decided to follow her. In the Arab world, we sing to love. Whether Om Kalthoum or Berber songs, men and women sing to love, to its pains, its jealousy, its emotions, its romanticism. But as soon as it gets to its reality, especially out of wedlock, taboo and duality settle in. Love becomes a 'sin'. Still, everyone has felt love, and it is this universal feeling that will allow the spectator to enter Noura's story.

Director's Biography

Hinde Boujemaa is a Tunisian director. In 2012, she directed her first feature-length documentary, 'It Was Better Tomorrow', which was selected for the Venice Film Festival, won the Muhr for Best Director at the Dubai International Film festival, and was named Best Documentary at Douz Doc Days. In 2014, her short fiction film 'And Romeo Married Juliet' won Best Short Film awards at Dubai, the Alexandria Film Festival, the Oran Film Festival, and the Verona Film Festival, where it also took an award for Best Actress. Boujemaa is now preparing the feature-length fiction film 'Noura Dreams'.

Company Profile

Propaganda Production is a Tunisian broadcasting company, created in 2002 by Imed Marzouk and Néjib Belkadhi. Its primary activities include the production of short and feature-length films, documentaries, broadcast series, and commercials. Notable projects include 'VHS-Kahloucha' (2006) and 'Bastardo' (2012), both by Néjib Belkadhi; 'And Romeo Married Juliet' (2014) by Hinde Boujemaa; and 'As I Open My Eyes' (2014) by Leyla Bouzid.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

João Viana

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



François D'Artemare

Producer



Contact

Les Films de l'Après-Midi

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Our Madness

'Notre Folie' / Portugal, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, France, Qatar / Xitswa, Swahili / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama, Road Trip

A child helps a woman who seeks her husband all over Mozambique. When they finally find him, the child is killed.



Lucy is hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital in Mozambique. She dreams about her little son, Hanic, and her husband, Pak, who is a soldier of the war. Lucy's musical virtuosity attracts the attention of the hospital nurses. Rosa, an evangelical priest of "Rádio Moçambique", goes to the hospital to listen to Lucy's song. Lucy takes this opportunity to run away from the hospital. Alone in the big city, with nothing else besides the pieces of her own bed, and struggling to find Hanic, Lucy looks for the radio's head office. Rosa confesses to Lucy that she's nothing else but her chauffeur's (Muxanga) prisoner. Lucy, with the help of Muxanga finds Hanic. Muxanga tries to terrorize Lucy, but little Hanic stands up to his mother and defeats Muxanga. Lucy and Hanic travel all over Mozambique in search of Pak. They cross the river heading the war. In the Infernal Club Muxanga kills Hanic. Pak shows up and kills Muxanga and a bird appears in place of Hanic's heart.

Director's Note

I am not interested in turning cinema into a psychologist's couch. Nor am I interested in making militant cinema. What is, indeed, important for this film is to summon the four forces which I perceived in the field. Summon the order to get to the madness and summon God to get to the Devil. Let me explain: what interests me is to work on the reality and the presence of their history in the social and political situation of Mozambique today. What interests me is to summon the order established by the present regime and link it with the liberating madness of artistic creation. What interests me is to tell the whole truth by way of fiction. What interests me is to speak of the Devil of the Mozambican God. If every nation is a fiction, this is the film of Mozambique.

Director's Biography

João Viana has worked in the areas of production, sound, storyboarding, direction and screenwriting, and has collaborated with directors Jean-Claude Biette, César Monteiro, Manoel de Oliveira and Werner Schroeter. He has directed his own films since 2004, beginning with 'A Piscina', which screened in competition at the Venice International Film Festival and is the Portuguese short fiction film that has won the most awards ever. For his next film, 'Alfama' (2009), he launched the production company Papaveronoir Films. His most recent work consisted of the feature-length 'The Battle of Tabatô' paired with a short film titled 'Tabatô', both of which won awards at the 2013 Berlin International Film Festival.

Company Profile

Les Films de l'Après-Midi has produced feature-length films from countries all over the world, including Bosnia and Herzegovina (Aida Begić's 'Children of Sarajevo', 'Djeca', and 'Snow'); Ethiopia (Hiwot Admasu's short film 'New Eyes'); Hungary (Balint Kenyeres's 'Hier'); Iran (Keywan Karimi's 'Drum'); Portugal (João Canijo's 'Fatima'; Marco Martins's 'São Jorge'; three films by Manoel de Oliveira; João Salaviza's 'Montanha'; and João Viana's 'Our Madness'); and Romania (Radu Muntean's 'One Floor Below'). The company is actively committed to supporting young filmmakers, among them Hiwot Admasu, João Salaviza, Keywan Karimi, and Meriem Mesraoua. Les Films de l'Après-Midi is also developing projects by established directors like Begić, Canijo, Pelin Esmer and Muntean.

Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Mounia Meddour

Director / Screenwriter



Gregoire Gensollen, Xavier Gens

Producers



Contact

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Papicha

Algeria, France, Morocco, Qatar / Arabic, French

Runtime: 100

Genre: Drama, History, Politics, Social Issues, War, Women's Issues, Youth

Nedjma refuses to submit to fear during the Algerian Civil War by fulfilling her dream of putting on a fashion show.



Nedjma is a free-spirited and independent young student. She refuses to allow the tragic events of the Algerian Civil War keep her from experiencing a normal young woman's life. She dreams of becoming a fashion designer, goes to university, and sneaks out at night to dance her sorrows away with her friend Wassila. Nedjma embraces life with open arms, but as the social climate becomes more conservative, she discovers her apolitical behaviour is considered a form of insurgency. When she loses a childhood friend in an attack, she decides to make a political statement by organising a fashion show to fight everything the war wants to repress: freedom, women's independence, and the prospect of a future. During her journey of personal resistance, Nedjma will discover that the celebration of life is often to be paid for in death.

Director's Note

'Papicha' is a chronicle of Algerian society and its youth at the end of the 1990s. Violence, a housing crisis, inefficient bureaucracy, unemployment, and the loss of points of reference surround this "sacrificed youth", who chose to vegetate and remain resigned to their fate. Nedjma, however, decides to face up to reality. She does not give up; instead, she remains strong, she shares her opinions straight-up. She becomes even stronger once she meets Mehdi. In love, together they are more powerful. Like Romeo and Juliet, they live an improbable fairy tale in a tormented Algeria.

Director's Biography

Mounia Meddour was born and raised in Algeria. At the age of 18, she moved to France with her family as a result of death threats they received during the Algerian Civil War. Meddour studied Journalism and Film in Paris, where she also joined the summer directing programme at La Fémis. Her first short film, 'Edwige' (2011), won the Ciné+ Award at the Saint-Jean-de-Luz Festival, the UniFrance Short Film Award, and the Grand Jury Award at the Festival du Premier Court-Métrage de Pontault-Combault. In 2012, the film was selected for the Dubai International Film Festival, and the Gulf Film Festival. Her current project, 'Papicha', received development funding from the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (CNC) as well as the Sopadin Screenwriting Award.

Company Profile

Together with feature film director Xavier Gens, Gregoire Gensollen founded The Ink Connection in 2010. Through their Paris and Los Angeles based production company, they are creating, developing and packaging a slate of international co-productions to be directed by Xavier Gens as well as other foreign directors. In 2011, they delivered their first feature film production, 'The Divide', directed by Xavier Gens, released theatrically in the US by Anchor Bay in 2012. In 2016, they delivered their second feature film, 'Where is Rocky II?', directed by renowned French contemporary artist Pierre Bismuth, also known for winning the Best Original Screenplay Academy Award for 'Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind'. This French-German-Belgian-Italian coproduction premiered in 2016 at Hot Docs Film Festival, then opened Art Basel's Film Program in 2016 and played at numerous film festivals such as Locarno, Rotterdam, CPH:DOX. It also won the "Prix Nouvelles Vagues" at La Roche-Sur-Yon as well as the FILAF d'Or at the Festival International du Livre d'Art et du Film in Perpignan in the past year. In 2017, they coproduced their third feature film 'Cold Skin', directed by Xavier Gens, with Spanish producers Kanzaman.

Development

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Yassine El Idrissi

Director / Screenwriter



Saffron's Land

Morocco, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama, History, Identity, Politics

In the Atlas Mountains, Saffrana is an isolated village where people believe the flower of saffron is a curse, but one man is trying to prove the contrary.



In the Atlas Mountains lies Safrana, an isolated village that was repeatedly attacked by the French army in the 1940s for its prized plantation of saffron. To protect themselves and live in peace, the residents decided to stop cultivating the valuable spice. After their independence and without this profitable crop, the village declined into poverty. The local people still believe that the flower is cursed, but one man, Hassan, attempts to grow saffron to prove them wrong.

Contact

Yassine El Idrissi

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Director's Note

For me, the Moroccan popular culture is my main inspiration for my films. I like to tell a human story that the international audience connect with but with a unique flavour. Morocco is ripe with visual and cultural wealth, and local myths which are embodied well in this new script. It tells a story that connects the past and the present of the area, alongside a dramatic series of events that show the impact of colonization in Africa and the Arab world in a poetic way. The topic of the film is the division between those who believe in theological or metaphysical ideas, and those who believe in Materialism. The saffron flower shows this division as a symbol, from the superstition of the villager to the logical thinking of Hassan, in explaining each event happening in the village.

Director's Biography

From graphic design to news photography, **Yassine El Idrissi** explored different professions before becoming a storyteller in film. El Idrissi worked several years as a successful photojournalist in newspapers and international news agencies until he found that to satisfy his urge to tell the stories he needed cinema. El Idrissi graduated from the Netherlands Film Academy in 2013 with the short 'The Iranian Film'. He also produced a documentary in Syria that was sold to Dutch national television. 'Honey and Old Cheese' (2016), Yassine's latest short was screened at Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival and the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Kamila Andini

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Gita Fara

Producer



Contact

Treewater Productions

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The Seen and Unseen

Indonesia, Netherlands, Australia, Qatar / Indonesian / 2017

Runtime: 85

Genre: Coming of age, Drama

As the moon dims and is replaced by the sun, so Tantri's becoming a woman eclipses her twin brother Tantra's fading life. Together, the siblings experience a magical journey and an emotional relationship through body expressions, finding themselves between reality and imagination, loss and hope.



One day in a hospital room, 10-year-old Tantri realises she will not have much more time with her twin brother Tantra. Tantra's brain is weakening and he has begun to lose his senses one by one. He now spends most of his time lying in bed, while Tantri has to accept the reality that she must soon face life alone. This situation opens up something in Tantri's mind: she keeps waking up in the middle of the night from a dream and seeing Tantra. The night becomes their playground. Under the full moon, Tantri dances – about her home, about her feelings. As the moon dims and is replaced by the sun, so Tantri's becoming a woman eclipses Tantra's fading life. Tantri experiences a magical journey and an emotional relationship through body expressions, finding herself between reality and imagination, loss and hope.

Director's Note

For the Balinese “sekala niskala”, or “the seen and unseen”, is an expression of the notion that life always contains good and bad things; that life is about balance. It also means that they believe in everything they can see, as well as what they cannot. For me, the term is a reflection of myself, both as an Indonesian and as an Asian. We are holistic people who perpetually live between two poles – religion and culture, reality and myth. Visually, I want to play with the words “seen” and “unseen”. Through employing the story of a sister and brother who are twins, the film is imbued continuously with dualism. When Tantri's twin brother Tantra is hospitalised, something opens up in the girl's mind, revealing emotions she has never dealt with before. Her days become silent, and she starts to experience many things that are happening around her. ‘The Seen and Unseen’ is about the dimensions of life, and therefore about the dimensions of art. Reality in my culture is surreal. With that, what is realism? By following the daily life of a girl whose brother is dying, the film examines the holistic dimension of feelings, and a surrealism that emerges from within.

Director's Biography

Kamila Andini was born in Jakarta in 1986 and studied Sociology and Media Arts at Deakin University in Melbourne. Her concern for culture, women's empowerment and environmental issues led her to her passion for storytelling through the medium of film. In 2011, she released her debut feature-length film ‘The Mirror Never Lies’, which portrays the life of a sea wanderer in the oceans of Indonesia. The film travelled to more than 30 film festivals including Berlin, Busan and Seattle International Film Festivals, and won more than 15 awards on the festival circuit. Her two short films ‘Following Diana’ (2015) and ‘Memoria’ (2016) portray women's issues in urban Jakarta and post-conflict Timor Leste. Her second feature-length film, ‘The Seen and Unseen’, was selected for the Cinéfondation Residence programme at the Festival de Cannes, supported by the Hubert Bals Fund and the Asia-Pacific Screen Awards Fund, and received a grant from the Doha Film Institute.

Company Profile

Treewater Productions is an independent production company based in Jakarta. The company's concern for culture, the environment and social issues had led it to create alternative films with a distinctive perspective for telling stories.

Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Meryem Benm'Barek

Director / Screenwriter



Olivier Delbosc

Producer



Contact

Curiosa Films

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Sofia

Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic, French / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama, Social Issues, Women's Issues

Casablanca. At 22, Sofia is the only daughter in a rather traditional family. While having lunch with her family, she discovers she is about to give birth.



Sofia lives with her parents in a modest apartment in Casablanca. While having lunch with her family one day, she is suddenly stricken with violent abdominal pain. Her cousin Lena, a medical student, is feeling her belly when water starts running down her thighs: Sofia is about to give birth. On the pretext of Sofia having overeaten, the two women head to the hospital. Reluctant at first, the personnel eventually agree to take Sofia in, on the condition that she provide her marriage certificate before the next morning; otherwise they will alert the authorities. After Sofia gives birth, she and Lena immediately leave the hospital in search of the child's father, launching themselves into a frantic nocturnal quest.

Director's Note

Through Sofia and Lena's journey, I seek to raise questions that to me are urgent in a society where social uprisings proliferate, and isolation is becoming the norm. This film seeks to go beyond simplistic interpretation: everyone takes turns at being victim and perpetrator; women are not subject to male domination, but rather to the socio-economic reality of the country. Throughout this project, I intend to offer a more complex interpretation of a Moroccan society torn apart by a profound conflict between social classes.

Director's Biography

Meryem Benm'Barek was born in 1984 in Rabat. She studied Arabic Languages and Civilisations at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations in Paris before entering the directing department at INSAS in Brussels in 2010. There, she directed five short films, notably 'Nor' (2013) and 'Jennah' (2014), which was selected for numerous international film festivals, and was considered for entry for an Academy Award in 2015. She also creates sound design art and has had regular exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. She is currently finalizing her first feature-length film, 'Sofia'.

Company Profile

Curiosa Films was born from Olivier Delbosc's desire to build a new production structure after almost 20 years at the helm of Fidélité Films with Marc Missonnier. Strengthened by his experience as a producer, which includes the production of more than 70 feature films of all genres in less than 20 years, Delbosc, with Emilien Bignon by his side, wishes to promote auteur films, both demanding and popular. He thus continues to collaborate with renowned authors such as Xavier Giannoli, André Téchiné and Bertrand Blier, while also developing new relationships with directors including Claire Denis, Martin Provost and Erick Zonca, among others, and producing first feature films by such new directors as Étienne Comar and Lou Jeunet.

Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Rana Kazkaz

Director / Screenwriter



Anas Khalaf

Director / Producer



Magali Negroni

Screenwriter



Nicolas Leprêtre, Raphaël Alexandre

Producers



Contact

Georges Films

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The Translator

Syria, France, Jordan, Qatar / Arabic, English

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama, Politics, Thriller, War

March, 2011. As the Syrian Revolution begins, a political refugee returns illegally to Syria and risks everything to free his brother from the Assad regime.



After getting into trouble with the Syrian government, Sami has been living for years as a political refugee in Australia, working as an Arabic-English translator. Although he has adapted well to his new life, he is haunted by feelings of guilt for having abandoned his brother and sister. In 2011, the Syrian revolution starts unexpectedly and Sami receives a video of his brother being arrested at a peaceful demonstration. The horrifying event brings up painful memories of when their father was arrested by the regime 30 years earlier. Seizing this moment as a way to make up for the past, Sami makes the dangerous journey back to Syria in order to free his brother. Once there, he becomes increasingly aware of his responsibilities towards his country and family, and this leads him to risk everything for freedom – just as his father and brother did before him.

Director's Note

We were living in Damascus with our two small children when the Syrian Revolution broke out in March of 2011. It is during that period that our film takes place, a moment when everything was possible – when Syrians believed, as with the other Arab revolutions, that the moment of emancipation and democracy was within reach. Violence, however, quickly took precedence over hope, and suspicion won minds over. Like Sami, the main character in 'The Translator', we are questioning our responsibility and culpability towards the situation in Syria. Like us, Sami has fled, uprooted himself, to live in freedom, but he cannot resolve that his country, Syria, and his people cannot share it.

Director's Biography

Anas Khalaf is a Syrian filmmaker who currently lives in Jordan, having left Damascus with his family as a result of the Syrian conflict. He holds an MBA from the Normandy Business School, and with his wife Rana Kazkaz, he co-founded the production company Synéastes Films in 2010. He is the screenwriter and director of three short films, including 'Mare Nostrum' (2016), which has been selected for more than 30 festivals, including the Sundance Film Festival and the Dubai International Film Festival, and has won nine international prizes. He also works as an actor, having played roles in 'Dégradé' (2015), 'With Premeditation' (2014) and the television series 'The Bureau' (2015-).

Rana Kazkaz, a Syrian-American, currently lives with her family in Jordan, having left Damascus as a result of the ongoing Syrian conflict. Kazkaz holds an MFA in Acting from Carnegie Mellon University/Moscow Art Theatre and attended the Directing Workshop for Women at the American Film Institute. She is the writer and director of four short films including 'Mare Nostrum' (2016). She is currently working as a story editor and co-producer on two feature-length documentaries.

Company Profile

Georges Films, based in Paris, was founded in 2015 by Raphaël Alexandre and Nicolas Leprêtre, and is dedicated to developing fiction works for film, television and new media, with the desire to discover and nurture new and experienced directors from around the world. In 2016, Georges Films produced 'Mare Nostrum', a short film by Rana Kazkaz and Anas Khalaf, which was selected for more than 30 film festivals, including the Sundance Film Festival and the Dubai International Film Festival, and won nine international prizes. In 2017, Georges Films will finish development of 'The Translator', Kazkaz and Khalaf's first feature-length film, and will produce two further short films. Alexandre and Leprêtre have more than 10 years' experience in production: Alexandre has worked as a location manager on feature films and television series, Leprêtre worked for eight years at Sombrero Films as a production executive for feature films and as a producer of numerous short films.

Production

Feature Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

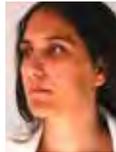
Alaa Eddine Aljem

Director / Screenwriter



Francesca Duca, Alexa Rivero

Producers



Contact

Le Moindre Geste

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The Unknown Saint

'Saint Inconnu' / Morocco, France, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Black Comedy, Drama, Materialism, Social Issues, Spirituality

After years in captivity, a thief returns to retrieve the money he stole and discovers a mausoleum unexpectedly built on the site where he stashed the money.



Young Amine steals a large sum of money and escapes into the hills with the police hot on his trail. Before being arrested, he buries the cash and disguises it as a modest tomb. Ten years later, he is released from prison and sets off in search of his money. In the meantime, a shrine has been built on the place where he buried his stash to honour a saint who used to live in the region, and whose tomb was never found until 10 years ago. His name is lost; he is known as "the unknown saint". Down the hill from the shrine, a new village subsists mainly as a result of the economic activity generated by pilgrims who come from all over the country and even from abroad. Amine settles in the new village and tries desperately to get his money back.

Director's Note

In all my works, I tend to start from an absurd situation. 'The Unknown Saint' starts with a fake mausoleum. A mausoleum, holy for the inhabitants of a village that lives off the activity generated by the fake saint even though the saint never existed and indeed was never buried there. The same mausoleum that was once a stash for stolen money. Nowadays, there is nothing as holy as money. The mausoleum where a bag of money is buried is the starting point of entangled stories, where spirituality and greed meet. In this film, I also wanted to work on rumours, how they quickly spread and can turn into legends. 'The Unknown Saint' will be shot in the vein of my previous films, in a simple and uncluttered staging that reveals the gravity of certain situations and also offers a space for the burlesque and the black comedy.

Director's Biography

Trained at ESAV Marrakech and INSAS in Brussels, **Alaa Eddine Aljem** directed several short films, among them 'The Desert Fish' (2015), which had great coverage in the film festival circuit and took the Critics, Screenwriting and Grand Prize at the Moroccan National Film Festival. 'The Unknown Saint' is Aljem's debut feature, currently in financing. With this project, he participated in the Open Doors Lab at the Locarno Festival, where it won the ICAM award. It was also selected for La Fabrique des Cinémas du Monde in Cannes in 2016, and took part in the Sundance Screenwriters Lab. In 2016, Alaa was named by 'Screen International' as one of the Five Arab Stars of Tomorrow.

Company Profile

Le Moindre Geste is an independent production company founded by director-producers Francesca Duca and Alaa Eddine Aljem in 2012. It is based in Marrakech and Casablanca. Le Moindre Geste offers authors a real context of coaching, mentoring and development of their projects while leaving them all the freedom to make their own film. Le Moindre Geste focuses on art films with a common denominator: start from the personal to reach the universal. A chance to explore places, people, stories and feelings.

Post-Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Annemarie Jacir

Director / Screenwriter



Ossama Bawardi

Producer



Contact

Philistine Films

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Wajib

Palestine, UAE, France, Switzerland, Norway, Colombia, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 100

Genre: Based on a True Story, Comedy, Drama, Identity, Politics, Road Trip, Satire

Shadi returns to his hometown to help his father hand-deliver his sister's wedding invitations. As the estranged pair go house to house, the details of their fragile relationship come to a head.



Abu-Shadi is a divorced father who lives in Nazareth. After his daughter's wedding, he will be left alone. His son Shadi arrives from Rome to help deliver the wedding invitations to each guest, according to local Palestinian customs. Shadi has spent the last several years abroad and there is little he misses about this place he left a long time ago. As the two men drive around Nazareth, Abu-Shadi tries to connect with his son, while feeling resentful that Shadi took his mother's side after the divorce. Shadi has gladly lost touch with his hometown, a city plagued with violence – but he has also lost touch with his family. Drily humorous, 'Wajib' takes place over the course of one day as these two men travel from house to house beginning a new relationship, while at the same time trying to deal with old tensions. Abu-Shadi defends the political and social reality of those Palestinians who remained in their hometown, while Shadi despairs at what he sees as an apathetic community suffering an identity crisis. They both do their best to honour their "wajib" (duty), but more than rediscovering a changed city, father and son rediscover each other.

Director's Note

Last summer, my husband's sister got married. I decided to tag along silently as he and his father spent five days traversing the city and surrounding villages, hand-delivering the wedding invitations. As a silent observer, I found the experience at times funny, and at other times painful. Aspects of that special relationship between father and son, the tensions of a sometimes tested love between them, came out in small ways. With that in mind, I began working on the idea for a film about this fragile relationship.

Director's Biography

Annemarie Jacir has written, directed and produced 16 films, two of which premiered at the Festival de Cannes, one at the Venice Film Festival and one at the Berlin International Film Festival. 'Like Twenty Impossibles' was the first Arab short film to screen in the Official Selection at Cannes, and it continued to break ground when it became a finalist for the Academy Awards. Jacir's first feature, 'Salt of this Sea' (2008), premiered at Cannes, was Palestine's 2008 Oscar Entry, won the FIPRESCI Prize, and was named Best Film in Milan and Traverse City. 'When I Saw You' was named Best Asian Film at Berlin, and Best Film at Abu Dhabi, Olympia, Amiens and Phoenix Film Festivals.

Company Profile

Founded in 1997, Philistine Films is an independent production company based in Jordan and Palestine. The company is known for its interest in challenging, thought-provoking and original films from directors with distinctive visions, and has established itself at the forefront of independent cinema in the region, producing films for both big and small screens. Philistine Films was created to support new voices and to offer a platform for the emerging independent Arab film scene. The company's goal is to focus on the development and co-production of independent feature and documentary films, and to find unconventional stories and fresh narratives. We hope to challenge the creative, financial and practical obstacles that confront filmmakers working outside the mainstream. Philistine's productions have been selected for the Festival de Cannes twice, screened in the Berlin, Toronto and Venice International Film Festivals and the Tribeca Film Festival, among more than 300 other festivals. Philistine-produced films have won numerous awards, and one was a finalist for an Academy Award.

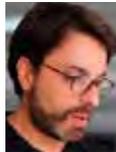
Production

Feature Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Mohamed Ben Attia

Director / Screenwriter



Dora Bouchoucha

Producer



Weldi

Tunisia, France, Belgium, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama, Social Issues

A father is confronted by his own reality and has to question himself and his choices.



Riadh and Nazli are in their sixties and have an only son, Sami, who is preparing to sit for his baccalaureate. He is often prone to migraine crises, and his worried parents take him to see specialists, then a psychiatrist. It seems Sami is getting better. Riadh works at the port and is soon to retire, a change in the couple's life that does not help their financial situation. One day Sami disappears. At first Riadh is lost. He goes through several absurd initiatives before deciding to leave for Turkey in search of his son.

Contact

Nomadis Images

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Director's Note

'Weldi' is the story of 60-year-old Riadh, who, when confronted to a painful ordeal, accepts the inevitable and becomes aware of the inanity of his own life, and of the one he dreamt of for his child. By losing his job first, as he is at the age of retirement, and then his son, who disappears to join a world which is odious to Riadh, and opposed to his beliefs and principles, he loses his anchors and is revealed to himself: a lucidity on his own fate, which could be perceived as weakness, but which is more like a capitulation. This revelation comes to him through a dream/nightmare, after an initial trip in search of his son. This dream will lead him to understand the uselessness of his quest.

Director's Biography

Mohamed Ben Attia was born in Tunis in 1976. He studied Audiovisual Communication at the University of Valenciennes in France after graduating from the Institut de Hautes Études Commerciales (IHEC) in Tunis in 1998. He directed five short films. 'Hedi', his feature-film debut, had its world premiere at the 2016 Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the Best First Film Award and the Silver Bear for Best Actor. The film has been released in more than 20 countries, has taken part in numerous festivals around the world and has won many awards.

Company Profile

Nomadis Images is a Tunisian audiovisual production company. Its main activities include producing short and feature-length fiction films, documentaries and commercials, and providing services and training to filmmakers. The company's filmography includes Sami Tlili's 'Cursed Be the Phosphate' (2012); Hinde Boujemaa's 'It Was Better Tomorrow' (2012); Raja Amari's 'Buried Secrets' (2009), 'Satin Rouge' (2002) and 'Foreign Body' (2016); and Mohamed Ben Attia's 'Hedi' (2016).

Feature Documentary

5 Seasons of Revolution

Amal

Chaos

Constructions

The Disappeared

Displaced in Heaven

Immolations

The Invented Biography

A Man on Fire

The Man Who Stole Banksy

My English Cousin

Nation's Hope

Naz (working title)

Nine Months War

Nothingwood

Of Fathers and Sons

On the Crossbar

Railway Men

Suspended Wives

Tiny Souls

Underdown

Feature Experimental or Essay

The Fifth Resurrection of Farid

I, Hummus

Mnemosyne

The Wind Blew On

You Come from Far Away

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Layla Abyad

Director / Screenwriter

Orwa Nyrabia, Diana El Jeiroudi, Torstein Grude

Producers



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No Nation Films
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5 Seasons of Revolution

'Khams Fusoul Thawra' / Syria, Germany, Norway, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 75

Genre: Creative Documentary, War, Women

'5 Seasons of Revolution' takes viewers on a journey into the experience of four young women who were swept up in the wake of the 2011 uprising in Syria.



To support an armed struggle, to protest peacefully, to flee or to document events: these are the courses of action that lie before the protagonists of this film. Their divergent paths threaten to lead the women away from one another, and to change them irrevocably as individuals. What they choose to become in wartime will surely define them for the rest of their lives. The filmmaker takes us on a journey into the experience of four young Damascene women who were swept up in the excitement that came in the wake of the 2011 uprising in Syria, and began to rebuild their relationships with their country and to define their roles amid the ensuing conflict. Today, after all that has happened and is happening, the director looks back, reconstructing the experience she documented and sharing with us her quest for an aspired sense of reconciliation.

Director's Note

Should we have taken that third left after the bridge? Should we have split at the crossroads or taken a step back? Should I have cut her out of the frame? Should I have filmed him more? How do you unite and organize a mass movement of people longing for their individual freedoms? How do you make one film of the story of those people? What we chose to remember, what we decided to learn and what we were aiming for from the start might all be one and the same, but maybe we had to go through it to find that out. I edit what I filmed, I cut out what I dismissed, I told what I felt. Making this film is the cinematic interpretation of that intense era we try to survive.

Director's Biography

Born in Damascus 1983, **Layla Abyad** is a documentary filmmaker and journalist who has made short and medium-length documentaries. Her most recent short documentary, 'Letters to S', premiered in IDFA. She holds a Master's degree in Documentary Filmmaking from Essex University. A camerawoman, she has been documenting events in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey over the past 10 years.

Company Profile

No Nation Films was founded in Berlin in 2014 by Orwa Nyrabia and Diana El Jeiroudi, to continue their previous work as 'Proaction Film', which they founded in Syria in 2002 and then in Egypt in 2013. Over the years, the company produced and co-produced award-winning films that have been released theatrically in France, Japan, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK, and screened in numerous festivals, including Cannes, Amsterdam, Busan, Locarno, London, New York, Sundance and Toronto. Their films have been broadcast worldwide on television and via premium VOD platforms. The work of No Nation Films has earned its team numerous awards, including the European Documentary Network Award 2012, the FIDADOC honorary award, the Katrin Cartlidge Award, the first ever George Polk Award for Documentary Film and the Human Rights Watch Nestor Almendros Award for Courage in Filmmaking.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Spring Grants 2017

Mohamed Siam

Director / Screenwriter



Myriam Sassine

Producer



Contact

About Productions

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Amal

Egypt, Lebanon, France, Germany, Denmark, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 80

Genre: Creative Documentary, Politics, Social Issues

Amal, an angry Egyptian teenager, matures into a young woman as she searches for her place and her identity in a male-dominated society and a country that is in constant political turmoil.



