

ELGOUNA
FILM
FESTIVAL



7TH EDITION

24 OCT - 1 NOV 2024

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
ORASCOM DEVELOPMENT

PROJECTS BOOK

25 — 31 OCTOBER 2024



CINE
GOUNA
Funding

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WELCOME TO THE

We are thrilled to welcome you to the 7th edition of **CineGouna**, the industry arm of El Gouna Film Festival (GFF). Through its vast range of activities, **CineGouna** upholds its mission of empowering Arab filmmakers by offering them opportunities for artistic mentorships as well as financial support for their cinematic endeavours.

CineGouna traditional two programs, **CineGouna Funding** and **CineGouna Forum** work together to support filmmakers in their artistic work.

While **CineGouna Funding**, GFF's project development and co-production lab offers filmmakers a top-notch business environment, **CineGouna Forum** connects regional and international industry professionals.

Invited industry professionals and filmmakers will take part in workshops, roundtable discussions, panels, presentations, as well as master classes that deliver on **CineGouna's** promises of insightful learning opportunities.

Last year, **CineGouna** introduced two new initiatives: **CineGouna Market**, a workspace for both established and emerging voices in the Arab film industry, including producers, distributors, sales agents, and VOD platforms, and **CineGouna Emerge**, a program dedicated to students and first-time filmmakers, inviting them to participate in and benefit from all festival activities. This year. Last edition also witnessed the newly introduced festival plaza, the impressive space that will work as a hub that gathers all the professionals, talents, and media for a vivid cinematic experience.

This year, a new program starts: **CineGouna Shorts**, the platform dedicated to support unique voices in the Egyptian short film scene.

For its upcoming 6th edition, **CineGouna Funding** has selected **21** projects: **13** in development, and **8** in post-production. These projects were carefully selected from more than **230** eligible projects that were submitted this year.

In **CineGouna** closing ceremony, the winners will be granted up to **US \$400,000** in cash and service prizes offered by El Gouna Film Festival, its revered sponsors, and its distinguished partners.

We hope that your stay in El Gouna will be both productive and enjoyable. Thank you for joining us.

Sincerely,
The CineGouna Team



روتانا ستوديوز
ROTANA STUDIOS

إبداع لا ينتهي

أكثر من
2000
فيلم

أكبر مكتبة
للأفلام
العربية

AWARDS

List of CineGouna Funding Awards 2024

- **CineGouna Platform Award US \$15,000** in cash for a project in development
- **CineGouna Platform Award US \$15,000** in cash for a project in post-production
- **US \$20,000** cash grant from **Rotana**
- **US \$20,000** cash grant from **MBC Studios & MBC Academy**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **Arab Radio and Television (ART)**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **New Century Productions**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **Lagoonie Film Production**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **Red Star Films**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **Shahid**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **International Emerging Film Talent Association (IEFTA)**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **Rise Studios**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **Blue Bee Productions**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **O West**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **ESLSCA University**
- **US \$10,000** cash grant from **The Sound of Egypt**
- **US \$5,000** cash grant from **Red Sea Fund** for a project in development
- **US \$5,000** cash grant from **Red Sea Fund** for a film in post-production
- **US \$5,000** cash grant from **Her Story Films**
- **US \$5,000** cash grant from **Sard**
- **US \$5,000** worth of script development by Mariam Naoum from **Sard**
- A filmmaker residency in Los Angeles from **the American Embassy in Cairo** and **Film Independent**, valued at **US \$13,000**
- Two invitations to a French film festival from **the French Embassy in Egypt / Institut Français d'Egypte**
- **US \$50,000** as MG for sales and distribution from **MAD Solutions**
- An invitation worth **US \$5,000** for an Arab producer to attend the Rotterdam Film Lab, provided by the **Arab Cinema Centre**
- An invitation for a project in development to participate in the Rawi Film Lab, offered by the **Royal Film Commission - Jordan**
- An invitation for a project in development to participate in Mosaic Film Lab by **Royal Film Commission - Jordan**
- **IEFTA** and **Torino Film Lab** Award: A secured place in **TFL Next 2025** for a project in development, covering the participation fees **EUR €1,700**
- **IEFTA** and **Documentary Association of Europe (DAE)** Award: A free European Film Market badge for the producer of one documentary project, along with a travel bursary of **EUR €1,500** to attend the market, and a one-year free membership to **DAE**
- **US \$23,000** worth of post-production facilities from **Bee Media Productions**, presented to two projects
- **US \$20,000** worth of post-production facilities from **Big Bang Studios**, presented to two projects
- **US \$10,000** worth of full DCP package services from **Shift Studios**
- **US \$10,000** worth of full promotion package services from **Shift Studios**
- An invitation for a documentary project in development to participate in **The Euro-Mediterranean Documentary Market (MediMed)**



Mentor Partnership with:



CINEGOUNA FUNDING JURY



Amjad Abu Alala

Sudan

Amjad Abu Alala is a UAE-born Sudanese director and producer, who honed his craft at UAE University, creating notable short films under Abbas Kiarostami's mentorship. His feature film, "You Will Die at Twenty," triumphed with the Lion of the Future at the Venice International Film Festival, marking Sudan's inaugural Oscars submission. He has been the Head of Programming at the Sudan Independent Film Festival since 2014 and has driven impactful productions through his company, Station Films, including the Cannes 2023 Freedom award-winning "Goodbye Julia."



