

ELGOUNA   
FILM FESTIVAL  
1ST EDITION  
مهرجان الجونة السينمائي

# EL GOUNA STAR



LOVING VINCENT  
A JOURNEY THROUGH COLOURS





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	Marina Theater	Audimax (TU Berlin)	Sea Cinema 1	Sea Cinema 2	Sea Cinema 3
11 AM				11:00 AM <b>The Brawler</b> 145 min	
12 PM			11:15 AM <b>Loving Vincent</b> 92 min		
1 PM					
2 PM					
3 PM		3:00 PM <b>The Insult</b> 110 min			
4 PM			3:30 PM <b>Of Sheep and Men</b> 78 min   Attended by dir. Karim Sayad &amp; Edit. Naïma Bachiri	4:00 PM <b>Shorts Program 3</b> 84 min R: 16+	4:15 PM <b>Shorts Program 2</b> 79 min R: 18+
5 PM					
6 PM		5:45 PM <b>Lucky</b> 88 min			
7 PM	6:45 PM <b>FIRST THEY KILLED MY FATHER: A DAUGHTER OF CAMBODIA REMEMBERS</b> 135 min		6:00 PM <b>In Praise of Nothing</b> 78 min	6:45 PM <b>After the War</b> 100 min	7:00PM <b>Soufra</b> 68 min
8 PM					
9 PM		8:30 PM <b>Photocopy</b> 90 min			
10 PM			9:00 PM <b>Wonders of the Sea (3D)</b> 82 min	9:30 PM <b>Arrhythmia</b> 116 min R: 18+	9:30 PM <b>The Square</b> 142 min R: 18+
11 PM	9:30 PM <b>Breathe</b> 117 min				
12 AM					

- OPENING & CLOSING FILMS
- FEATURE NARRATIVE COMPETITION
- FEATURE DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION
- SHORT FILMS COMPETITION
- OFFICIAL SELECTION OUT OF COMPETITION
- SPECIAL PRESENTATION



Screening of  
**Sheikh Jackson** is to be  
held today at Sea Cinema 1  
1:15 PM

**MASTERCLASSES**

**THE SCREENWRITER'S PATH**

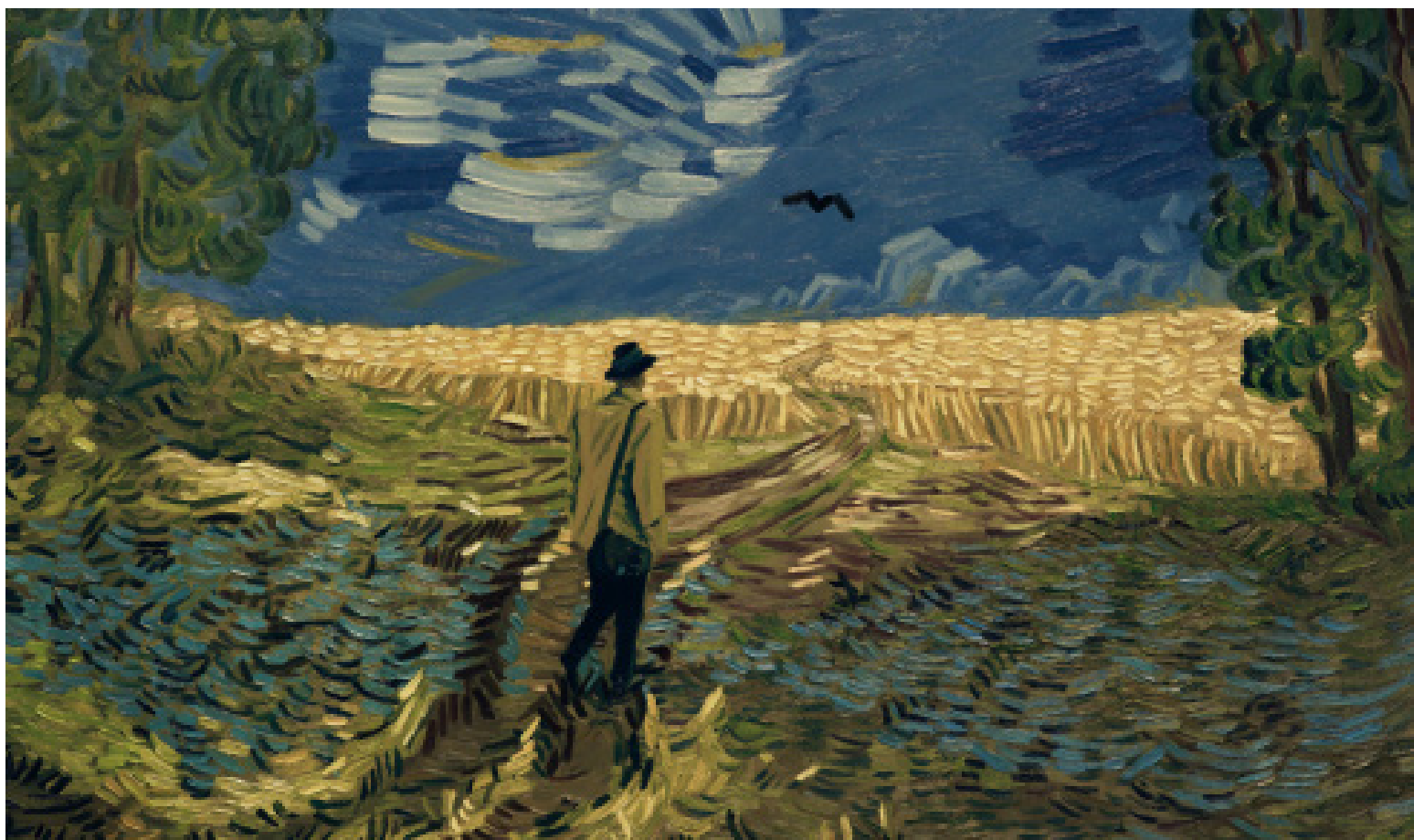
Masterclass by Jeff Stockwell and Richard Tanne, Moderated by Ghada Shahbender