Amal, an angry teenager, comes of age in a post-revolution Egypt that is undergoing tremendous change. Filmed over five years, 'Amal' is an observational self-discovery journey that follows a young female from the age of 15 till the age of 20 while she is searching for her place, identity and sexuality in a male-dominated society. As she grows from childhood into adulthood, she realises how limited her choices are as a young female living in an Arab police state in a post-revolution era.

Director's Note

How did our teenage years shape us? How could we make vital choices at such an early age, particularly in a country that went through massive changes like Egypt has? When the Arab Spring began, I wondered how the youngsters would face reality after their revolution fails and they have to start planning their futures. What would become of their anger and dreams? My dual background in psychology and cinema enabled me to bridge the distance between Amal and the lens to bring the character fully to the screen. Amal's tone resonates with my first film, 'Whose Country?', as both revolve around how growing up and living in a vast state like Egypt could shape our destiny and identity. My father was a criminal investigator and very secretive about his line of work, and that made me think of the inconceivable circle of secrecy and hierarchy that we are all affected by.

Director's Biography

Mohamed Siam is a director, producer and cinematographer who has received several international grants and prizes supporting his films, from funds including the Sundance Institute, the IDFA Bertha Fund, the Catapult Film Fund, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, Cinereach, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture and ITVS. His first film, 'Whose Country?' (2016) screened at the New York Film Festival, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and Hot Docs, among other festivals, and was distributed internationally. An alumnus of numerous prestigious film institutions, such as Sundance Labs, the IDFA Academy, La Fémis and La Fabrique des Cinémas du Monde at the Festival de Cannes, Siam is also a Berlinale and Durban Talents alumnus. He is currently working on his second feature-length documentary, 'Amal', as well as his first feature-length narrative film, 'Honey & Blood'.

Company Profile

About Productions produces feature films and documentaries with a distinctly Arab voice, expressing the identity of the region. Since 1998, the company has brought together an important network of Arab and Lebanese artists, and has produced award-winning films such as 'A Perfect Day' (2005), 'I Want to See' (2008) and 'The Lebanese Rocket Society' (2012) by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige; 'The Last Man' (2006) and 'The Valley' (2014) by Ghassan Salhab; 'Stray Bullet' (2010) by Georges Hashem; 'Melodrama Habibi' (2007) by Hany Tamba; and 'Ladder to Damascus' (2013) by Mohamad Malas. About Productions has a strong partnership with MC Distribution, a distribution company dedicated to promoting new films from the Middle East along with direct and priority access to Metropolis Cinema, the sole art-house cinema in Lebanon. The company's main objective remains helping to structure the Lebanese and Arab cinema craft into a solid industry.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Sara Fattahi

Director



Paolo Calamita

Producer



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Chaos

Syria, Austria, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, German / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Biography, Creative Documentary, History, Identity, Immigration, Politics, Social Issues, War, Women's Issues

The story of three Syrian women, each living in a different time and place, separated by the very things that unite them - fear and trauma.



'Chaos' narrates the story of three women in three cities - three women who have given up on life. One lives in Damascus. She has stopped speaking to others entirely, seeking refuge in silence since the death of her son in the war. The other has left Damascus as a result of the war there, hiding herself in Sweden. The third ended up in Vienna and faces an unknown future. The film is a discussion among one woman stuck in Damascus, a second stuck in exile, and a third who has recently left. It is a conversation between the interior and exterior - which is also an impossible conversation.

Director's Note

In the shadow of an unending war, or perhaps wars, we are blind in the face of a future we cannot see completely, a future we are almost entirely unable to read or make sense of. Wars that have viciously dug in their claws, blinding our sight without mercy, leaving us begging for forgiveness. How can our humanity persevere in the shadow of a war that has brought out the viciousness of aggrieved social classes, which was until now buried in our midst? How can people protect themselves from hatred when there is so much loss and pain surrounding them?

Director's Biography

Sara Fattahi was born in Damascus in 1983. In 2010, she started to produce and direct her own documentary films independently. She finished her first short documentary '27 Metres' in 2013. Since 2014, she has collaborated in researching and writing independent short film projects. 'Coma' (2015), her first feature-length documentary, was granted the Regard Neuf Award for Best First Feature Film at Visions du Réel and took the FIPRESCI Award at the Vienna Film Festival in 2015, and has been screened in numerous festivals, such as MoMA's Doc Fortnight, the Berlin International Film Festival, and the São Paulo Film Festival.

Company Profile

Little Magnet Films (LMF) is a Vienna based production company, focussing on projects with high artistic value. LMF's first production was Jem Cohen's acclaimed feature film 'Museum Hours' (2012), which screened at numerous film festivals and received many awards and nominations, among them two nominations for the Independent Spirit Awards (Best Editing) and the John Cassavetes Award (Best Feature under \$500,000). Apart from the production of 'Chaos' by Sara Fattahi, Little Magnet Films is currently developing two documentaries: 'Epicentro' by Academy Award nominee Hubert Sauper and 'Tyrolean Meditation' by Academy Award nominee Debra Granik.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2017

Fernando Martín Restelli

Director / Screenwriter



Pablo Cruceño

Screenwriter / Producer



Milagros Cabral Montejano

Producer



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Periferia Cine

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Constructions

'Construcciones' / Argentina, Qatar / Spanish / 2018

Runtime: 75

Genre: Creative Documentary, Family, Social Issues

A 60-year-old watchman of buildings under construction has a second chance in life to become a father.



Sixty-year-old Pedro watches over the quiet corridors of a building that is undergoing construction. In spite of the difficulties he has to face as a single father, he constantly looks for ways to stay close to his seven-year-old son, Juampi. A young couple who are building a home of their own, Jesi and Lucas, take care of the boy while his father works. Over time, Juampi grows close to the couple and comes to see in Jesi the figure of his absent mother. In an attempt to deepen his relationship with his son, Pedro brings Juampi on a camping trip, hoping that their experience together will help them reconnect.

Director's Note

At night, lights from buildings under construction illuminate flat areas where many stories begin. Through slits in construction hoarding, which jealously guards the buildings, and beneath the fluorescent light from inside, we can make out human figures moving slowly from one place to another, amid the construction materials. Who are these guardians wandering around those corridors while the city sleeps? Where do they go when the morning clatter of the cement mixer starts once again? For sleepless Pedro, guardian of inanimate objects, always carrying a radio, his only companion, work time is leisure time. 'Constructions', like a family album, aims to portray the many changes over time each character goes through while they build a sense of belonging regarding both spatial and personal relationships. The film seeks to observe and disclose the ways in which the property-development business affects the daily life of construction workers.

Director's Biography

Fernando Martín Restelli

was born in 1991, and currently lives and works in Córdoba, Argentina. A filmmaker, editor and cinematographer, he studied at the Universidad de Córdoba. His short film 'Merodeo' (2016) received the Special Jury Prize at the Valdivia International Film Festival and was selected for several other festivals. 'Constructions', his first feature-length film, is currently in progress; with it, he participated in the Rough Cut Lab at Visions du Réel, the Mar del Plata International Film Festival, pitch sessions at DocMontevideo and TransLAB at the Transcinema Festival Internacional de Cine. In 2016, he received a scholarship to attend the IDFAcademy in Amsterdam.

Company Profile

Periferia Cine is a young production company based in Córdoba, Argentina, that generates committed, creative documentaries and non-fiction films for an international audience, helping filmmakers explore and shape their own personal voices, with a special focus on fresh and new talent and contemporary social issues. Periferia's films have participated and received awards and recognition in various film festivals, including Visions du Réel, the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, MDQFilmFest, the Valdivia International Film Festival, the Transcinema International Film Festival, and DocMontevideo.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Yasmin Fedda

Director / Screenwriter



Hugh Hartford, Elhum Shakerifar

Producers



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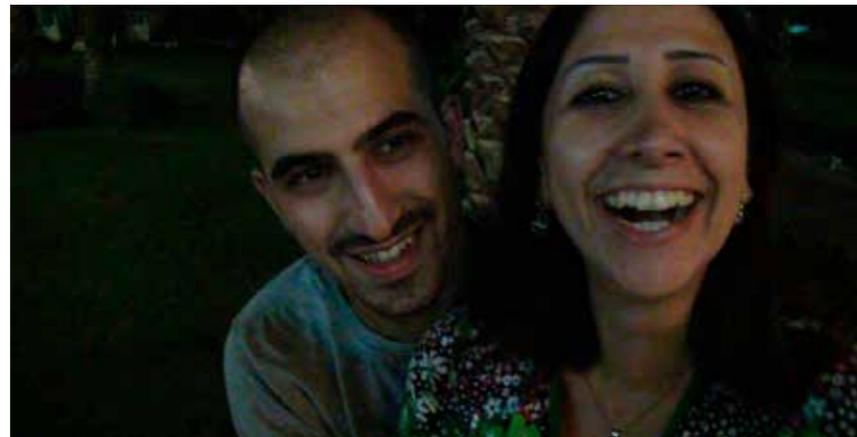
The Disappeared

Lebanon, UK, Qatar / Arabic, English, Italian

Runtime: 90

Genre: Creative Documentary

Bassel was a hacker; Paolo a priest. Both active in the Syrian revolution, both were forcibly “disappeared”.



Bassel was a successful open source developer and hacker in Damascus. Paolo was a well-known priest based in Mar Musa monastery. Both men were active in the 2011 revolution, and witnesses to crimes before they were forcibly disappeared. ‘The Disappeared’ follows these two high-profile figures of the Syrian revolution and asks how to rebuild a country when its civil society has been disappeared, killed and scattered across continents. Much like archaeologists, we are left to dig through the dirt in the hope of finding mere fragments of the truth.

Director's Note

I started this film as a personal search to understand an unfathomable crime - the forcible disappearance of a friend. An image that kept coming back to me as I thought about the reality of forcible disappearance was that of the Tell Brak idols from 3000 BC. They have intrigued archaeologists over decades for their disproportionately large eyes. To me, they have taken on the meaning of silent witnesses of Syria. This film is inspired by them - in their bearing witness to what is not seen but is powerfully present in its absence. The film also gives us the possibility of connecting the dots, investigating the unknown, and trying to make sense of the big picture, through the small, intimate realities of people's lives. Through this film, I want to interrogate how Syria as a country can be rebuilt when its civil society has been disappeared, killed and scattered across continents.

Director's Biography

Yasmin Fedda is a BAFTA-nominated documentary director. Her films have screened extensively at festivals including Sundance and Edinburgh International Film Festival, and have been broadcast on BBC and Al Jazeera. She has made three films in or on Syria, most recently ‘Queens of Syria’ (2014), which won the Black Pearl award at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and best female director at Carthage Film Festival. Yasmin has a PhD in Transdisciplinary Documentary Film, and is also a co-founder and programmer of Highlight Arts, an organisation that works with artists in times of conflict.

Company Profile

Banyak is an innovative production company that has been making award-winning documentaries for cinema and broadcast since 2006. They've had films in cinemas worldwide including the UK, USA, Asia and Scandinavia. They have made films for major broadcasters including PBS, BBC, Channel 4, ARTE and Al Jazeera. Credits include, ‘Thank You For The Rain’ and ‘Ping Pong’, a BRITDOC feature film for Film 4.

Hakawati was founded in 2017 to produce, distribute and curate films with the art of storytelling at their core. Set up by BAFTA-nominated producer Elhum Shakerifar, Hakawati supports storytellers with distinctive vision and enables new talent to take creative risks. Hakawati is committed to the broader visibility of independent film, giving platforms to quieter voices and unique individual perspectives in relation to a dominant whole. In making creatively bold films with integrity, representation and reframing narratives are at the heart of what we do. Hakawati is supported by the prestigious BFI Vision Award – awarded once every three years to leading UK producers; Shakerifar was the only documentary producer among the 2016 recipients.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Khaled Jarrar

Director / Producer



Thomas Kaske

Producer



Contact

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Displaced In Heaven

'Laje' fi Mecca' / Palestine, Germany, Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Creative Documentary, History, Immigration, War

By following a family through the Balkan route, a Palestinian director plunges into the horror of exile in a desperate need to recover his lost memories.



The repetition of history and the passing on of collective and individual traumas from generation to generation is what defines the Palestinian identity. In a journey across the Balkan route, director Khaled Jarrar follows an elderly Palestinian woman from Damascus to Europe in what marks her second displacement. Walking side by side with Nadeera and her family towards a utopian freedom, Jarrar asks himself about the meaning of home, belonging and identity, while the memories of his childhood come back to life after many years of silence.

Director's Note

I became a protagonist of this film without expecting to. But, to be able to help Nadeera's family and bring them to Germany, I had no choice but to become a refugee. On the one hand, there is a distance with the reality I film; I am witnessing a historical moment – I observe. On the other, an intimate world grows in response to that: How do I perceive this reality? How is it affecting me? In the film, my presence appears to connect both journeys, or to express how I feel; how it feels to be a refugee. I will not assume facts in a judgmental way, but rather express ideas and thoughts through a shared experience of displacement. Although there is drama in this story, humour and lightness will also appear in the film, as they do in human nature.

Director's Biography

Born in the occupied West Bank in 1976, **Khaled Jarrar** currently lives and works in Tucson, where he researches the potential fallout of the proposed border wall between Mexico and the USA. He is also working on a film and multimedia series that documents his month-long journey with a group of migrants who travelled to Europe last year in order to draw attention to the plight of Syrian refugees.

Company Profile

Kaske Film produces creative essay and documentary films that express aesthetic, innovative, and experimental ways of storytelling. The company's various projects combine personal and critical approaches to historical, social, and political topics. As a cultural film production house, Kaske Film seeks German and international funding opportunities, and to establish international co-productions and creative partnerships, in order to realize and finance projects, and maintain the integrity of the author's vision.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2017

Meriem Achour Bouakkaz

Director / Screenwriter



Carmen Garcia

Producer



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Immolations

'Al Hareg' / Algeria, Canada, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 75

Genre: Identity, Politics, Social Issues, Youth

An intimate encounter with people who have attempted to set themselves on fire as a cry of distress against the infinite difficulties of simply finding their place in the sun.



Surviving in Algeria is a constant challenge that leaves the nation's population without hope. Self-immolation is all too common; those who survive must face not only physical and psychological suffering, but also the disapproving eye of communities who consider suicide a sin. To make matters worse, the Algerian state has criminalised immolation, so survivors must therefore face prosecution. 'Immolations' attempts to explain the inexplicable, to free the speech so that a debate is set up through means other than fire. In my eyes, this self-destructive act reveals what Algerians have become: frustrated, disjointed, far from their dreams and from what they could become. Algeria's people live a deep malaise, a sort of fatality that is no longer questioned, which has now become integrated into the national personality. It seems the time has come to ask ourselves questions - all the questions. To try to grasp how we have arrived at this point.

Director's Note

'Immolations' is an immersive journey into the Algeria of the forgotten and the abandoned. I will travel around the country to meet fragile and vulnerable characters, as a pilgrimage to the memory of those whose tragic death demands a response from me. Those who consider immolation are numerous. Those who survive after an attempt must face not only physical and psychological suffering, but also the disapproving look of people around them, who consider suicide a sin. In my eyes, this epidemic of self-immolation reveals what has become of Algerians today: they are frustrated, disarticulated, far from their dreams and devoid of hope for the future. Often, the motive behind cases of immolation is the "hogra", an Algerian Arabic term that refers to a mixture of contempt and injustice: a vivid, very sensitive feeling in the Algerian people, who have reached the point of exasperation. The disintegration of the Algerian personality has never been so clearly apparent in society. People live in a profound state of evil that has become an integral part of their personalities, a kind of fatalism that goes unquestioned. It seems to me that it is time to ask questions - all the questions, so we can try to understand how we got here.