Lamia Belkaied Guiga

Tunis

Director, Researcher, and Consultant in Audiovisual and Cinema. Lamia Belkaied Guiga holds a PhD in Audiovisual Media from Panthéon-Assas University (Paris II) and is an Assistant Professor at the Higher School of Audiovisual and Cinema (ESAC) in Gammarth since 2004. She has served as Director of ESAC (2020-2024), leading key academic reforms.

Currently the Artistic Director of the Carthage Film Festival (JCC) 2023-2024, A founding member of the HESCALE research group at Sorbonne Nouvelle, she has contributed to academic research on Tunisian and African cinema and was an expert for the UNESCO report on African film (2020-2021). Lamia is also part of the Critics Awards for Arab Films and Mentor Arabia, focusing on promoting Arab and African cinema globally.



Nadia Dresti

Switzerland

Nadia Dresti, a Swiss film industry veteran, began her career at 20th Century Fox Switzerland. In 1990, she founded her own PR and Film Marketing company, collaborating with major festivals like the Locarno Film Festival, the Cannes Marché du Film, and the European Film Market (EFM) at the Berlinale and many more. In 2000, she created Locarno Pro, a key initiative that has become a global hub for film professionals. She also co-founded Open Doors, a workshop aimed at supporting film production in regions where independent cinema is particularly at risk.

Dresti has held various leadership roles, including Delegate to the Artistic Direction of the Locarno Film Festival and Vice President of UNICEF Switzerland. She is currently Head of the Industry Advisory Board at Locarno.

CINEGOUNA FUNDING MENTOR



Paul Foley

United States

Paul Foley, has written for Disney, Universal, Warner Bros., and more. He returned to his alma mater, USC, in 2008 where he teaches rewriting, pitching, and writing for animation. Passionate about fostering talent, his former students now write for film, TV, and games on six continents. In 2018 he began working with the Middle East Media Initiative, promoting values-based content in the MENA region. In 2024, Foley was appointed Head of Story for Alamiya Filmed Entertainment, a studio based in Dubai, Riyadh, and Los Angeles.



ARABS GOT T★LENT

كل أربعاء 10PM

بناهد

بَنَاتُ الشَّانُوِيَّيْنِ 2



المستعمرة

The settlement

A FILM BY MOHAMED RASHAD

**EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTORS
IN THE ARAB WORLD AND
CO-PRODUCED BY**

Hassala Film

in co-production with Caractères Productions and Seera Films

Starring Adham Shoukry Zeyad Islam Emad Ghoniem Mohamed Abd-Elhady Hanady Abd El-khalek
Costumes Salma Sami Art Director Yasser El-Hossieny Colorist Attia Amin Sound Designer Mohamed Salah
Music Tony Overwater Editor Heba Othman Director of Photography Mahmoud Lotfy
Co-Producer Kesant El-Sayed Co-Producer Etienne de Ricaurd Producer Hala Lotfy



CARACTÈRES PRODUCTIONS

SEERA FILMS



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P R O D U C T I O N

IS PRESENTING
FOR ITS FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW



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تقدم أحدث إنتاجاتها السينمائية



AISHA CAN'T FLY AWAY

عائشة لا تستطيع الطيران



THANK YOU FOR BANKING WITH US

شكراً لأنك تحلم معنا

نجوي
NAGWA FROM
THE FIFTH FLOOR
فالنخاس

101

منكر
وشفيق
MONKAR
WI SHAFIK

زق
العجبل
Idiots Make
A Living Too

صيف ٦٧
THE 67TH SUMMER

FIND OUT MORE AT THE
LAGOONIE FILM PRODUCTION
BOOTH AT CINEGOUNA FUNDING

اكتشف المزيد من التفاصيل عبر جناح
LAGOONIE FILM PRODUCTION
في منصة سيني جونة لدعم إنتاج الأفلام

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ولنا في الخيال حب | LOVE, IMAGINED! | 2024



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Red Sea Fund



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**250+ Projects, with
15 Million US Dollars
in Grants.**

A dynamic force in the world of Arab and African film financing, the Red Sea Fund operates across four cycles, encompassing projects in stages of development, production, and post-production.

Documentary, fiction, animation, episodic, shorts, and features, the Fund is looking out for filmmakers and the new exciting wave of films.

250+
Projects
supported

120+
Co-productions

160+
Award
Nominations

100+
Festival Awards

PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT



DIRECTOR
Yousef Assabhi

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer
Ala'a Amer

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$722,000.00

Confirmed Financing
\$120,000.00

Confirmed Financial Partners
N/A

Contact

alaa.dammaj@gmail.com
+5082800280

AL-MADEENEH 2008

Yemen

Log-line

In the old town of Al-Madeeneh, Fuad, the last construction worker of a dying craft, faces debt and homelessness while townspeople chase hidden riches.