Wednesday, 27th of September, 10:30am

This Masterclass is presented in partnership with the American Film Showcase and The US Embassy in Cairo, Egypt.

# LOVING VINCENT

## A JOURNEY THROUGH COLOURS



With 7 years in production, «Loving Vincent» is one of this year's most anticipated features. The film went through a monumental production process as famously advertised «The world's first fully painted film» with over 65,000 frames painted over 1,000 canvases by a team of over 100 painters. But these numbers and records aren't the film only merits.

A genre film disguised as an art house, «Loving Vincent» tells the story of fictionalized journey of young Armand Roulin, a real life character and a son to Van Gogh's friend Joseph Roulin, to fulfill his father's wish to deliver a letter that was written by Vincent Van Gogh to his brother Theo prior to his death and was returned deemed undeliverable. Armand, who is portrayed as an uninterested cynic, doesn't understand his father's motives behind his wish, but he takes the journey anyways only to find out more and more questions opening up around the strange circumstances of Van Gogh's death. Armand grows obsessed with solving the mystery, which leads him to unexpected places constructing a complex portrait for the deceased artist in the process.

The film employs famous Van Gogh paintings dramatically, ever wondered how his famous «Bedroom in Arles» looked when you're not looking at different times of day? You'll get to see that. «Loving Vincent» offers an extremely satisfying journey to Van Gogh fans and art lovers in general as it gives the viewer a chance to see the brilliantly disturbed famous brush strokes working on a large scale and in full effect, taking the artist style to new settings and eventually cinematizing it through moving images.

But the film goes beyond this stylistic extravagance. With heavy noir elements the film draws from the actual details of Van Gogh's death to weave a carefully plotted detective story that revolves around Van Gogh's multi-faceted personality. Armand seems to be loosely modeled after a film noir detective archetype, with the drinking, the fist fights, and the growing obsession about the case to the point that his existence purpose is summarized in solving the mystery. But unlike noirs the film ends on a sort of sweet note taking an optimistic stance towards his subject.

It's Vincent Van Gogh all over, not only his life, not only his style. But his it's also his sickness, his

fractured sense of reality, his complexity, even his ferocious stylistic choices. The film's main virtue is its faith to the essence of Vincent Van Gogh practice rather than the visual gimmicks it could've settled safely for.

«Loving Vincent» premiered last June in Annecy International Animated Film Festival in France eventually winning the audience award for best feature animation, and it will be screened today and on Friday at El Gouna Film Festival for the first time in the Middle East.