Director's Biography

Meriem Achour Bouakkaz

graduated with a degree in Veterinary Medicine in Algeria. In 2007, she participated in a filmmaking workshop, after which her first film, 'Harguine Harguine' (2008) was selected for numerous festivals. In 2011, she completed filmmaking training in Montreal at the Institut national de l'image et du son, and directed the short films 'Ashes of Our Soul' (2012) and 'Faceless Story' (2012), which screened at several festivals. In 2014, she received a scholarship from the Quebec Arts Council to write a documentary about self-immolation in Algeria.

Company Profile

Argus Films produces documentary films that explore and question major social, political and cultural issues from a humanistic perspective. The company has broad experience in filming on all continents and in many languages; made up of a team of seasoned filmmakers and collaborators, it has won many nominations and awards for its productions.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2017

Nicolás Lasnibat

Director / Screenwriter



Xavier Rocher

Producer



Contact

La Fabrica Nocturna Productions

Xavier Rocher

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The Invented Biography

'La Biografía Inventada' / France, Chile, Qatar / Spanish, French / 2018

Runtime: 94

Genre: Biography, Creative Documentary, Docufiction

A search for Roberto Arturo Belano, a Chilean poet who has become a myth since he disappeared in Mexico in 1999.



Arturo Belano, alter ego of the writer Roberto Bolaño, shared with his creator a significant part of his biography. The film searches for him in places where his stories and novels occur, meeting with real and imaginary characters, in a territory where reality and fiction have a blurred frontier. A new form of the literary biopic, where the writer and his character turn into one and the same person.

Director's Note

Is it possible to make a writer's biopic through his literary alter ego? It was a risky bet. Reading Roberto Bolaño's work, I noticed that his character Arturo Belano's life had many coincidences with his own biography. I wanted therefore to reconstruct his author's path by taking for reality novels and short stories where Belano appears. I could thus explore as well a new cinematic field: a documentary form where the audience is invited to accept literature as the unique reality, because for Bolaño, literature was life. I wanted to propose a journey inside Bolaño's books to unravel his mystery, but with a comforting style far from conceptual films or essays. Rather than a didactic author's biography, my film wants to invite the audience to question their own way of looking at reality and to interrogate the truth of images while diving into the work and life of one of the greatest writers of the 21st century.

Director's Biography

Nicolás Lasnibat was born in Valparaiso, Chile, in 1975. He studied film direction at the French cinema school la Fémis. His graduation work '30 years' featured at the Venice Film Festival and won the Best Short Film award in San Sebastian, Toulouse, Rome, among more than 50 festivals selection worldwide. He recently finished his latest film 'Everything You Cannot Leave Behind You' with the support of the CNC and ARTE TV. He also worked as assistant director for Patricio Guzman on his films 'Nostalgia for the Light' (Festival de Cannes selection and European Film Award for Best Documentary), and 'The Pearl Button', which was awarded in Berlin.

Company Profile

La Fabrica Nocturna Productions was founded by producers Marina Perales Marhuenda and Xavier Rocher in 2010. The company produces both short and feature-length films which aim to open up frontiers to creation from all around the world. They have recently produced more than twenty short films and documentaries, including 'Wolf and Sheep' by Afghan director Shahrbanoo Sadat (Art Cinema Award at Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2016), and 'The Lost City' by Chilean director Francisco Hervé (Visions du Réel, Nyon 2016). La Fabrica Nocturna Productions have also developed several feature films including 'The Heiresses' by Paraguayan director Marcelo Martinessi, 'The Return' by Syrian director Meyar Al-Roumi, and Shahrbanoo Sadat's latest film 'The Orphanage'.

Development

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2017

Ibrahim Harb

Director



Louai Haffar

Producer



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A Man On Fire

'Rajol Ala Khat Al-Nar' / Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 70

Genre: Creative Documentary, Politics, Psychological, Social Issues

Yousef is on a pursuit for self-fulfilment. An unsung hero, he juggles saving lives every day with navigating the tricky geopolitical environment of the Lebanese Civil Defense department.



The story of a man who was born and raised in a modest environment and aspired to be a superhero. Yousef is a dreamer and an adventurer; a man in his forties with tanned skin and hulkish stature. For more than two decades, Yousef has volunteered with the Lebanese Civil Defense. His whole life revolves around rescue operations, but he also has an inner mission - that of challenging the regime in power to enlist him and his colleagues officially as employees with full rights. No specific political party or association is backing him up to carry out his mission. Through an exploration of Yousef's endeavours and interior motives, 'A Man on Fire' provides a contemporary portrayal of Lebanon, full of hope and failure in the era after the Civil War.

Director's Note

In my early years, animated heroes always fascinated me. However, once I sat with Yousef and started hearing his life story, I realised heroes do, in fact, exist among us. Like me, Yousef grew up as a kid captivated by tales of heroes and adventurers. These characters, he says, are part of what inspired him to help those in need. What is strange is that the events in which Yousef finds himself involved are incidents we see on the news all the time - violent conflicts, humanitarian crises, war, fires, natural disasters. We simply see the aftermath or hear the basic details of what happened. Civil Defense units like Yousef who actually serve in the field during these events are left out of the narrative. They repeatedly risk their lives so others can live. What brought them to these moments? What motivates them? What do they feel in the midst of danger? I want to know their side of the story.

Director's Biography

Even before graduating from Saint Joseph University with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Arts, **Ibrahim Harb** had lengthy experience in and exposure to media production. Early on in his career, he worked in various production positions, which allowed him to gain knowledge of different filmmaking skills. While he continues to work in a variety of TV shows, his passion has long been to make documentary films. His film 'Story of Fatat' (2016) won three festival awards. 'A Man on Fire' is his first feature-length documentary.

Company Profile

Cinifilm is a young production company based in Doha. Among other services, Cinifilm aspires to produce high-end, quality documentary films with strong narratives and compelling storytelling.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2017

Marco Proserpio

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Christian Omodeo

Producer



Filippo Perfido

Screenwriter / Producer



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The Man Who Stole Banksy

Italy, Qatar / Arabic, English, French, Italian / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Based on a True Story, Creative Documentary, Identity, Politics, Road Trip, Social Issues

In 2007, internationally-acclaimed artist Banksy slips into Palestine to paint on walls. What follows is a story of clashing cultures, art, identity, theft and the black market.



In 2007, Banksy went to Palestine to paint on walls. Someone takes offence at a piece depicting an Israeli soldier checking a donkey's ID. A local taxi driver decides to cut it off and sell it back to the West. This is the story of the Palestinian perspective and reaction to street art through the work of its most celebrated hero. The story of an illegal black market of art stolen from streets around the world, cultures clashing in the face of an unsustainable political situation and finally of the changing perception of street art. It is not one story, but many. Like Banksy's art would be meaningless without its context, so the absence of it would be meaningless without an understanding of the elements that brought his artwork from Bethlehem to a Western auction house, along with the wall it was painted on.

Director's Note

I started following street art out of personal interest. When I was young, most of my friends used to cover their faces to evade CCTV cameras and jump on walls to paint on trains, knowing they would only see their artwork in the light of day once – as the train ran by the next morning – before it was erased. The original idea of the film came after a chance meeting with Walid, a Palestinian taxi driver who was my very first encounter once I passed the Bethlehem checkpoint. Walid and his friends had stolen a whole house wall with a Banksy painted on it and were about to sell it on eBay. As I began my research, I realized how that same action can be interpreted in very different ways and how its ethical justifications and explanations can vary drastically from country to country, depending on cultural and economic priorities.

Director's Biography

Italian director and screenwriter **Marco Proserpio** has been involved in film, television and advertising since the age of 20, when he started working at MTV Italia. Soon after leaving MTV he started directing short films and commercials for television. His corporate clients include Pirelli, Campari, Jeep, Diesel, and Sony. In November 2016, Proserpio directed the film 'The Story Of Our Guardians' produced by Balich Worldwide Shows for the 45th UAE National Day. His most recent projects include the short films 'Toys' and 'Golden Age' and the upcoming feature documentary 'The Man Who Stole Banksy'.

Company Profile

Hiding behind the cult of the multiple-use name 'Sterven Jønger', Sterven Pictures is an independent production company based in Milan, Italy, founded in 2010 and operated ever since by filmmakers Marco Proserpio and Jacopo Farina. Sterven Pictures specializes in the research and production of a broad range of original content. Clients include Adidas, Autogrill, Fondazione Prada, Jeep, Missoni, Moleskine, Montreux Jazz Festival, Pirelli, Sony, Universal Music Group, Vice, YOOX, Wired and many more. In 2017, during the production of the feature 'The Man Who Stole Banksy', Marco Proserpio decided to split the company and simply use his own name and focus on documentaries and features, leaving former partner Jacopo Farina to use the name 'Sterven Jønger' to work mainly on advertising and music videos.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Karim Sayad

Director / Screenwriter



Joëlle Bertossa

Producer



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Close Up Films
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My English Cousin

'Mon Cousin Anglais' / Algeria, Switzerland, France, Qatar / Arabic, English

Runtime: 90

Genre: Creative Documentary, Identity, Immigration, Social Issues

My cousin Fahed left Algeria in 2001 to settle in England. Finally "regularized", he is torn between his new life abroad or a return home.



My 41-year-old cousin, Fahed, left Algeria in 2001 to settle in England. Regularized after a decade of forced secrecy, he has been married to an English woman with whom he can't have a family. Recently, he has welcomed his nephew to his home in Grimsby, but the young man disappeared shortly after. Fahed works two jobs to pay his bills and devotes his rare free time to buying discount gifts for his Algerian family, while also secretly preparing a wedding to a younger woman living in Algeria.

Director's Note

This new project sheds light on people who have managed to flee Algeria successfully and are now residing in Europe. When he moved to the UK, Fahed had no education and no grasp of the English language. He grew up fatherless in Algeria during the 'black decade', and is now an integrated man living in a small town in England. Far from the tales of misery often heard, Fahed's journey represents a success story. I want to examine the notion of Fahed's success. He has attained his material goals: UK citizenship, and an apartment in the suburbs of Algiers. However, his new status has turned his relationships back home upside down. I spent time with my cousin Fahed when he had just moved to England. I discovered the universe of Algerian illegal immigrants in the UK. I saw the many challenges and hardships they faced. His will and unfaltering courage stayed in my mind ever since, and nourished my desire to one day tell his story.

Director's Biography

Karim Sayad was born in Lausanne in 1984 to an Algerian father and a Swiss mother. After completing an MA in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies of Geneva, he decided to become a documentary filmmaker. His first short, 'Babor Casanova', premiered in Locarno in 2015. It was then shown in festivals worldwide, and won awards at DocLisboa, Festival Dei Popoli and, among others, the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival. 'Of Sheep and Men' his first feature documentary was selected at TIFF Docs, São Paulo and Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal, and won the Special Mention at the MedFilm Festival.

Company Profile

Joëlle Bertossa founded Geneva-based 'Close Up Films' in 2012. Over the past five years, they have produced twenty documentary and six fiction films. These include 'Volta a Terra', a documentary directed by João Pedro Plácido that premiered at Visions du Réel and was presented at ACID, Cannes in 2015; 'The Shadow of Women' by Philippe Garrel, that opened the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, and 'I Am Not Your Negro' directed by Raoul Peck, which was presented at TIFF Toronto and nominated for the 2017 Oscars. Through its work, Close Up Films aims to question the contemporary world in an original way. Involved, poetic or radical, the projects that Close Up Films wishes to defend are sometimes fragile but always engaging.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2017

Hana Mire
Director



Andreas Rocksén
Producer



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Nation's Hope

'Rajada Dalka' / Somalia, UAE, UK, USA, Sweden, Republic of the Congo, Qatar / English, Somali

Runtime: 90

Genre: Creative Documentary, Sports, War, Women's Issues, Youth

A season in the lives of Somalia's National Women's basketball squad, as veteran coach Suad Galow leads the team of fearless young women against both rival teams and Al-Shabaab.



Basketball, one of the oldest and most popular games among Somali women, is now an endangered sport. This highly visual, character-driven portrait of the Somali Women's National Basketball Team takes viewers on an immersive journey from Mogadishu to the Somali diaspora communities of Minneapolis and Toronto. The 'Nation's Hope' filmmakers were embedded within the team throughout its troubled 2016-2017 season, which is viewed through the eyes of coach Suad Galow and several Mogadishu-based players. The film illuminates the power of basketball, a once-beloved Somali national sport, to reunite and re-inspire a nation fractured by 27 years of civil war. In a country where strict gender roles and Islamic tenets increasingly restrict women's rights, this team personifies the hopes and aspirations of generations of Somali women.

Director's Note

I am a 27-year-old independent Somali filmmaker, who is passionate about making films that take me home. Basketball has been a passion for Somali women for decades, but since the civil war began in 1991, it has become an endangered sport. I have followed the newly revived National Women's Team as they have overcome immense challenges in order to play the game they love. In doing so, they continue to inspire me, my production team, and millions of men and women – in Somalia and beyond. Former team members Suad and Mira were separated by the conflict. Now they are back together, no longer star players, but coaches. Despite threats from terrorists and religious leaders, they are determined to reach the Pan-Arab Games in Cairo with their fearless and determined young team. I am committed to telling their inspirational story and sharing it with audiences around the world.

Director's Biography

Somali filmmaker **Hana Mire** studied at the New York Film Academy in Abu Dhabi. Her short documentary 'Silent Art' (2013) won an award at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival. Mire is currently a Chicken & Egg Pictures Diversity Initiative Fellow. She attended the Union Docs Summer Intensive programme in Brooklyn in 2016, and is currently participating in the Greenhouse Documentary Development Program. 'Nation's Hope' is her first feature-length documentary.

Company Profile

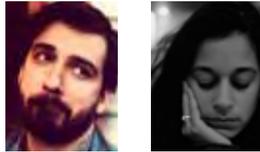
Laika Film & Television was established in 2004 and have a wonderful and expanding track record across both documentary and fiction work. Their latest co-productions include Kaouther Ben Hania's 'La Belle et la Meute' which premiered in the 'Un Certain Regard' selection at Cannes 2017 and also the forthcoming Mads Brügger feature 'Cold Case Hammerskjöld'. Laika's previous films have had significant impact around the world, including 2009's 'Toxic Playground,' which prompted legal action against a giant Swedish mining corporation, and 'Essence of Terror', which led to foreign policy reform at both national and international level, regarding the situation of Somali people living in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia.

Development

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Omar El-Khairy,
Ana Naomi de Sousa

Directors / Screenwriters



Elhum Shakerifar

Producer



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Naz (working title)

Palestine, United Kingdom, Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Creative Documentary, Sports, Biography, Diaspora, Fashion, Islam, Music, Popular Culture

'Naz' is a feature-length documentary that explores the historical and cultural formations of the British Yemeni boxer Prince Naseem Hamed. It is a film that not only celebrates a forgotten era, but also sheds light on where we are now.