Synopsis

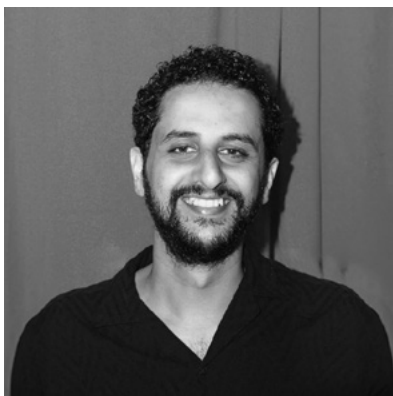
When Fuad, a middle-aged construction worker, loses both his job and the temporary home it provided, he embarks on a series of daily quests for survival in Al-Madeeneh, a small Yemeni town he helped maintain with his late father. These daily quests unfold within broader events around him that showcase a panorama of Yemeni life and Yemeni days, such as a town-wide search for old lanterns that allegedly contain uranium and out-of-town land thieves who steal with impunity. Each day brings a new challenge: one moment, he's dragged into the strange dealings of his sister's husband; the next, he's caught in the middle of a land dispute.

Though Fuad is the last living craftsman of Qudad, an ancient lime plaster made obsolete by cement, and despite the townspeople's verbal recognition of his rare skill, his options continue to shrink. His version of a Ponzi scheme in relying on borrowing money to pay back previous lenders unravels, leaving him deeper in debt. The roof over his head is taken away, and a falling-out with his brother-in-law threatens his last source of refuge in Al-Madeeneh. As his personal struggles intensify, so does the sense of collapse around him.

Set in Ibb, Yemen, Al-Madeeneh 2008 is a portrait of a town on the edge, and the daily lives of its cynical and superstitious characters. The range of events, which are inspired by true incidents, creates a time capsule of a period that signifies a sense of loss, desperation, and strange resilience of Yemenis at the time and in the present.

Director's Biography

Yousef Assabahi is a Yemeni writer and director currently based in Los Angeles. After completing his studies at UCLA's School of Film and Television in 2018, Yousef has written and directed several short films and commercials that explore the cultural identity and collective memory of Yemenis at home and abroad. His films have been screened in international festivals, universities, and cultural institutions. Simultaneously, Yousef manages the Oral History Projects department at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He oversees the production of oral histories with filmmakers across various disciplines in the global film industry. Most recently, he produced an oral history with directors Béla Tarr and John Carpenter. Yousef is now writing his feature debut.



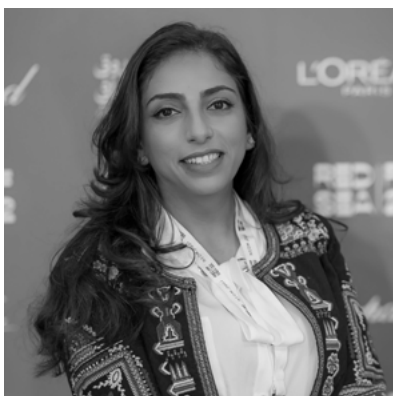
YOUSEF ASSABHI
Director

Director's Statement

This story is a collage of real-life events that I piece together by fusing the past with my memory, creating a time capsule and a portrait of my hometown. My formative teenage years were spent there and it seemed as if everything was coming to an end. I am still realizing how that period shaped my sense of fear and skepticism toward the world. This is my attempt to capture fear as I remember it and to take the viewer on a journey into the life of my hometown.

I'm also very fascinated by that period—the people's routines, how they expressed themselves, and the wealth of individuals who had character. The film unfolds in five days, and the sense of real-time is an important element not only because it aids my goal to make events feel incidental, but also because it allows me to show the anatomy of a Yemeni day with its unique structure and characters.

What excites me the most about filmmaking is the ability to recreate memory, and give it another life of its own. My work thus far can be characterized as a case against forgetting. This focus on remembering is perhaps my way of dealing with the relentless feeling of homesickness. It is also my way of finding beauty in the personal and a way of understanding the present. I am interested in recreating memories we tend to forget, the little details in everyday life that make up the bigger picture.



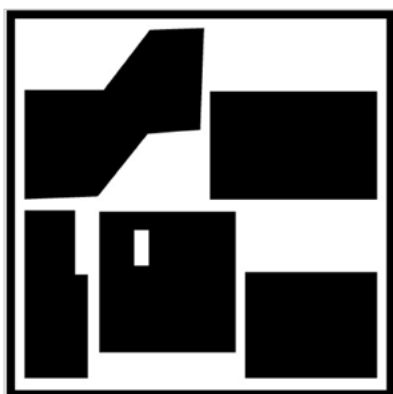
ALA'A AMER
Producer

Producer's Note

As a long-time collaborator with director Yousef Assabahi, I have witnessed his growth and dedication firsthand. His unwavering commitment to telling Yemeni stories authentically is what inspired me to shift my career and become a film producer. Together, we aim to showcase the vibrant and simple life that Yemenis cherish and remember. In this film, Yousef presents the third installment of his trilogy about his hometown, Ibb. The three stories draw deeply from his personal experiences and connection to the place. He began with *In The Long Run*, featuring a 7-year-old character, and continues with a youth story in *One Ride Away* (a short film currently in preproduction). *Al-Madeeneh 2008* is the third film, and his feature debut, which has already received five development awards at the Amman International Film Festival Industry Days.

While filming in Yemen presents serious challenges, the solid local support and the connections we have cultivated in our previous short films and commercials will surely help us get through this one as well. The success of these projects has only solidified our support from the townspeople who are constantly asking us about our next production.

Our collaboration has been fueled by a commitment to redefine how Yemen is perceived globally. We want to shift the narrative from a single perspective of war to a multifaceted view that celebrates the resilience, culture, and spirit of Yemenis.