Mohamed El-Hajj



## AMR SALAMA: “SHEIKH JACKSON EXPRESSES AN ENTIRE GENERATION’S IDENTITY CRISIS”



*Ever since its screening as the closing film of the Special Presentations section in the Toronto International Film Festival then as the opening film in El Gouna Film Festival, director Amr Salama's Sheikh Jackson was surrounded with a lot of controversy. The film clashes with deep-rooted Salafi ideas embraced by millions in Egypt, and poses existential questions around the relationship of humans with their Creator, the path to religious virtue, and whether it contradicts with art. To discuss these sensitive questions, among others, El Gouna Star met with Sheikh Jackson co-writer and director Amr Salama for this interview.*

### **How did you start writing Sheikh Jackson? And what drew you to that idea in particular?**

I've always found it difficult to direct a film with a story that isn't mine, but Sheikh Jackson was different. When Omar Khaled, my co-writer, came to me with the idea, I was impressed, and I told him the story somehow resembles my life. I asked him to write it and show it to me when it was done, and we started working together on the treatment he had finished after I told him I would write the screenplay. I would then show him what I wrote at each stage and we would discuss and rewrite, until we were done with the script after going through nearly ten drafts.

### **How does the story resemble your life? Does this mean you were a Salafi yourself?**

Not exactly a Salafi, but back when I was in college I was religiously conservative. I used to do all five prayers at the mosque, and did share some Salafi beliefs. I struggled with the same fear of Hell that Sheikh Khaled grapples with in the film, and I believed it was necessary to steer away from earthly pleasures. It took me 35 years to become the person I am today, after a long journey of self discovery that led me to my current values. This is why Sheikh Jackson is the closest among my films to my heart, and I believe its story reflects the suffering of millions of young people in Egypt and the Arab world.



Aren't you scared the film would create problems with Salafi groups in Egypt, since music is religiously forbidden in Salafi tradition, while your protagonist is a moonwalking Salafi who loves Michael Jackson?

I actually think they will like the film, if they watch it, that is, rather than judge from afar. The film doesn't attack Salafi ideas at all.

**Did you expect that the film would be Egypt's submission to the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar race?**

I have always dreamt of this honour, and I was expecting it with my 2014 film *Excuse My French* but that year the committee responsible for sending the submissions actually forgot to make a nomination. Yet here I am now, making it to the race with a film that means even more to me. I even feel like it's my first work as a director. In my head, I'm still working on it, adding and changing scenes even though it's already done and touring festivals now. I really hope we reach the final list of nominations, something no other Egyptian film has managed before.

**Sheikh Jackson has generally been met with praise, but it was also described by some foreign critics as a shallow portrayal of an identity crisis. How do you view these varying opinions?**

This is the nature of art. You convey an idea, and everyone engages with it in their own way. I respect everything that had been said and written about the film, and I follow the reviews closely in order to learn and further understand audience and critic perspectives.

Some have also criticized the film for not including any original Michael Jackson music, even though the protagonist's obsession with Jackson's songs is an essential part of the story.

We did reach out to the recording labels for copyrights in order to use some of Jackson's iconic songs in the film, but unfortunately they asked for monumental sums of money, and we simply couldn't afford it. This is why I collaborated with my friend, musician and composer Hany Adel, to create an alternate soundtrack for the film that incorporates elements from the world of Jackson's music for the scenes where Khaled practices his dance moves.

**How did actors Ahmad AlFishawy and Ahmed Malek train for those dance scenes?**

It took a lot of training for them to nail those moves, which might seem easy but really aren't. I also asked Malek to undergo a severe diet in order to have a slim figure like Jackson's, and he eventually lost 20 kilograms for the role.

**And how did you manage to hide AlFishawy's countless tattoos?**

We worked with a professional team of makeup artists to cover the tattoos until we were done with the film, so it didn't really pose a problem when shooting.

Interviewed by: Sherif Abdel Hadi



# WONDERS OF THE SEA 3D DELIGHTFUL MISSION



"I am pleased to have my voice to this unique film experience. Jean-Michel Cousteau had created the love to the living beauty of the ocean because like his father Jacques Cousteau, Jean-Michel believes that you only protect what you love. Let us fall in love with the wonders of the sea." This is how Arnold Schwarzenegger, the film star and the former governor of California, introduced the Wonders of the Sea 3D documentary film co-directed by Jean-Michel Cousteau and Jean-Jacques Mantello where Schwarzenegger is featured in the opening sequence. For Jean-Michel Cousteau, choosing Schwarzenegger to participate in his first feature 3D documentary as a co-producer and a narrator, serves the mission of the environmental film. In an interview with Variety magazine he said "From the very beginning, my wish was that the narrator be profoundly connected to the environment. Arnold and I share the same enthusiasm about what should be done to protect the ocean."

Jean-Michel Cousteau, the son of the renowned French ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, is an oceanographic explorer, environmentalist, and film director and producer. After producing and directing dozen of environmental films on ocean adventures he decides to have his latest feature length documentary in 3D because "Thanks to new breakthrough filming techniques in 3D, millions of viewers will literally dive into a new and virtually unknown underwater world without ever getting wet." He explains.