One of the most successful and entertaining sporting icons of the 1990s, Naseem Hamed's unique position as a second-generation British Arab with mass appeal resonated deeply with an under-represented Arab community in Britain and beyond, as well as with a new generation in the Middle East, all coming of age at a similar time. 'Naz' explores the tension between Hamed's near-cult status within certain communities, and the ambivalence of the British nation-at-large, which never really took him to heart.

Director's Note

Through rare archive material and found footage, this film will excavate a unique and abandoned moment in the history of multicultural Britain; a time when it was still possible for a British sportsman to proudly recite the Takbir at his weigh-ins, and enter the arena on a flying carpet against backdrops emblazoned with Islamic scripture, in front of adoring crowds – an image that seems inconceivable nowadays. Raising challenging questions around nationalism and sports – and who gets to create the stories that bind the two – the narrative arc of 'Naz' will be shaped by the counterpoints between Naseem's achievements, both in and outside the ring, and disruptive moments in British socio-political life.

Director's Biography

Omar El-Khairy is a playwright and screenwriter, and holds a Ph.D in Sociology from the London School of Economics and Political Science. A former Leverhulme Associate Playwright at the Bush Theatre, his plays include 'Burst', 'Sour Lips', 'The Keepers of Infinite Space', 'The Chaplain: or, a short tale of how we learned to love good Muslims whilst torturing bad ones', and 'Homegrown'. His work is published by Oberon Books. 'No Exit' (2014), his first short film, had its world premiere at the Dubai International Film Festival. His new short film, 'White Girl', is currently in production.

Ana Naomi de Sousa is a Peabody award-winning filmmaker and writer. Her work addresses history, architecture and identity. She co-directed 'Saydnaya - Inside a Syrian Torture Prison', a collaboration between Forensic Architecture and Amnesty International, that gained international media attention and was awarded a Peabody Award in 2017. She has directed several short documentaries for television, including 'The Architecture of Violence' and 'Angola - Birth of a Movement', both for Al Jazeera English.

Company Profile

Hakawati was founded in 2017 to produce, distribute and curate films with the art of storytelling at their core. Set up by BAFTA-nominated producer Elhum Shakerifar, Hakawati supports storytellers with distinctive vision and enables new talent to take creative risks. Hakawati is committed to the broader visibility of independent film, giving platforms to quieter voices and unique individual perspectives in relation to a dominant whole. In making creatively bold films with integrity, representation and reframing narratives are at the heart of what we do. Hakawati is supported by the prestigious BFI Vision Award – awarded once every three years to leading UK producers; Shakerifar was the only documentary producer among the 2016 recipients.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

László Csujá

Director / Screenwriter



Ágnes Horváth-Szabó, András Pires Muhi

Producers



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Nine Months War

‘Kilenc hónap háború’ / Hungary, Qatar / Hungarian / 2018

Runtime: 75

Genre: Coming of age, Creative Documentary, History, Identity, Social Issues, War

Jani has left his family to serve in the Ukrainian Army for nine months. His mother wants her son back. Jani just wants his independence.



Twenty-four-year-old Jani lives in a small town in Western Ukraine, part of the minority Hungarian community. An only child whose father died five years ago, Jani is fed up with the boring life in his hometown, and drowning in the love of his mother, Erzsike. When he is drafted by Ukrainian Army, called up to fight the separatists, he could sneak out of the country to escape the military service just like his fellows did, but instead he chooses to go to the war 1,500 kilometres away. But why? He is not a patriot; he is not even Ukrainian. Combining visuals of cinema verité and mobile footage of war, Jani's coming-of-age story unfolds over the nine months of his military service and the time after his discharge.

Director's Note

‘Nine Months War’ is a close-up on an ordinary family whose story introduces today’s Ukraine in the shadow of its war with separatists. We witness life from a naive soldier’s point of view, seeing Jani in his two different worlds: the provincial boredom of his hometown, and the extremes of war. Jani is caught between the two while he strives to find his identity. The film investigates whether military service can transform a boy into a man, as Jani and most of us might think. The visual styling of the war zone and the hometown serve to capture the scantiness of Jani’s world, and show the limitations of his fight for independence and adulthood.

Director's Biography

László Csujá was born in 1984. He graduated in Scriptwriting from the Hungarian Academy of Film and Drama. His short films have been screened at film festivals across Europe, among them the Tampere and Edinburgh International Film Festivals. He attended, among others, Talents Sarajevo, the Berlinale Talent Campus, and the Aristoteles Documentary Workshop. Csujá’s first feature-length fiction film, supported by the Hungarian Film Fund, is currently in post-production.

Company Profile

ELF Pictures, run by former freelance producers Ágnes Horváth-Szabó and András Pires Muhi, is a Budapest-based production company. The two producers fused in 2016 to provide a hub for filmmakers of their generation to grow together. ELF Pictures produces feature documentaries with a human, political, art, and sports focus. Since 2018, ELF also functions as a theatrical distributor, bringing international and domestic fictions and documentaries to screens across Hungary.

Post-Production
Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2017

Sonia Kronlund
Director / Screenwriter



Laurent Lavolé
Producer



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Nothingwood

France, Germany, Qatar / Dari, French / 2017

Runtime: 85
Genre: Comedy, Creative Documentary, History, War

Salim Shaheen is the most prolific and popular actor-director-producer in Afghanistan. Passionate about cinema, he tirelessly makes Z-grade movies in a country that has been at war for over 30 years.



About a hundred kilometres away from Kabul, Salim Shaheen, the most popular and prolific actor-director-producer in Afghanistan, comes to show some of his 110 films and to shoot the 111th in the process. He has brought with him his regular troupe of actors, each more eccentric and out of control than the next. That trip is an opportunity for us to get to know Shaheen, a real movie buff who has been making Z movies tirelessly for more than thirty years in a country at war. 'Nothingwood' is the story of a man who spends his life making his childhood dreams come true.

Director's Note

Salim Shaheen has survived every war, every regime, every form of censorship that has arisen in the 30 years that he has been making films in Afghanistan – and he has never stopped filming. His Z-grade movies, screened in one of Kabul's four cinemas before being sold on DVD, have made him popular in even the nation's most isolated corners. As such, Salim Shaheen's story is that of the urgent need to give the Afghan people images that represent them; through them, I wish to reveal a certain vision of Afghanistan. By setting off to meet a director living in a country where visual representation has a complex status, where belief in the power of images is taken very seriously, and where cinema is the object of intense passion, I hope to inspire considerations of the relationship between art and life, a theme that is central to my work.

Director's Biography

Since 2002, **Sonia Kronlund** has co-written scripts, run several documentary series for television and is the producer of the daily program 'Les Pieds sur Terre' for the public radio channel France Culture. She has directed several films and radio documentaries in Iran and Afghanistan, for Arte and France Culture. In 2012, Actes Sud published her collection of stories entitled 'Nouvelles du réel'. 'Nothingwood' is her first feature-length film as a director.

Company Profile

Founded by Laurent Lavolé in Paris in 1994, Gloria Films is an independent production company dedicated to fiction and creative documentary films by French and international directors. The company's films have regularly been international co-productions, distributed in leading overseas territories and won awards at major festivals.

Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Fall Grants 2017

Talal Derki

Director / Screenwriter



Ansgar Frerich,

Eva Kemme,

Tobias Siebert,

Hans Robert Eisenhauer

Producers



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Of Fathers and Sons

Syria, Germany, Qatar / Arabic / 2017

Runtime: 98

Genre: Children, Politics, Social Issues, War, Youth



This affecting and disturbing documentary demonstrates that jihadism is a learned behaviour – one that in some arenas is being handed down with paternal authority to vulnerable minds.

Director's Note

After my film 'Return to Homs' about the young rebel Basit Sarout and his comrades, I wanted to go deeper. I wanted to penetrate the psychology and the emotions of this war, understand what made people radicalize and what drives them to live under the strict rules of an Islamic state. My main character in the film, Abu Osama (45), is not only a loving father, but also a specialist for car bomb attacks and the disposal of mines. He deeply believes in an Islamic society under the laws of the Shari'ah and also places his children at its service. I follow his sons Osama (13) and Ayman (12) to a training camp for young fighters and start to understand how the children are affected. 'Of Fathers and Sons' is my personal journey through a devastated country and troubled society, looking for answers to my desperate questions about the future.

Director's Biography

Talal Derki was born in Damascus and has been based in Berlin since 2014. He studied film directing in Athens and worked as an assistant director for many feature film productions and was a director for different Arab TV programs between 2009 and 2011. Furthermore, he has worked as a freelance cameraman for CNN and Thomson & Reuters. Talal Derki's short films and feature-length documentaries have received many awards at a variety of festivals. His feature documentary 'Return to Homs' has won the Sundance Film Festival's World Cinema Grand Jury Prize in 2014. The same year, he was also a member of the international Jury at IDFA.

Company Profile

BASIS BERLIN Filmproduktion is an independent arthouse film production company that emerged from the post-production house Basis Berlin Postproduktion GmbH in 2010. Our focus is on the development of high-quality national and international feature and documentary films, as well as documentary TV formats. We aim to tell unique and original stories that appeal to a broad audience and therefore have a chance at the box office. Due to the intimate cooperation between production and post-production in our company, we can offer a creative space for the long-term and innovative collaboration with our filmmakers. Our work includes feature documentaries 'Hello I am David!' (2015) by Cosima Lange and 'Keep Surfing' (2009) by Björn Richie Lob.

Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2017

Sami Tlili

Director / Screenwriter



Dora Bouchoucha

Producer



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On the Crossbar

'Al Aardha' / Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 90

Genre: Creative Documentary, Sports, Politics

The improbable journey of a national football team intertwines with the worst crisis a country had seen since its independence. It happened in Tunisia in 1978.



In June of 1978, Tunisia entered the international football scene as the first African team ever to win a match in a final phase of the World Cup. The team arrived home and were hailed as heroes of the 'Epic of Argentina', their success helping somewhat the Tunisian people to forget they had just gone through one of the worst events in their history since independence. Just a few months before, tensions between the Only Party and the main trade union had led to confrontations on the streets. More than 500 people died in a single day, January 26th, 1978. 'Black Thursday' remains to date the bloodiest episode in contemporary Tunisian history, more so than the 2011 revolution. In 1978, a football team saved the regime and offered a relatively happy ending to a very black year.

Director's Note

In this film, I will attempt to demonstrate how a football team with an unlikely course helped a regime maintain power and escape its worst crisis since Tunisia gained its independence. The entire film is predicated on the parallel advance of these two movements, sporting and social, incarnating two sides of youth. If the team had not risen so high, the fate of Tunisia would have been different. I wish to show that 1978 was composed not only of a football game and a joyful mob. Behind the memorable celebration, a tragedy was playing out; one which continues to flood Tunisian life today. Because our history books stop at independence, I wish to fill in the blanks and remind everyone that the heroes are not just football players. Others dared defy authorities and paid with their lives as a war for succession was being waged, and a struggle for democracy was underway. 'On the Crossbar' is a reflection on the absurdity of history, which never ceases to repeat itself.

Director's Biography

Sami Tlili is studying for a PhD in Humanities. He holds a Master's degree in French Literature from the University Paris 13 and trained in directing documentaries at Les Ateliers Varan in Paris. His debut feature-length documentary, 'Cursed Be the Phosphate' (2012), won the Black Pearl Award for Best Documentary from the Arab World at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival.

Company Profile

Nomadis Images is a Tunisian audiovisual production company. Its main activities include producing short and feature-length fiction films, documentaries and commercials, and providing services and training to filmmakers. The company's filmography includes Sami Tlili's 'Cursed Be the Phosphate' (2012); Hinde Boujemaa's 'It Was Better Tomorrow' (2012); Raja Amari's 'Buried Secrets' (2009), 'Satin Rouge' (2002) and 'Foreign Body' (2016); and Mohamed Ben Attia's 'Hedi' (2016).

Post-Production

Feature Documentary
Spring Grants 2017

Erige Sehiri

Director / Screenwriter



Palmyre Badinier

Producer



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Railway Men

'Sikka Adiya' / Tunisia, France, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 75

Genre: Creative Documentary, Road Trip, Social Issues

On a road trip, five train drivers are torn between their loyalty to the old Tunisian railway company and the fresh personal aspirations they can finally express in the wake of the revolution.



Four Tunisian railway employees are assigned to Line #1. They call it "the normal way" because it is the only one built to international norms, but it is also the most neglected. Crossing the breath-taking landscapes of the north, the old locomotive has to be constantly repaired. The grandson of a train driver, Ahmed has recently joined the company and learns on-the-job alongside his fellow railroaders. As time goes by, he begins to realise the immense risks that he and his colleagues face every day. Between the half-abandoned tracks, a young colleague of Ahmed, Abee, shares with him his love of rap music, while Najib, the master of a small rural railway station nearby spends his solitary life tirelessly shifting trains. Seemingly the only one among the railroaders who refuses to work in these dangerous conditions, Issam begins to document the hazards he sees. Provoked by his behaviour, the railway company transfers Issam to their ticketing department. When two serious train accidents occur, there is public uproar and the media turns to Issam, but he has been fired.

Director's Note

Little known to Tunisians, the everyday life of the railway employees is rock 'n' roll: winters with no heating, summers with no ventilation, hours spent with hands deep in machinery repairing damage, the ever-present risk of accident and a great deal of fear. However, as dignified representatives of the international family of railroaders, they defend their jobs with an iron fist. On the line, a new generation of railwaymen and women are redefining standards for the society as a compromise in harmony with their own desires. Yet, the railway still resonates like a particularly topical question and metaphor. How are we expecting a new generation of railroaders to drive trains safely without giving them the tools to do so, nor the freedom to speak out about failures? Keeping the dramatic irony of the railroaders in its sights, 'Railway Men' is a poetic and social road movie about work as a metaphor for a changing society.

Director's Biography

Erige Sehiri is a Tunisian-French journalist and documentary filmmaker. She has directed several short documentaries and worked as an independent journalist for international broadcast channels. Since 2011, she has committed herself to the development of new participative media in Tunisia and co-founded the Tunisian webzine 'Inkyfada'.

Company Profile

Les Films de Zayna was established in 2008 by Palestinian producer and director Raed Andoni and French producer Palmyre Badinier. Based in Paris, the company develops and produces films with a strong focus on stories and talents from the Arab world.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Merieme Addou

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Suspended Wives

'Moalakat' / Morocco, Qatar / Arabic

Genre: Creative Documentary, Social Issues, Women's Issues

'Suspended Wives' follows three women, who were abandoned by their husbands, and their lengthy battle to obtain divorces.



After waiting for many years, Ghita, Latifa and Karima decide to turn to the courts in order to obtain divorces. The procedure turns out to be not only lengthy, but also quite absurd. During their lonely struggle against the law and its harshness, bureaucracy, and society's prejudices, the three women are assisted by other women who meet every day in a city park. This is the only peaceful place where the trio can share intimacies, and particularly their hope to put an end to their hellish situation, and find their rightful freedom and dignity.

Director's Note

Among my strongest childhood memories are nice evenings shared with my parents, sitting around the radio. Our favourite programme was on every day at six o'clock, when a serious voice went on reading a litany of women's calls in search of their husbands: "Marrakesh Court President announces that Alami Khadija is looking for her husband, Mohamed Sabir, who has disappeared". I still remember, sharing my dad's laughter, and his jokes with my mum saying, "Who knows? Maybe one day you will make this sort of announcement on the radio" Later, when I became a law student, I realised that the radio programme was in fact satisfying an obligatory step in divorce procedures in cases of a husband's extended absence. In 'Suspended Wives', I will accompany women in their daily struggle to regain their dignity.