Producer's Filmography

Semasser is a boutique studio that produces commercials, short films, and feature films. Founded by longtime collaborators Yousef Assabahi and Ala'a Amer, the young studio is powered by Yousef's unique perspective and outlook as a writer/director and Ala'a's international production experience, as well as her ability to assemble great teams. Driven by this force, Semasser is currently developing *Al-Madeeneh 2008*, a feature film project that has already won five awards at the Amman International Film Festival and is slated to participate in Cinemed x Aflamuna's Encounters, CineGouna, and more! The studio is also in pre-production for one short film and in post-production for another, while working on a few commercials. Through Semasser, Yousef and Ala'a aspire to bridge cultures, promote understanding, and contribute to the foundation of a dynamic film industry in Yemen.



DIRECTOR

Michelle Keserwany

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic, French

Producers
Tine Mikkelsen, Nadim Cheikhrouha
Co-Producers
Alaa Alasad, Michelle Keserwany, Noel Keserwany

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$1,462,443

Confirmed Financing
\$52,154

Confirmed Financial Partners
CNC - Aide au Parcours d'Auteur, A.R.T. grant Amman IFF, IEFTA Emerging Talent Amman IFF, Rawad Media Post Production grant Amman IFF, Region Sud (France)

Contact

tine.mikkelsen@filmbyen.dk
+4525216591

AMARA

Denmark, France, Lebanon, Jordan

Log-line

Darine, a dynamic horoscope presenter on the radio, must replace the news anchor suddenly fired due to the economic crisis, forcing her to break out of her fictional bubble and face a harsh reality caused by her words.

Synopsis

Darine, a vibrant woman in her mid-thirties, works at a small, politicized radio station in Beirut where she hosts the morning show "Horoscopes with Darine," which she leads with expertise thanks to her talent for writing sweet little lies. Coming from a middle-class background, she shares a modest apartment with her mother, a devout Christian, and her quirky aunt, who is housebound due to respiratory issues and spends her days reading tarot cards. Darine's job is the sole source of income for the household. Caught between her family responsibilities, personal life, and daily struggles, Darine cocoons herself in a fictional bubble filled with horoscopes, old Egyptian films, 90s Arab music, and dating apps.

One day, Darine's life takes an unexpected turn when the radio station asks her to replace the news anchor who was fired due to the country's economic crisis. Darine, who has always retreated into a deliberately fictional universe through her horoscopes, suddenly finds herself forced to announce the harsh news of a country on the brink of total collapse, broadcasting a reality she is not ready to face.

Director's Biography

Michelle is a multidisciplinary artist and filmmaker from Lebanon. Since 2011, she and her sister Noel have been creating satirical political music videos. In 2023, their debut short film, *Les Chenilles*, won the Golden Bear for Best Short Film at the Berlinale, making it the first Arabic film to receive this award. The film's success continued worldwide, earning prizes such as the Golden Star at El Gouna Film Festival, and was pre-selected for the César Awards. After co-writing the film *Capernaum* with Nadine Labaki and Jihad Hojeily (2014 to 2016), Michelle embarked on her own projects. She is currently developing several films, including an animated feature film for adults titled *Ouzkourini* and *AMARA*, her first live-action feature film.



MICHELLE KESERWANY
Director

Director's Statement

Through Darine's journey, AMARA addresses a universally impactful issue: the weight of our words and their power to shape perceptions. This is particularly relevant to words used in the media. The film explores how language can lay the groundwork for dehumanization, making aggression more acceptable. AMARA highlights the courage needed to speak out against dehumanization and the personal costs of doing so, especially when economic survival and dependency are at stake. Over a decade of creating satirical music videos out of frustration, alongside my sister Noel Keserwany, we have gradually learned the importance of carefully choosing our words. To me, AMARA represents the culmination of this journey, presented in a cinematic format with a more introspective and nuanced approach to satire, incorporating a touch of humor that is integral to this story. In AMARA, the characters' challenges originate from internal conflicts faced by individuals under pressure, avoiding the oversimplified categorization of people as purely good or bad. I myself grew up in a society where I witnessed how challenging it is for individuals to maintain their dignity, and their jobs or basic rights altogether. They can be both corrupt yet compassionate, helpful yet classist and aggressive, showing selective empathy depending on their perspectives.

From a cinematic perspective, AMARA is raw and realistic, echoing the aesthetics often found in Iranian films with naturalistic settings, the use of everyday locations and realistic dialogue.



Producer's Note

Tine Mikkelsen from Zentropa in Denmark and Nadim Cheikhrouha from Tanit Films in France will produce AMARA in close coproduction with Alaa Alasad from CMS Media Solutions out

of Jordan and Michelle and Noel Keserwany from Barr in Lebanon. We are currently looking for further international or local partners to finance the project.

We have international sales agent TrustNordisk and Danish distribution by Camera Film attached, who due to a globally relevant theme see a strong potential for the film both locally and internationally.