The film is a mix of a voyage to explore the life in the deep ocean from Fiji to the Bahamas, and an invitation to dive in the personal history of the Cousteau family. The film opens with black and white photos and videos from the father Jacques Cousteau's ocean adventures where the 7 years old Jean-Michel started his first step on board as a junior diver. However, Wonders of the Sea's ship board has Jean-Michel and his two children Celine and Fabien "I too is Cousteau and my children without doubt are Cousteaus" says Jean-Michel in his narration where he connects between the life of the ocean creatures and his own life story.

The 3D technique gives a fresh and lively taste to the deep ocean life with its beautiful colors and amazing details that turns the wild life into a seductive experience. Although it is full of scientific data, statistics, and maps such as on the survival techniques of the animals and the percentage of fresh water on earth, the use of graphic and 3D lightens the weight of the information. The background music by the prominent composer and musician Christophe Jacquelin is delightful. Jacquelin is known for the soundtrack of Sharks 3D, Dolphins and Whales 3D, and Ocean Wonderland 3D, in addition to composing 17 films.

Wonders of the Sea had its world premiere at the 65 edition of San Sebastian international Film Festival 24 September 2017.

Nahed Nasr



Jean-Jacques Mantello



Jean-Michel Cousteau



# MANIFESTO

## PHILOSOPHICAL DECLARATIONS



The school teacher addresses the children in a soothing voice, pausing between sentences to make sure they understand. She strolls among the desks, peering into their notebooks as they write, suggesting changes and giving instructions. It is a typical classroom setting; coloured drawings plastered on the wall, the students curious and receptive, the teacher gentle and modestly dressed. There is only one twist: The sentences she speaks are parts of artistic manifestos by different iconoclastic filmmakers, including Werner Herzog, Jim Jarmusch, and Dogme 95, a movement started by Danish filmmakers Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg.

Originally conceptualized—and exhibited in Melbourne, Berlin and New York City—as a video installation, *Manifesto* is German visual artist Julian Rosefeldt's directorial debut. The film is an imaginative collage of philosophical declarations written by some of the most influential political thinkers and avant-garde creators in modern history, from Karl Marx to André Breton to Claes Oldenburg, and performed in astounding versatility by Academy Award winning actress Cate Blanchett. The scene relayed above is one of 13 segments in which Blanchett masterfully portrays an array of wildly diverse archetypes to which she manages to lend depth and character, despite each of them getting only a few minutes of screentime.

The film was shot over 12 days in and around Berlin, and in its gallery run from 2015 to 2017 was displayed in multiscreen form, with one screen solely devoted to the film's intro, in which the mesmerizing image of a flame being lit is accompanied by a voiceover of Blanchett reading from Marx and Friedrich Engels' 1848 Communist Manifesto. It is a fitting visual to open a work like this one, as each of the seminal texts revisited throughout its 95 minutes has in its time of release ignited a form of political or artistic movement, or a new mode of aesthetic perception.

Condensing all 13 vignettes in this feature-length version, which premiered in January at the Sundance Film Festival, makes Rosefeldt's choices when it comes to the juxtaposition of text and imagery even more intriguing. With each segment filmed in a setting that at first glance appears entirely disconnected from the words being said, it becomes a rewarding—even enjoyable—mental exercise to try and figure out the connections; sometimes relatively clear, others a lot subtler, and often seemingly nonexistent. For example, Blanchett vehemently affirms the nihilist values of Tristan Tzara's Dada Manifesto in a funeral. In her rendition of the ruthless Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto ("The suffering of a man is of the same interest to us as the suffering of an electric lamp"), she is a

hawk-eyed stockbroker. As she calmly recites lines from Bruno Taut's "Daybreak," she makes breakfast and wakes her child as the sun comes up outside.

Yet even when the setting and the words are in fact disjointed, as is the case in the classroom scene, it makes for some of the film's most inventive and exceptionally humorous moments. It also stands as testament to Blanchett's indomitable skill as an actress, from the sheer cognitive ability that allows her to inhabit physical mannerisms entirely at odds with the content of the layered lines of text she delivers, to her chameleonic capacity for transformation—her shifting accents, faces (aided by makeup artist Morag Ross) and movements.

"Remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: 'It's not where you take things from—it's where you take them to,'" the teacher advises her students, inspired by Jarmusch's 2004 "Golden Rules of Filmmaking." With *Manifesto*, Rosefeldt follows through. He has taken the work of others, and employed it to create something entirely innovative and fresh, standing not only as a tribute to those texts, but also to the craft of acting, and to the endless possibilities of artistic practice.

Yasmine Zohdi