Director's Biography

Born in Morocco, **Merieme Addou** graduated from Mohammed V University with a degree in Law, and a Master's degree in Documentary Film. She has been a freelance producer for ADTV, Qatar TV, BBC 2, Radio 4, BBC World, and SABC, among other outlets, and has worked as a freelance correspondent for Radio D-W.

Company Profile

Based in Rabat, IrisProd is an established video and film production company that produces and coproduces documentaries that are auteur-driven and produced creatively.

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Post-Production

Feature Documentary

Spring Grants 2017

Dina Naser

Director / Producer



Palmyre Badinier

Co-Producer



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Tiny Souls

'Arwah Saghirah' / Jordan, France, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic / 2018

Runtime: 75

Genre: Children, Immigration, War, Youth

A documentary film that portrays the changes in Marwa's life, as she goes from childhood to adolescence within the walls of the Al Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan, reflecting its effect on her reality and future.



Marwa is nine and stranded in Al Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Studying is her greatest worry, while playing is her greatest enjoyment. She says she has been there for four months with her mother and siblings, adding they will probably stay for another week... "maybe two". Over the ensuing four years, the director follows Marwa's life in the camp, where she blossoms from being a child to becoming a young woman. Sometimes, she still dreams of being one of the pigeons whose freedom is not surrounded by the high walls and barbed wire of the camp. Until one day, a rumour spreads, one which is wild enough to jeopardise Marwa and her family's life. From facing authorities, to reported associations with militant extremists, their existence has taken tremendous turns.

Director's Note

Over the past six years, the war in Syria has affected the lives of millions of people, and it has become crucial for me to give a voice to the children among them. The story of Marwa, Ayah, and Mahmoud, three siblings living in the Al Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, is told through their eyes. Being part of their lives for four years made me experience their reality as it unfolded day-by-day, and as they were coming of age. In telling this story, I am not trying to leave the audience with a single dominant thought or emotion. In fact, viewers will experience the conflicted collection of emotions that the children of Syria go through every day. In a conflict dominated by decisions made by adults, these children have been left out of the conversation – but they have a great deal to say. More than anything, I hope this film can be a moment that allows us to reflect on the world we live in today – and on the future of these "tiny souls".

Director's Biography

A Jordanian director, writer, and producer with Palestinian roots, **Dina Naser** holds a BA in Art and Graphic Design. Following her passion for filmmaking, she was granted the scholarship for DOCNOMADS Mobile Documentary School for a two-year MA programme in Lisbon, Budapest, and Brussels. She worked her way through a variety of television and film productions, until she began to direct and produce independently. Her first works are inspired by stories from her homeland. Her short documentary film 'Shamieh' (2011) portrays an aging Palestinian woman living in the Zizya refugee camp in Jordan. Her award-winning 'One Minute' (2015) tells the story of a woman living in Gaza while it was under attack in 2014. 'Sea Wash' (co-director, 2016), a short experimental film, pictures refugees who lost their lives at sea. 'Tiny Souls', a documentary project first realized in a nine-minute format, will be Naser's first feature length film.

Company Profile

Founded in 2011 by Frédéric Corvez, joined in 2017 by Palmyre Badinier and Julien Russo, independent French production company Urban Factory (UF) is the sister company of Urban Distribution International (UDI). UF has always been driven by the same goal: to make quality cinema and bring it to the largest audience possible on every continent. UF has produced and co-produced 11 art-house films by promising young filmmakers and renowned directors, all distinguished by their innovation and originality. Recent titles include the Brazilian genre film 'Good Manners' (2017) by Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra, which won the Special Jury Prize at the Locarno Festival. UF is a member of the Syndicat des producteurs indépendants, UniFrance, and the EAVE Network.

Production

Feature Documentary
Fall Grants 2017

Sarah Kaskas

Director / Screenwriter



Liliane Rahal, Ines Meier

Producers



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Underdown

'Taht Al Taht' / Lebanon, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 90

Genre: Children, Creative Documentary, Identity, Immigration, Social Issues, Women's Issues

'Underdown' is the pulsating journey of three unbreakable characters struggling to live below the poverty line in the chaos of Beirut.



Moving to Beirut's anarchic rhythm, 'Underdown' follows the struggles of a Palestinian cab driver who lives in his car, a homeless Syrian kid and a Lebanese woman and her family. Through a pulsating journey full of harsh realities and an unbreakable sense of humour, the film's subjects convey glimmers of hope in the darkest of places.

Director's Note

I'm not alone when it comes to feeling both love and hate towards Beirut and its beautiful mess. With all the current uproar against a corrupt government and a crumbling infrastructure, it becomes difficult to be grateful for what little we may have. The protagonists in 'Underdown' are living in poverty and facing conflicts most of us are lucky never to experience. To the outsider, they are pariahs, cast aside as "drunks", "beggars" or "dirty people". What is overlooked is their resilience, humour and overwhelming hope that drives them forward. Capturing the essence of these characters requires trust, respect and honesty. My approach is to observe their truths openly and develop with the protagonists at their own pace. As a Lebanese filmmaker, I believe the amount of twisted and corrupt stories at our disposal are limitless, but stories of how to endure this darkness are essential.

Director's Biography

Sarah Kaskas received her MFA in Cinematic Arts in 2011. Her thesis film, 'Fugue' (2011), toured to several festivals before being sold to BBC Arabic's 'Alternative Cinema'. In 2013, her animated short film 'Wanderland' won an award at the Co-Production Forum at the Stuttgart International Animation Festival, and was nominated for the Robert Bosch Film Prize in 2014. In 2016, Kaskas co-directed 'Bread and Tea', which was named Best Short Documentary at Iran's Cinéma Vérité. Her upcoming feature documentary was nominated for the Robert Bosch Film Prize 2017 and received a production grant from the Doha Film Institute. She resides in Beirut and is an Assistant Professor of Film at the Lebanese American University.

Company Profile

Karaaj Films produces independent fiction and non-fiction films and web series. The company is run by Lebanese producer Liliane Rahal and director Sarah Kaskas, an eclectic team who bridge their passion for storytelling with their technical skills. Keeping in line with their organic and independent filmmaking approach, the team recently produced the award-winning short documentary 'Bread and Tea', which to date has appeared at 12 festivals in under a year. The team has also secured a production grant from the Doha Film Institute for their upcoming feature documentary 'Underdown', which will be released in 2019.

Pong was founded in 2001 by the Berlin-based filmmakers and producers Merle Kröger and Philip Scheffner and stands for the production of creative documentaries on the border to the arts - films in which the filmmakers' aesthetic and/or political positions are formed and expressed. In 2014, filmmakers and producers Alex Gerbault and Caroline Kirberg joined the collective. Ines Meier started as a freelance producer for Pong in 2013. Together, they focus on up-coming artists and filmmakers and international co-productions, aiming to expand Pong as a platform for moving images as well as sounds, music and text.

Production

Feature Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2017

Khalid Youssef

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



The Fifth Resurrection Of Farid

Egypt, Qatar / Arabic, English

Genre: Based on a True Story, Creative Documentary, Docufiction, History, Identity, Immigration

In Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, a new life is awarded to Olympic champion, pilot, Hollywood actor, war hero, and all around professional hell-raiser Farid Semeka.



Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. An old man comes across an odd collection of film reels, vinyl records and VHS tapes hidden in the confines of his basement. He quickly discovers that they embody the strange story of a largely forgotten renaissance man from the 1920s and 30s with a funny name: Farid Semeka.

Director's Note

Farid Semeka's story represents the profound alienation that comes with migrating to a foreign land, creating a new identity, and the collective need to obliterate our national heroes while creating new ones. Given that I have lived abroad for many years, this story is rather personal, and I would like to explore the dichotomies in Semeka's life. The term "documentary" can sometimes be misleading, as verisimilitude is a given, and it denotes a stylistically straightforward type of cinema filled with talking heads. However, there have been recent experiments that allow for dynamic storytelling and the intertwining of fictional elements within the framework of verifiable facts. My work is an exploration of the experimental documentary genre, and I hope to expand upon this by continuing to play with aesthetics, devising an essayistic approach to telling Farid Semeka's story, one of the most enigmatic and forgotten figures of the 20th century.

Director's Biography

Born in Cairo in 1978, **Khalid Youssef** is a filmmaker, screenwriter, editor and actor. After finishing university studies in Egypt, he travelled to study filmmaking, theatre and photography in Madrid, for well over a decade. He finished his first film, 'Zero in Conduct', in 2007, and it travelled to various film festivals, including the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. He also shot, produced, directed, edited and wrote the feature-length film 'Overground' (2015), in addition to 10 other short films. Among them is '1995', which was selected for five festivals, among them the Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival.

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Development

Feature Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2017

Rawane Nassif

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Lara Abu Saifan, Niam Itani

Producers



I, Hummus

'Ana, Hummus' / Lebanon, Canada, Qatar / Arabic, English

Runtime: 70

Genre: Creative Documentary, Identity, Immigration

A film about the geopolitics of food, culture appropriation and immigration presented as a personal reflection, and mixed together in one famous dish: Hummus.



When I landed in Canada in 2006, I became recognized as a giant walking plate of hummus. Being from Lebanon, my identity was intrinsically linked to hummus, and I started to get accustomed to it and represent it to the best of my ability, until one day I was told that hummus is from Israel. This is when I realized how much food matters and how personal and political it can be. A dip into hummus is an invitation into the complexity of the Middle East, the journey of immigration, the problems with cultural appropriation, the economy of the hummus industry, and the rise of food subcultures.

Contact

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Director's Note

My hummus story started around 11 years ago when I landed in Canada a few days before the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006. At the time I barely spoke English, did not grasp the world that I was thrown into, and relied on my cooking skills to help me create relationships with the people around me. One year later, I took a course in the anthropology of food which now I realize is the seed for this very film. Concepts such as "you are what you eat", "tasting cultures", "comfort food" and "national dishes" all resonated deeply with my personal journey of integration in a multicultural nation. I started to see the world through a food lens and understood how immigrants and refugees feel the need to eat themselves back into familiar grounds. My kitchen became my refuge, a mini-Lebanon that I could recreate, offer and enjoy.

Director's Biography

Born in Beirut in 1983, **Rawane Nassif** is a Lebanese/Canadian filmmaker and anthropologist. She has a BFA in Filmmaking from the Université Saint Joseph in Lebanon and an MA in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Alberta in Canada. Her work addresses space, identity, displacement and memory and spans different formats such as films, children's books, oral history projects and publications.

Company Profile

placeless films (aflam bila makan) is a production company run by filmmakers Lara Abu Saifan and Niam Itani in Beirut, Lebanon. The company develops and produces quality short and feature films that bring social and human issues to the fore. Their previous credits include Niam Itani's award-winning short, 'Super.Full.' and Anna Fahr's award-winning short 'Transit Game', as well as Itani's feature documentary 'Twice Upon A Time', which won Best Documentary in the Lebanese Film Festival (2016).

Production

Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2017

Shaza Moharam

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Nada Riyadh

Producer



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Mnemosyne

Egypt, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 70

Genre: Creative Documentary, Docufiction, Identity, Psychological, Social Issues

Shaza returns to her hometown of Alexandria with a quest to recover from her childhood amnesia, only to find that the city itself is losing its memory.



On a quest to remember, Shaza returns to her hometown of Alexandria, a decision triggered by the recent loss of her grandfather. Having suffered from a deficient autobiographical memory syndrome all her life, Shaza only knows stories of the past. She uses a camera as a tool to inspire remembrance by recreating old memories in the once-familiar spaces of Alexandria, only to realise the city itself is losing its own memory. This personal struggle is mirrored in the collective memory of the city as Shaza explores the elusive realms of remembrance and oblivion, with their distorted and multiple versions. 'Mnemosyne' blurs the borders between different formats and mediums: documentary and fiction, science and myth, cinema and visual art, the personal and the collective.

Director's Note

It is said if one drinks from a river named Mnemosyne in the underworld, one will come to remember all there is, and obtain omniscience. Mnemosyne is the personification of memory in Greek mythology, and this film invokes her. It is fuelled by my personal desire to remember. The documentary follows my journey into the elusive world of memory and oblivion, and expands it to tap into the collective memory of my hometown, Alexandria. The film pays tribute to the Alexandria of my childhood, the city of my grandparents. It is an attempt to reconcile the passage of time and the burden of nostalgia. 'Mnemosyne' poses a recurring question: If you cannot remember your past, do you know who you truly are?

Director's Biography

Shaza Moharam is an Egyptian filmmaker. She obtained an MA in Scriptwriting from Carlos III University in Madrid and studied TV/Video Communication as a Fulbright scholar in the United States. Among other positions, she has worked as a project manager at the Contemporary Image Collective in Cairo; as a scriptwriting and digital storytelling instructor working with vulnerable populations for NGOs including Nazra and Tadamon. Her debut documentary film, 'Ahlam' (2015), was named Best Documentary at the Young Cuban Film Festival. She is interested in exploring the borders between fiction and reality in her film work.

Company Profile

Established in 2016, Felucca Films is a fledgling production company based in Cairo. The company aims to help filmmakers explore and shape their own personal voices and produce unique and original fiction and documentary films, with a special focus on fresh new talents and contemporary social issues. The company's debut production, 'Happily Ever After', a feature-length documentary, premiered in 2016 at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam. Recently, the short fiction film 'The Trap' was awarded the Robert Bosch Film Prize for Arab-German co-production at the 2017 Berlin International Film Festival. Felucca Films also established the Mahd Film Lab in 2016, an annual regional training programme that provides script-development assistance.

Post-Production

Feature Experimental or Essay
Fall Grants 2017

Katrín Ólafsdóttir

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Gudrun Edda Thorhannesdottir

Producer



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The Wind Blew On

Iceland, Qatar / English, Spanish / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Drama

“Perhaps I’m already dead?” says a little boy, to himself. But these words are spoken in an unsettling world where no one can confirm this to be true or false for him.



A boy is on a journey. Things have strayed from their course without anyone knowing why. The unsettling landscape he makes his way through is both real and imaginary. The ruins he plays among and the enigmatic figures he encounters there are threatening and welcoming in turn. They teach him how to become who he is; the half-remembered fragments of the past that somehow return to him. ‘The Wind Blew On’ shows us scenes of a life lived after the end of the world has taken place, and the search for an escape from this fate.

Director’s Note

In preparation for this film, I have studied different creation myths, looking at the fall from paradise as a symbol of the loss of innocence and the ensuing journey in exile. This journey is all the more arduous for being made in the knowledge that we are capable of hurting the ones we love, that evil haunts our actions as an ever-present possibility. How are we to come to terms with this ordeal? Through religion, technology, love? The boy is travelling through the desert in search of a forest. Over the course of his journey, the familiar appearances of reality progressively cloud over. Eventually, the cloud lifts and the forest appears in front of him. We have filmed this story in fragments over the past six years. My son, the story’s protagonist and inspiration, provides the prism through which all this is viewed, as childhood turns to face what can be expected from the future.