TINE MIKKELSEN, NADIM CHEIKHROUHA
Producers

**ALAA ALASAD, MICHELLE KESERWANY,
NOEL KESERWANY**
Co-Produces

Producer's Filmography

With a back catalogue comprised of 275+ titles Zentropa is one of the most prolific and notorious Scandinavian and European production companies today. The portfolio of the company who launched the DOGME 95 movement includes a comprehensive list of awards and accolades among them: 2 Oscars, 5 Academy Award-Nominations, a Golden-Globe, 5 Golden Globe-Nominations, 5 Cannes Film Festival Palms, 3 Berlinale Silver Bears, 1 BAFTA, 1 César and 22 European Film Awards.





DIRECTOR
Muhannad Lamin

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic, Tamasheq

Producer
Lynda Belkhiria
Co-Producer
Maytham Jbara

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$1,233,205

Confirmed Financing
\$40,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
N'dirou Film

Contact

ndiroufilm@gmail.com
+21624131629

THE GUARDIAN

Algeria

Log-line

In the timeless Libyan desert, an elderly Bedouin herdsman resists aiding two hunters seeking the meat of the Waddan—a rare mountain sheep believed to be sacred and possessed.

Synopsis

In the remote desert valley of Mathkhandosh, where ancient rock carvings tell stories of a time when the Sahara was a green paradise, lives Assouf, an elderly Bedouin herdsman. His seemingly peaceful life is disrupted when two hunters, Qabeel and his companion, arrive seeking the Waddan.

The Waddan, a rare mountain sheep rumored to be extinct, is traditionally only hunted with amulets for spiritual protection. However, Qabeel, after consuming dried Waddan meat without these protections, developed a nightly urge for fresh meat. Reluctantly, Assouf agrees to guide the hunters after they threaten him.

As they venture deeper towards the mountainous desert, the silent Bedouin's memories stir—the desert itself seems to remind him of his secret pact never to hunt the Waddan. With each step, it becomes harder for Assouf to keep the promise that has defined his life. As the hunt drags on, Qabeel's hunger intensifies, and the vast desert mirrors his unraveling mind. The valley wind grows harsher, the sun becomes a relentless tormentor, and Qabeel appears increasingly possessed. Each night, his sanity erodes, his need for fresh meat consuming him.

When Assouf's intentions become clear, Qabeel loses control. Succumbing to his cursed instincts, he turns on Assouf in a blind rage, striking him atop a sacred rock, shattering the fragile balance. The desert responds with its own punishment: a violent rainstorm unleashes a flood, sweeping everything away and reclaiming all once again.

Director's Biography

Muhannad Lamin is a Libyan director, editor, and producer based in Tunis. He holds a degree in directing and screenwriting from Tripoli's Art Institute. His short films, including Prisoner and Jailer, have been featured at major festivals such as Clermont-Ferrand, Locarno, and Rhode Island. As a production manager and coordinator, he worked on notable documentaries like Freedom Fields and After a Revolution. In 2023, Muhannad premiered his debut feature documentary, Donga, at the IDFA International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam and the Red Sea International Film Festival. Currently, Muhannad is developing his first feature fiction film, The Guardian, based on a novel by renowned Libyan writer Ibrahim Al-Koni.



MUHANNAD LAMIN
Director

Director's Statement

In high school, I discovered Ibrahim Al-Koni's Eclipse series in my father's library. These desert-set novels fascinated me with their complex themes. I was shocked that such literature was absent from our education. This felt like finding a hidden treasure connecting me to our cultural heritage.

I shared Al-Koni's work with a friend, and we searched for more. Finding his books in Libya was difficult, but persistence led us to "The Bleeding of the Stone." This book opened my eyes to a narrative exploring nature and humanity, with almost biblical characters. Al-Koni's novels rekindled my belief that mythical storytelling isn't only Western. Years later, a friend told me how a tourist, inspired by this novel, visited the Libyan desert, specifically Wadi Matkhandoush.

Our films have often been confined by realism, focusing on socio-political issues. Yet, our culture is rooted in metaphor and myth. Al-Koni's work, especially post-2011, showed me that imaginative tales belong to us too.

As one of Libya's most important writers, Al-Koni's work has had limited adaptation. This project brings his cherished voice to the screen, sharing our spiritual heritage through his storytelling.

Our film redefines the desert as a character, a metaphysical space. This approach demands deep research and understanding of both visual and literary elements to capture Al-Koni's themes and evoke the connection his novels inspire.



LYNDA BELKHIRIA
Producer
MAYTHAM JBARA
Co-Produce

Producer's Note

I discovered Muhannad's work in 2019 through his short film "Prisoner and Jailer," which captivated me and sparked my interest in his future projects. We met during the post-production of his feature documentary "Donga," where I witnessed his creativity and resilience. Our discussions about "The Guardian" began in December 2023. Adapting a novel into a film is always challenging, and shooting in the Algerian desert adds complexity, but Muhannad's talent and determination convinced me to bring this project to life. As Muhannad and I delved into "The Guardian," the story felt both familiar and magical.

This film is more than a narrative; it's a profound exploration of humanity's connection to nature and spirituality, urging peace, coexistence, and respect for our environment.

We are currently in early development, engaging with Canadian co-producer Maytham Jbara, known for his work on the acclaimed "Hanging Gardens" and other remarkable films. "The Guardian" aims to be visually stunning and emotionally resonant, capturing the desert's beauty and the depths of the human spirit. With Muhannad as director, I am confident that we will create a unique film that deeply resonates with audiences worldwide.