Director’s Biography

Katrín Ólafsdóttir is a director and producer from Iceland currently based in London. She studied at the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d’Angers, the Binger Film Lab and Torino Film Lab. She started her career as a dancer and choreographer and moved into film with her debut ‘Slurpinn & Co.’ which won several international awards. She directed, produced, wrote, choreographed and acted in the film. Katrín is now working on ‘The Wind Blew On’, a feature film she directs, produces and writes. Her next feature film as director and producer will be ‘Home’, and as producer ‘Persona Non Grata’ by Bertrand Mandico.

Company Profile

Duo Productions is a film production company established in 2006 and owned by producer Gudrun Edda Thorhannesdottir. In 2008, Duo Productions formed a daughter company, Spellbound Productions, in co-ownership with Oscar-nominated film director and producer, Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. Spellbound produced four feature films, a short film and a TV series but since 2013, Duo Productions has served as the main production outlet for its owner as a producer. At the moment, the company has a number of feature films and TV series in various stages of development and production.

Post-Production

Feature Experimental or Essay
Spring Grants 2017

Amal Ramsis

Director / Screenwriter



Necati Sonmez

Producer



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You Come from Far Away

'Ta'toun Men Ba'id' / Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic, Russian, Spanish / 2018

Runtime: 90

Genre: Creative Documentary, History, Identity, War

Imagine your father is a Palestinian who fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Imagine you have a family, but were raised without parents.



The role of Arabs in the Spanish Civil War has only been associated with the Moroccan troops who were brought to Spain by Franco in order to fight against the Republicans. This image has been predominant throughout the last several decades, overshadowing the existence of the many other Arabs who were among the international volunteers who defended democracy. The story of Sidki, a Palestinian journalist who came to Spain as one such volunteer, reveals this little-known historical fact. The war was a turning point for Sidki's family, and particularly for his eldest daughter Dulia, who was stuck in Russia for 20 years and had to live her life separated from her family. The turmoil that steered the 20th century dispersed Sidki's family: the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the Nakba and the Lebanese Civil War; the 1900s are retraced through the story of this one family.

Director's Note

To date, the role of Arabs in the Spanish Civil War has primarily been associated with the Moroccan troops who were brought to Spain by Franco in order to fight the Democratic Republican government. This image has been predominant since the conflict, overshadowing the existence of other Arabs in Spain during that time. When I started researching the struggles of Arab people in support of the revolution and against fascism during the war, a little-known history that was buried for decades, the present was always my point of comparison. For me, 'You Come from Far Away' is not a film about history, but a film about the present told through intimate portraits of people who paid a huge price to try to make the world a better place. For them, borders were not obstacles to taking action; a struggle that starts in Europe might be fulfilled in the Arab world. These people took a lengthy journey through many countries and cities, but at the same time, this became a perpetual exile in place and in time. Their stories break the stereotypes of our imagination: Who would believe the Spanish Civil War was a turning point in the destiny of generations of an Arab family? And who would imagine that the grandparents of some who fled their homelands to take shelter in Europe were, in fact, fighting for that same Europe?

Director's Biography

Amal Ramsis was born and raised in Cairo, and studied Cinema in Madrid. She has conducted numerous workshops around the world with women who have no experience with filmmaking. Ramsis is the founder and director of the Cairo International Women's Film Festival. Her films 'Only Dreams' (2005), 'Life' (2008), 'Forbidden' (2011) and 'The Trace of the Butterfly' (2014) won several international awards and have been screened at numerous festivals.

Company Profile

Founded in 2007, Klaketa Árabe is a production company based in Cairo. It focuses mainly on creative documentaries as well as festival and workshop organisations. In 2008, the company started the Arab-Iberoamerican Women's Film Festival in Cairo and the Caravan of Entre Cineastas "Between Women Filmmakers". In 2013, the Arab-Iberoamerican Women's Film Festival changed its name to the Cairo International Women's Film Festival, and soon became the leading women's film festival in the Arab world. Among the documentaries produced by Klaketa Árabe, 'The Trace of the Butterfly' (2015), 'Forbidden' ('Mamnou', 2011) and 'Life' (2009) were presented at many film festivals and received several awards. Klaketa Árabe has organised nearly 50 One Minute Workshops "Correspondences Between Women", with participants in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Peru, San Salvador, Spain and Syria.

Short Narrative

Beit Byoot

The Black Veil

Hope

Inside Me

Last Day at Home

Lemon Hart

The Mute

Night

Soaring Over Mayhem

Split-Screen

Tainted

The Time Tree

Short Experimental or Essay

Ceuta's Gate

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Mayar Hamdan

Director / Screenwriter



Ghouna Jaber

Producer



Contact

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Beit Byoot

Jordan, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 10

Genre: Children, Coming of age, Drama, Identity, Social Issues, Women's Issues, Youth

Set in a dystopian women's world, little Jameela wants to fit in with two mean girls. When she meets Yasmine, she must choose between being odd or fitting in.



Jameela is an adorable eight-year-old girl who arrives at the perfect pastel playground with her half-scrap, half-plastic doll. She sees Yasmine, an odd-looking girl rummaging through the trash. Jameela looks for other girls to play with. She finds Sahar and Souad, but Jameela is brutally rejected when they see her doll. They call her names and throw away her doll. Jameela finds her doll in the hands of Yasmine. They argue, but when Yasmine reveals her perfectly made trash doll, Jameela is intrigued. She allows Yasmine to fix her ugly doll. Jameela grabs the doll and runs back to the girls. Yasmine follows. Souad is intrigued, but Sahar grabs the doll and smashes it, demanding Jameela to pledge her loyalty. Angry, Jameela grabs Yasmine's doll and smashes it. Sahar and Souad motion to Jameela to play with them. She's finally in.

Director's Note

'Beit Byoot', meaning 'Doll House', is a game played by many young girls in the Middle East. The rules of the game are simple: bring your doll to the playground and join the girls in creating a storyline. In this seemingly simple game, the little girls' politics can often be brutal with players' dolls being disqualified simply for not fitting the beauty standards. It is then that girls learn the meaning of beauty and its importance in the rules of friendship. In a way, women in this region never stop playing this game, even after they've outgrown their dolls. 'Beit Byoot' is predominantly a story about fitting in and how far you would go in order to do so. I believe that my main character Jameela personifies this struggle when she comes face to face with the girly brutality of this doll game.

Director's Biography

Mayar Hamdan is a storyteller and filmmaker. She graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in Media Industries and Technology and a concentration in film animation. Mayar was awarded two Studio20Q Grants for 'Asfoora' (2014) and 'Man Down' (2015). Her film 'Asfoora' won the Best Short Narrative award at the Ajyal Film Festival and screened at multiple international film festivals. Since then, Mayar has script edited, and art directed numerous films. She has worked as an Animator and Story Developer at King Barcelona, Spain. Currently, Mayar works at the Doha Film Institute as a Film Training and Development Assistant.

Production

Short Narrative
Spring Grants 2017

Post-Production

Short Narrative
Fall Grants 2017

A.J. Al Thani

Director / Screenwriter



Vibhav Gautam

Producer



Contact

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The Black Veil

Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 15

Genre: Drama

In order to gain freedom from the oppression she has been living under, a woman attempts to finally escape.



Many women around the world suffer under oppression and dream of escaping it. 'The Black Veil' is the story of one woman who puts her life at risk in order to find her freedom.

Director's Note

I want to tell a story about wanting to escape, because it is a universal theme that anyone can relate to. My story is based on a Muslim Arab woman who is living in a place where a woman does not belong. In order to find a place for herself in the world, she must escape the horrible situation she is in, even if it means she must put her life at risk.

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.

Production

Short Narrative
Fall Grants 2017

Mohammad Shaikhow

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Hope

'Hévi' / Syria, Iraq, France, Qatar / Kurdish

Runtime: 15

Genre: Drama, Immigration, Women, Politics

Strangers up to a few hours ago, a man and a woman walk together in a snowy environment. Their journey is a portrayal of humanity reduced to its very essence.



Hévi and Walat, a Kurdish-Syrian refugee couple in their thirties meet a human trafficker. They try to cross an undefined border amid an endless environment of winter with spotless, but hostile, whiteness. The man offers to bring the young woman with him if Walat would take another road alone. So, Hévi ends up by herself, fragile, in front of an unstable man whose intentions are little by little unveiled.

Contact

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Director's Note

The question of immigration implies a particularly cinégenique relation: the relationship between humans and territory. By pairing up a wide shot with a landscape, cinema is deployed. It is the romantic model that I wanted to elaborate on this project: to find a particular resonance through the triangle of the two main protagonists and Nature. It's Hévi and Man's mental isolation in a mysterious environment that interests me more than only shedding light on the development of their conflict. Mysterious because it's a territory where the limits are not seen, like a land without borders that, ironically, Hévi wants to cross.

Director's Biography

Mohammad Shaikhow was born in Qamishli in 1988. He is a Kurdish-Syrian film director and cinematographer based in Paris. His films have screened in numerous festivals. He is currently a PhD Candidate in the School of Cinema at the École National Supérieurs d'Audiovisuelle (ESAV). He received his MA in Directing from ESAV, and is a graduate of the Film School of Salahaddin University in Erbil.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Halla Tarek

Director



Julia Urban

Screenwriter



Hussein Hegab, Linda Dedkova

Producers



Contact

Film Clinic

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Inside Me

Egypt, Germany, Qatar / No dialogue

Runtime: 7

Genre: Animation

A young Egyptian girl, silenced by society, goes on an adventure to discover her own voice, fighting an evil monster that wants to eat her alive.



A young Egyptian girl living with a conservative group that follows communal acts and practices has always been silent to blend in. When she dares to speak, to her amazement a yellow letter emerges from her mouth. The group gets angry and does not accept it, so the young girl leaves them to start her own journey to a wide and colourful world. A dark cloud rises from the words of her folk and transforms into a monster that chases her. When she arrives in a new settlement, she is encouraged to speak and to be herself. She is happy but still weak. The monster finds her and swallows her, and in its dark stomach she feels lonely and scared. A small letter comes out of her and lights up the darkness. Gradually, the girl regains her strength and begins screaming out illuminating words that destroy the monster. She returns to her new friends, happy and strong, at last unafraid of her individuality and her own voice.

Director's Note

'Inside Me' is a film I want to make, because I feel acutely how hard it is to be a girl with her own, different vision of life within a society controlled by old-fashioned traditions. The film is a 2-D animated dramatic short that focuses on women's rights. It is about a young Arab woman who finds herself in conflict with her society because she has a vision, voice and ideas of her own. But her society, especially its men, refuse her individuality because they believe that if a woman thinks differently, their manhood will be in jeopardy. As such, the young woman is faced with a difficult struggle to obtain her freedom. I see the story of this film as the personal narrative that every girl carries inside her, if she fights to be emancipated. I am passionate about this project, and I hope it will be an inspiration to others.

Director's Biography

Halla Tarek was born in 1989 in Cairo where she studied Animation at the Faculty of Fine Arts. In 2013, she directed the animated film 'Express' which appeared in many festivals in Egypt and elsewhere. In 2015, she obtained her Master's degree with a thesis on black comedy in animated films. Presently, Tarek works as an animation director at the Egyptian Film Centre. Besides working as a director, she freelances in storyboarding and as a concept artist. She believes cinema is the most powerful way to share one's stories.

Company Profile

Film Clinic was established by Mohamed Hefzy in 2005 as a film development and production company that produces narrative and documentary features, and also offers screenwriting workshops. While targeting general audiences in Egyptian, regional and international markets, the company has also developed a reputation for supporting young independent filmmakers, and for investing in innovative approaches to film that offer creative alternatives to Egyptian mainstream commercial cinema. Film Clinic has co-produced Egyptian, Arab and international features, and its productions have participated in more than 100 film festivals and won more than 50 awards at festivals including the Abu Dhabi, Cairo, Dubai and Muscat International Film Festivals, the BFI London, Carthage, Montpellier, Oran and Sundance Film Festivals, and the Malmö Arab Film Festival, in addition to national Egyptian festivals.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Noor Al-Nasr

Director / Producer



Ana Ivanović

Screenwriter



Contact

Noor Al-Nasr

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Last Day at Home

'Al Yom Al Akher Fi'l Bayt' / Qatar / English

Runtime: 10

Genre: Children, Fantasy, Identity, Science Fiction

His last day at home becomes a boy's first day of an adventure.



A 12-year-old boy has just moved to Doha with his parents. To avoid dealing with the changes this brings about, he spends his days playing a space exploration video game. On the last day before starting at a new school, his computer breaks down, so he is forced to go out for the first time. All alone in the desert, in surroundings that become increasingly similar to the game he has been playing, he finds himself on a rescue mission to find life on a deserted planet. With the real world transformed into a digital universe, the boy faces his fear of the unknown and “plays his way home” – a task he must complete in order to accept his new environment.

Director's Note

Living in a rapidly changing world can be a challenge. Of course, the perks of this high pace is the wonderful technology that makes our lives easier – or at least, that's one way of looking at it. Having grown up in a time when technology was very limited, I can appreciate the value of human interaction that is sadly slipping away in our daily lives. I see the ongoing and increasing isolation that has come about as a result of the proliferation of these gadgets: today, a person can be within a group, yet their attention is entirely focused on interactions via mobile phone. The protagonist of 'Last Day at Home' is 12-year-old Nebojsa, who is home alone in Qatar, where he has recently moved with his family. Playing video games provides an escape from living with his busy parents. This film challenges the boy to step out, leave his comfort zone and begin to explore the world beyond a screen. With every step, the illusory reality fades away, and Nebojsa learns that adaptation is a necessity that will make living in the world of today much easier.

Director's Biography

Noor Al-Nasr is a graphic designer, writer and aspiring filmmaker. She has always been interested in art in all its forms, especially the moving image. Her first short film, 'Health Invaders' (2015) was shot as part of a challenge for Qatar's Seha health organisation. It had its premiere in the Ajyal Youth Film Festival and was featured in the Short Film Corner at the Festival de Cannes. Her next short film, 'Dana's Kite' had its premiere at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival in 2016. In 2016, Al-Nasr shot 'Dreams That Stayed', a short film about an adult who grew up watching cartoons dubbed into Arabic in the 1980s. She is currently developing her first feature-length film entitled 'The Pearl', and the short film 'Last Day at Home'.

Development

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Sara Al-Thani

Director / Screenwriter



Franck Merenda

Producer



Contact

Sara Al-Thani

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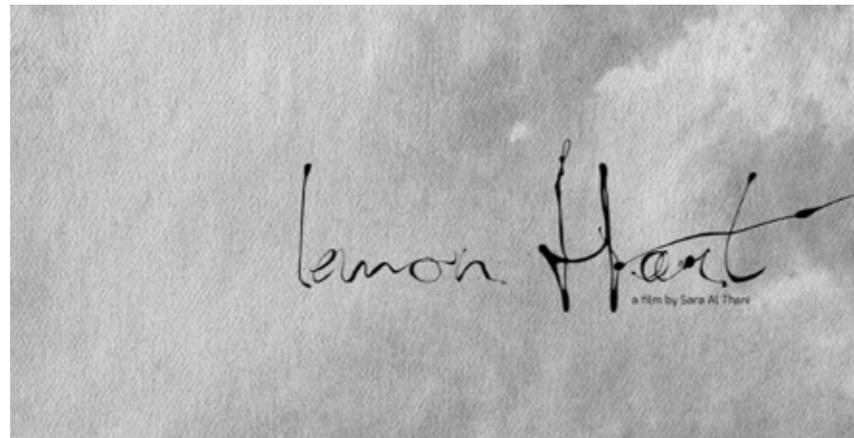
Lemon Hart

Qatar, France / English

Runtime: 12

Genre: Arthouse, Psychological Drama

A troubled young girl retells her tale of fear, courage and the savagery she endures by her stepfather.