Producer's Filmography

N'dirou Film is a newly established production company based in Algeria, dedicated to supporting innovative and impactful storytelling. The company is currently co-producing a feature film in the pre-production stage, along with two short films: "The Circle," which is in development, and "Al-Hawiya," now in post-production. N'dirou Film aims to bring fresh voices and compelling narratives to the forefront of the Algerian and international film scene.





DIRECTOR

Charlie Kouka

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Tunisian Arabic

Producers
**Cyrine Sellami, Dora Bouchoucha,
Caroline Nataf**

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$1,754,156

Confirmed Financing
\$391,128

Confirmed Financial Partners
MAD Solutions, AFAC, Hubert Bals

Contact

sellamicyrine@gmail.com
+21652511339

LEILA'S TRIAL

Tunisia, France

Log-line

In a dilapidated district of a small Tunisian town, a young girl of 13 is believed to perform miracles and divides the neighborhood: is she a witch or a saint?

Synopsis

Leila, a 13-year-old girl, lives in Cité Nour, a decrepit neighborhood in a small Tunisian town, which is about to be demolished. Her depressed father, Ali, was a librarian before his shop was destroyed by a fire. He owns a large library in their modest apartment and instills Leila with his love of books. Her mother Djamilia had to take on all family's responsibilities.

Leila is always hanging out with boys, and never questions the fact that she's the only girl in her group of friends. When her cousin Marwan kisses her, she thinks she has committed a sin and becomes obsessed with the idea of being a good Muslim.

A couple of days later, a young neighbor, Taqwa, threatens to commit suicide. Leila – suddenly inspired – recites a surah from the Koran, which dissuades Taqwa from killing herself.

Word spreads in the town that Leila performed a miracle, and she notices that people look at her differently. In a patriarchal society, where pious people are highly regarded, Leila realizes that religion can allow her to emancipate herself.

But there is a price to pay: as her influence grows in Cité Nour, people project their hopes and fears onto her: she is either championed or rejected. Is she a witch or a saint? Can this strange girl really save the neighborhood?

Director's Biography

Born in Tunisia, Charlie Kouka graduated in optics. Her desire for cinema made her change her life and get a Master's in Filmmaking. She came to France when she was admitted to the prestigious film school, "La Fémis", where she graduated in Directing. During her studies, she directed several short movies, her last one, Rajâa (The Return), was bought by ARTE French-German broadcaster.



CHARLIE KOUKA
Director

Director's Statement

The story behind Leila's Trial brings me back to my hometown. I grew up in Sidi Bouzid, a small town in the center of Tunisia which, like many Tunisian cities, has been neglected by state authorities for years. As a result, marginalization has become the norm, and religious faith plays an important role in people's lives. This is the environment in which Leila evolves.

Through Leila's Trial, I try to reflect on how we are defined by what others project on us. Indeed, each of the characters – depending on their worldview, beliefs, and above all, whatever is most convenient for them – will project an image or label onto her. As the film progresses, the judgments heaped on Leila grow more intense, culminating in a trial that takes place in a TV studio. This approach reflects the reality of contemporary Tunisian society, as social media and talk- shows became the platforms where public judgments are made.

In the form of a coming-of-age film, from childhood to adolescence, Leila's Trial is above all an opportunity for me to show the role played by religion, which structures people's daily lives in Arab-Muslim countries. I truly want to delve into this intimate feeling of religious faith from the point of view of a girl.



**CYRINE SELLAMI, DORA BOUCHOUCHA,
CAROLINE NATAF**
Producers

Producer's Note

When I started working at Nomadis Images, LEILA'S TRIAL was already in the pipelines. I read the script and was struck by the modernity of Leila's character. Her self-confidence, her ability to challenge the established rules, and her ambition to do good to those around her are such compelling features for a young girl. I could recognize her in some women among my family and friends. During our many discussions with Charlie about the project, I was able to see how deeply she knows Leila and feels for her, as well as all the other characters.

She also tackles an issue that has been on my mind since I was a teenager, which is the place of women in the religious sphere. How come that in my country there are trusted female doctors, professors, lawyers, judges, engineers, etc., but when it comes to religion, they are excluded? Is it God who wanted us women to always remain secondary to men, or is it the interpretation of the Koran by men throughout the centuries that put us in this position?

Charlie's take on the many sensitive questions raised by the script is informed and nuanced. To her, there are no easy answers. Leila is neither a saint nor a witch. She is merely a teenager trying to find meaning in what she is experiencing and to carve a place for herself among her community. That is why I believe this story will speak to many viewers beyond our borders.

Producer's Filmography

Nomadis Images is a Tunisian production company founded by Dora Bouchoucha in 1995, and joined by Lina Chaabane in 1997. Since then, Nomadis has produced several short and feature fiction and documentary films which were selected and awarded in prestigious festivals around the world.

Several Tunisian and foreign renowned filmmakers were produced by Nomadis Images, among whom Raja Amari, Abderrahmane Sissako, Mohamed Ben Attia, Arij Sehiri, Dhafer L'Abidine, Karim Moussaoui etc.

Filmography:

- Aisha can't fly away (in post-production)
- The Vanishing (2024)
- Behind the Mountains (2022)
- Ghodwa (2021)
- My Mohamed is different (2021)
- Soad (2020)
- Weldi (2018)
- Hedi (2016)
- Satin Rouge (2002)





DIRECTOR
Jad Chahine

Color

Length
110 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer
Yousry Nasrallah

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$1,384,111

Confirmed Financing
\$553,644

Confirmed Financial Partners
Red Star Production Company (40%)

Contact

info@redstarfilms.net
jadchahine@gmail.com
rodrigo@akissinthedesert.com

THE MASTERS OF MAGIC AND BEAUTY

Egypt

Log-line

Following the magical circumstances surrounding the birth of a little girl, a couple seeks counsel from the Oracle, only to find out that a past mistake has cursed the family's bloodline, forcing them to fight for survival.

Synopsis

In a realm steeped in myths and legends, amidst desert villages, Nabaweya and her husband Hemdan seek the counsel of mystical Masters to bless their unborn child. After a tragic miscarriage, one Master, Badeea, appears to Nabaweya. She entrusts her with a yellow herb resembling the narcissus flower, instructing her to prepare it within a four-legged creature's meal, warning her to ensure Hemdan does not partake. Despite hesitations, Nabaweya prepares a rabbit infused with the magical herb. Tragically, Hemdan consumes it, resulting in an inexplicable pregnancy. In a panic, Hemdan plans to abandon the baby, but a daughter is born. Facing societal scorn and fearing a cursed fate, Nabaweya contemplates abandoning the child. However, Badeea presents her with a choice: forsake the child and suffer infertility or embrace her and seek refuge in a distant village, where a son named Gabbal awaits. As Narguis blossoms into a captivating woman, she catches the eye of the village ruler. Hemdan's jealousy ignites when he discovers her illicit affair, leading him to consult an oracle. The oracle's prophecy foretells doom for Hemdan and his lineage due to his consumption of the enchanted rabbit. To offset the oracle's prophecy, Nabaweya incites Hamdan to get rid of Narguis. But she escapes and, with Badeea's aid, ascends to become a revered Master of magic. As tragedy befalls Hemdan, the oracle's words haunt Nabaweya, Gabbal, his wife Khadra, and their twin children Sawsan and Allam.

Director's Biography

Jad Chahine, an Egyptian filmmaker, was born in Cairo. Following his graduation from media school, he attended Egypt's Higher Institute of Cinema to study filmmaking. He worked in several independent films and worked as an assistant director and casting director for Egyptian filmmaker Yousry Nasrallah before making his short film, 'AL TORAA' (THE CALL OF THE BROOK), which was the first Egyptian film to be selected for the LA CINEF competition since 2014.



JAD CHAHINE
Director

Director's Statement

I grew up in a large family home. The center of our household was my father, followed by my mother, who constantly cautioned us about the dangers of the outside world. She emphasized the safety and security of our home, urging us to adhere to the values, beliefs, and traditions instilled in us since childhood. I was very young when I decided to break free from my parents' authority and live with my grandmother, severing all ties with them.

My grandmother used to tell me folktales of individuals possessing magical abilities, stories of mythical creatures prowling the night to frighten men away from carnal desires, and monsters that targeted rebellious children. Ironically, I found those stories to be a source of liberation for both myself and my imagination.

Years later, I returned home to discover the profound impact my grandmother's stories had on my parents. It became clear to me that my parents' paralyzing fear of the outside world was inadvertently passed down to their children.

In my debut feature-length film, "The Masters of Magic and Beauty," I endeavor to explore themes of reconciliation with family by delving into beliefs and fears. Through tracing the lives of a family across three generations, I aim to depict their struggles to break free from unhappiness, past mistakes, and the constraints of a prophecy. I am eager to immerse myself in the enchanting world of my grandmother's myths, drawing inspiration from its magical allure to herald the emergence of a new narrative.



YOUSRY NASRALLAH
Producer

Producer's Note

Jad Chahine served as the casting director for two of my recent projects. When he presented his film-school project "The Call of the Brook", which received a nomination for the Cinefondation Award at the 76th Cannes Film Festival, I was convinced that it was part of a larger, ambitious dream. This exceptionally talented young filmmaker possesses a unique and refreshing approach to cinema. Egypt boasts a wealth of folk tales and myths that have captivated generations. Surprisingly, Egyptian cinema has yet to fully explore this rich source material. Delving into this ancient yet largely untapped territory is both audacious and obvious. It revitalizes Egyptian cinema by incorporating its foundational myths and stories, which are sorely needed. When Jad shared the manuscript for "Masters of Magic and Beauty" with me, I felt compelled to be part of the project and assist with its production.



Producer's Filmography

Established in 2014, Red Star Films stands as a non-conforming entity that constantly pushes the foundation of the market. With a deep commitment to amplify the voices of the global south. Empowering stories to bring forth narratives that challenge, inspire, and captivate audiences beyond borders.

A portfolio of more than 18 films reaping various awards from prestigious regional and international film festivals such as Cannes, Cairo, and Rotterdam, reflects our dedication to contributing to the global cinematic landscape through transcending geographical and cultural boundaries while focusing on exploring the intersection of our common humanity.



DIRECTOR
Ayman El Amir

Color

Length
100 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer
Nada Riyadh

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$851,875

Confirmed Financing
\$50,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
Felucca Films

Contact

nadariyadh107@gmail.com
+201143589962

A PAIR OF SHOES IN THE DARK CORNER OF THE MOON

Egypt

Log-line

A Coptic man, estranged in his remote village, dreams of becoming a famous actor. He wins a chance to participate in a reality show to be the first astronaut in Egyptian history. His ambitions lead him to an unexpected fate.