In a story of how courage transcends fear, a young American girl living in Le Var, France reflects on the terror she endures at the hands of her stepfather.

Director's Note

'Lemon Hart' took shape after hearing countless horror stories of abuse within families of all backgrounds, so common that they appeared to be the norm. This film is about courage, which transcends fear and ultimately redirects lifepaths, regardless of the circumstances one is born into. Lemon, a young girl with a forlorn upbringing, chaotic present and uncertain future, must preserve herself and confront her abusive stepfather to ensure a life free from the bindings of fear. We follow her closely, as each decision she makes quickly leads to new challenges, only adding to her emotional turmoil and reshaping her perspective on life. It ultimately remains her choice whether to start over or give in to the relentless struggles and pain – a choice that many are confronted with, regardless of background and culture, as violence and abuse do not discriminate.

Director's Biography

Sara Al-Thani was born in Qatar, raised in San Francisco, California, and France in a mix of cultures and languages. She graduated in Political Science from University of San Francisco (USF) and holds a second degree in Fashion Design from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Along with filmmaking, Sara is also a composer and a painter. "Lemon Hart" is her first short film as writer and director.

Company Profile

Neibulon Productions is a film production company registered in Paris, France with its main activities based in South of France, Cannes. They focus on independent film projects, and international films made by directors with personal artistic vision and the ability to transcend borders with a broad global appeal.

Development

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Thamer Al-Thani

Director / Screenwriter



The Mute

'Al Bakma' / Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 10

Genre: Animation, Fantasy, Science Fiction

In 1960s Qatar, a mute old lady builds a spaceship to find a cure for her disease, but will she be able to finish it before she is stopped by the evil Qatari Space Initiative?



In 1960s Qatar, Mama Looloo lives alone as she builds a spaceship in the middle of her living room. She is mute and does not interact with people around her. She collects scrap metal around the country to build her spaceship. She is met with a series of events that require her to speak, but she chooses to avoid communication and run away from social interaction. In order to finish her spaceship, she must ask someone to help her find a piece that is out of her reach. Once she finds it, she blasts off.

Director's Note

This film explores a character's disability and learning to live with it. The story follows Mama Looloo, a mute elderly woman, who finds it hard to connect with people because of the shame she feels about her muteness. Due to her disability, she lives alone and tries to escape from the environment that she feels isolated in. This animated film will appeal to a wide audience while exploring mature themes.

Director's Biography

Thamer Al-Thani is a current student at Northwestern University in Qatar, majoring in Communications. He is a director with a unique view of the world. He enjoys telling complex and colourful stories and collaborating with others. 'The Mute' will be Al-Thani's first short film as a writer and director.

Contact

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Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Ahmad Saleh

Director / Screenwriter



Saleh Saleh, Jessica Neubauer

Producers



Night

'Layl' / Palestine, Jordan, Germany, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 11

Genre: Animation, Drama, Fable

A mother who has been unable to sleep since the disappearance of her son meets a storyteller whose tales can heal sleepless souls.



While searching for sleepless souls, a storyteller finds a woman standing in front of her door, waiting. Her son disappeared years ago and she has been awake ever since. After each sunset, Night, a girl in a long black dress, knocks on the woman's door, bringing back the son into his mother's arms. As the daylight starts coming through the windows, the girl and the son disappear. Filled with hesitation, the storyteller tells the woman a story that will make her cry out her hope and fall asleep.

Contact

Ses-Studio

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Director's Note

I still clearly remember the face of a woman randomly approaching anyone she met on the street. "Please tell me he is dead", she kept saying. I asked the people around me about her story. They told me her son had disappeared years ago, and she did not know where he was, nor what had happened to him. While hope is something we generally admire, here, for the first time, I was faced with observing hope destroying a person's life.

Director's Biography

Ahmad Saleh is an Academy Award winning writer and director. His writing career started with a collection of short stories, which won the Young Writer's Award from the Al-Qattan Foundation in Palestine. 'House' (2011), his first film, was his graduation project for his Master's degree in Digital Media from the University of Arts, Bremen. The film won numerous prestigious awards. Recently, Saleh completed a second Master's degree at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. He specialised in Film Writing and Directing, and his graduation project, 'Ayny' (2016), was awarded with a golden medal in the Foreign Animation category at the Student Academy Awards.

Company Profile

Ses-Studio is an Amman-based studio run by brothers Saleh, Saed and Ahmad Saleh that has been in operation since 2010. The company's main focus is on animated productions that require highly skilled handcraft.

Production

Short Narrative

Spring Grants 2017

Abdullah Al-Wazzan

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Soaring Over Mayhem

Kuwait, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 20

Genre: Coming of age, Drama

Two brothers struggle to survive as they reach manhood in the brutal terrain of war-torn Syria.



In the brutal lands of northern Syria, 10-year-old bird enthusiast Rami struggles to survive alongside his overly adventurous elder brother Ibrahim. Due to Ibrahim's ambitions to make a quick profit and Rami's hope for a better life, the brothers are lured into taking on a dicey job in rural Syria. Complications arise when they roam dangerous conflict-ridden terrain, which not only compromises the job at hand, but also the safety of the boys' lives.

Director's Note

'Soaring Over Mayhem' is a realistic interpretation of the lives of young children who are entangled in the crossfire of an ongoing, complex war. Projected through the story of two young boys, the film reflects on characters that stand as a metaphor for the thousands of children who have perished or are still suffering from the brutality of the Syrian war. At the same time, it shows the total chaos of the conflict through their innocent eyes. The film stems from my own need to understand and showcase how a series of events that are beyond one's control can have the power to change the course of our lives forever.

Director's Biography

Abdullah Al-Wazzan is a director, producer and writer. Born in Kuwait in 1990, he graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 2012. He went on to create the animated short film 'Falafel Cart' (2014), which was selected for the Dubai International Film Festival.

Company Profile

Founded by Abdullah Al-Wazzan in 2011, RoyalTales is a film and entertainment production company based in Kuwait. Formerly known as Royal Pictures, the company was started as a means to create the short experimental animated film 'Falafel Cart' (2014). In 2016, it made a transition and became committed to producing compelling and cinematic content that would shine a light on Arab stories and have global appeal. In the years ahead, RoyalTales aims to collaborate with film institutes in the Gulf region and produce the short live-action film 'Soaring over Mayhem', as well as to produce a feature-length adventure-drama-fantasy film that is currently in development.

Contact

RoyalTales

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Development

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Nadia Al-Khater,

Fahad Al-Khater

Directors / Screenwriters



Split-Screen

Qatar / English

Runtime: 30

Genre: Psychological, Thriller

After unwittingly drinking poisoned coffee, two acquaintances are forced into a death match by a faceless conspiracy to win the only antidote.



Two men, 'A' and 'B', are drinking coffee. They receive anonymous texts telling them their drink has been poisoned and will kill them in 24 hours. Only one of them can receive the antidote if they kill the other man. The two 'players' must wear a device that features a display of a video feed of the other camera with GPS coordinates. At first, they are in denial, but once 'B' experiences symptoms, he leaves player 'A' alone at the café because of an argument. They try to defeat each other. Finally, 'A' and 'B' meet in the desert, but just before 'B' shoots 'A' in a standoff, a drone drops a package labelled 'Antidote'. It is only enough for one person, and 'B' takes it, but suddenly dies. It was no antidote, rather, it was a ruse by 'A' to kill 'B.'

Contact

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Director's Note

Through this film, we are hoping to explore a multitude of themes related to free will, the internet, and collective behaviour. Our experience has been a part of the new generation who are uniquely "plugged in". We want to articulate this experience onscreen through such characters in our story. Problematizing the relationship between the virtual and the real may be translated visually by paying homage to current internet subcultures such as "vaporwave". Through this elevated thriller, we intend to create scenes and images to resemble worn out cassette tapes in hues of violet, pinks, and purples contrasted with bright turquoises. Our ultimate aim is to create a thrilling and exciting short.

Director's Biography

Fahad Al-Khater and **Nadia Al-Khater** are Qatari nationals born in 1992 and 1994, respectively. Though they both spent part of their childhood in San Diego, California, they returned to Doha where they both graduated in International Politics at Georgetown University in Qatar. They will be sharing screenwriting and directing responsibilities for their first short film 'Split-Screen'. Together, they also wrote a second short film called "This is Not a Test" in the DFI-TorinoFilmLab's Short Screenwriting Lab.

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Meriem Mesraoua

Director / Screenwriter



François D'Artemare

Producer



Tainted

Qatar, France / Arabic

Runtime: 15

Genre: Drama

A young teen forbidden from biting her nails must now ignore her urge and abide by a new set of rules, to ensure she does not damage her newly acquired, yet imposed fake nails.



Despite her young years, Sarah's blissful holiday is quickly interrupted by her mother's new rules. She must now wear fake nails to stop her from biting her real ones. But her bad habit only grows into an obsession. Unable to remove her new nails and continuously deprived of answers, the teen is forced to redefine her sense of touch, behaviour and ultimately, her relationship with her mother.

Contact

Les Films de l'Après-Midi

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Director's Note

Through 'Tainted', I wish to explore the behavioural conditioning and handover process through a mother-daughter bond, in which the mother has already conformed to society's expectations and the daughter is expected to follow. Set in a heavily normed world, the child finds she cannot transgress a set of codes she does not understand. She must, therefore, learn the protocol, but is deemed too young to grasp the real motives behind it. The adult perpetuates the handover process she has gone through herself - one believed to originate from good intent, as it ultimately aims to protect. The child must surpass her blind trust for her parent, to unveil the paradoxical world her mother is stuck in. An awakening that leads the young girl to leave her childhood behind.

Director's Biography

Of Algerian origin, **Meriem Mesraoua** was born in Qatar, raised in France and earned a BSc with Honours in Media Industries and Technologies from Northwestern University. Mesraoua explored various facets of the film industry and gained professional experience at Miramax, NYWIFT, film sets and festivals, amongst others. Her short films are 'Coucou' (2009) and 'Our Time Is Running Out' (2017). She is currently working on a new short titled 'Tainted' and developing her first feature-length project, 'The Other Wife'.

Company Profile

Les Films de l'Après-Midi has produced feature-length films from countries all over the world, including Bosnia and Herzegovina (Aida Begić's 'Children of Sarajevo', 'Djeca', and 'Snow'); Ethiopia (Hiwot Admasu's short film 'New Eyes'); Hungary (Balint Kenyeres's 'Hier'); Iran (Keywan Karimi's 'Drum'); Portugal (João Canijo's 'Fatima'; Marco Martins's 'São Jorge'; three films by Manoel de Oliveira; João Salaviza's 'Montanha'; and João Viana's 'Our Madness'); and Romania (Radu Muntean's 'One Floor Below'). The company is actively committed to supporting young filmmakers, among them Hiwot Admasu, João Salaviza, Keywan Karimi, and Meriem Mesraoua. Les Films de l'Après-Midi is also developing projects by established directors like Begić, Canijo, Pelin Esmer and Muntean.

Production

Short Narrative

Fall Grants 2017

Celine Cotran

Director / Screenwriter / Producer



Enid Richemont

Screenwriter



Oliver Sunley

Producer



Contact

C24 Films

Celine Cotran

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The Time Tree

Lebanon, United Kingdom, Qatar / English

Runtime: 22

Genre: Children, Coming of age, Fantasy, Women

In 1596, a bullied deaf girl comes across a magical tree. It is a portal to the present, where she meets two girls who help her grow in ways she never imagined.



Based on the children's novel by the best-selling author Enid Richemont, 'The Time Tree' is a story that combines a coming-of-age with magical realism. Best friends, Rachel and Jo, discover an oak tree one day in a nearby wood. Unbeknownst to them, they are being watched by Anne, a deaf girl from 1596. She had discovered this tree in her own era and found that it transported her to the present day, where she watches these two strange girls. Intrigued by them, she coaxes them to the tree, and after a near-death encounter, the three girls meet. What follows is a story of Anne's self-discovery, as she transforms from a timid, neglected little girl, to a confident, self-assured person, who despite her "affliction" (as her mother calls it), is perfectly capable of anything she puts her mind to.

Director's Note

What drew me to 'The Time Tree' is Anne. I grew up completely mesmerised by all sorts of storytelling, from literature to film to theatre. As a little girl, my heroines were Roald Dahl's Matilda and Mary from 'The Secret Garden'. I have been searching for another heroine like them for years now, and I believe I finally found her in Anne. To be granted the opportunity to give her a voice, to personify her and let little girls, like I was once, cherish her in their hearts forever, is something I am truly honoured to be doing.

Director's Biography

Celine Cotran is a British-Lebanese filmmaker and London Film School graduate. Having worked in script development, Cotran writes and directs her own films, telling female-driven stories touching on the fantastical and absurd. Her first short film, 'Grounded' (2015) has made its way around the festival circuit including Williamsburg International, Melbourne Underground and Arizona Underground Film Festival. Cotran's follow-up, 'After Eights' premiered at the BAFTA Cymru Qualifying Carmarthen Bay Film Festival in 2017, where it was nominated for Best Short Comedy. Cotran has been mentored by the award-winning producer David Parfitt, former chairman of BAFTA, and current Chair of Film London.

Company Profile

C24 Films is an independent film production company based in London, founded by Celine Cotran and her mother, Huda Cotran. 'The Time Tree' is their first production together.

Production

Short Experimental
Fall Grants 2017

Randa Maroufi

Director / Screenwriter



Sophie Penson

Producer



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Ceuta's Gate

'Bab Sebta' / Morocco, France, Lebanon, Qatar / Arabic

Runtime: 20

Genre: Creative Documentary, Politics, Social Issues, Women

'Ceuta's Gate' is an experimental film inspired by the tension felt at the border of Ceuta.



Ceuta is a Spanish enclave on Moroccan soil. It has, since the independence of the country, witnessed trafficking in manufactured goods. These goods are transported on foot from one side of the frontier to the other, exempted from taxation, and sold in the cities of Northern Morocco. Through a continuous camera movement, we discover this "atypical trade" - a smuggling activity in the area in which the protagonists are busy with their tasks, thus revealing this incessant carousel that animates the city of Ceuta. The film invites us to feel for a moment the strange reality of the city.

Director's Note

In this project, my goal was to transcribe the particular tension felt on this small territory separating Africa from Europe. I would like to raise the question of the passage between two continents from the perspective of everyday life, trying to combine a critical look at the capitalist society, opposed to the most amazing strategies of individual resistance.

Director's Biography

Randa Maroufi was born in 1987 in Casablanca, Morocco. She is a Fine Arts graduate from Tetouan (Morocco), Angers (France) and Le Fresnoy (France). Her multi-disciplinary practice is rooted in political issues with a primary concern in gender studies. Her work primarily takes the form of film, photography, performance and sound. It has been presented at major contemporary art events such as the Marrakech Biennale, the Videonale Bonn and film festivals such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, New Directors / New Films at the MOMA in New York, etc. Her graduation film 'Le Park' (2015) has received more than 20 awards.

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' (2017) and Walid Mattar's 'Northern Wind' (2017). The company is currently working on four short films and developing several feature-length films.

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