Synopsis

George, a quirky 22-year-old Coptic man, who lives in a remote village in the south of Egypt, feels alienated and cannot find a place for himself in his society. With a dream of being an actor, he goes on many auditions, but he is only asked to pose as a fake groom in a charity group wedding event to save the night for the organizers, then he finds himself tricked into playing an extra in cheap local films. However, when George all of a sudden wins, by chance, a spot in an international reality show for potential astronauts with a prize to travel to the moon, his life is turned upside down. He becomes a national hero, the first astronaut in the history of Egypt. All talk shows speak about him, and all the officials honor him. In the village, he gains the respect he was hoping for from everyone. He goes to the show with pride, and he starts the astronauts' evaluation tests, under the spotlight of the cameras.

When the show turns out to be a scam, the same media that was honoring him some weeks ago is now accusing him of fraud. He returns to his village defeated. His community abandons him. He cannot even get his small acting roles, as before. He has to take a tough route to regain his dignity and to find a home for himself.

Director's Biography

Ayman El Amir is an Egyptian director, producer, and script consultant. His recent work includes directing and producing, with Nada Riyadh, the feature documentary, *The Brink of Dreams*, premiered in Cannes' Semaine de la Critique and won L'Oeil D'or Prize For best documentary at the Festival de Cannes 2024. He directed, also with Nada Riyadh, the feature documentary, *Happily Ever After*, premiered at IDFA 2016. He produced the short fiction, *The Trap*, selected for La Semaine de la Critique at the Festival de Cannes 2019. El Amir has worked as a script consultant, a mentor, and a jury member for many programs, labs, funds, and institutes including Torino Film Lab, Cannes' La Fabrique, Cannes' Short Film Corner, Doha Film Institute, Idfa Bertha Fund, Marrakech Atlas Atelier, Full Circle Lab, Hot Docs Documentary Fund, and DW Academy.



AYMAN EL AMIR
Director

Director's Statement

The film questions the meaning of home and it satirizes our obsession with fame-at-all-costs. It is a film about a man who escapes from his reality, to be crushed by his dreams and he cannot go back to reality again. It is a story about the rise and the fall of a man in the context of the patriarchal Societies, and within regimes that prioritize chauvinistic values over individual wellbeing. The story also tackles the rise and fall of trends of social media and its effect on the psyche of individuals who find themselves in the middle of its predicament. Finally, it is about a man who cannot find a home for himself or for his soul, neither in his village nor up in the sky.

The village's scenes will be shot in the real location of Barsha village, with casting of non-professional actors from there. Barsha village is a village with a Coptic minority, that is located in the south of Egypt. We have full access to the village and its people since we were shooting the feature (The Brink of Dreams), the winner of 2024 Cannes L'oeil d'or, there for the last five years.



NADA RIYAD
Producer

Producer's Note

I've been working closely with Ayman El Amir for more than ten years. Together we produced and directed "The brink of dreams" a feature documentary film set in Barsha village in the South of Egypt, following a rebellious group of young women who formed an all-female street theatre troupe and disrupted their community with their bigger than life dreams of becoming actresses, singers and ballerinas. The film premiered in the official competition of Semaine de la critique, Cannes, and won the goldeneye prize for best documentary in Cannes Film Festival.

All through the four years of filming "The brink of dreams", I noticed how Ayman was increasingly curious about the boys of Barsha village and their condition. That's why I was very excited to discover the first draft of "A Pair of Shoes in the Dark Corner of the Moon". I believe Ayman knows the world of Barsha village very well and connects with the plight of the young men in the village. I also believe his experience filming with non-actors in Barsha village will help him create incredibly fresh and powerful performances for this feature film. I believe the film's dark humorous tone and Ayman's unique perspective and cinematic aesthetic will create a film that both the local and international audience will connect to.



Producer's Filmography

Felucca Films is a Cairo-based production company. Felucca aims to help filmmakers explore and shape their personal voices and to produce unique and original fiction and documentary films, with a special focus on fresh and new talents and contemporary social issues. Felucca's latest productions include (THE BRINK OF DREAMS), winner of L'Oeil D'or Prize for Best Documentary at the Festival de Cannes 2024, (THE TRAP), Cannes' Semaine de la Critique 2019 and (HAPPILY EVER AFTER), IDFA 2016. Felucca Films also has an array of capacity building programs and script consultation services.



DIRECTOR
Leila Basma

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer
Natália Pavlove

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$990,000 USD

Confirmed Financing
\$41,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
**Czech Film Fund Scriptwriting, Doha
Film Institute Development, Malmö
Industry Days Development Award,
Munich Pop Up Development Award,
Own Investment**

Contact

natalia@otherstoriesfilms.com
+420737776585

RUNNING WITH BEASTS

Czech Republic, Lebanon

Log-line

Amid Lebanon's economic collapse, five friends come up with a risky secret plan to chase their dreams, confronting the unexpected costs of growing up.

Synopsis

Amid the Lebanese economic crisis, a group of five high schoolers meets one last time after their graduation day to finalize their secret plan which guarantees to afford their approaching dreams. Lana, Mira, Omar, James, and Nader each have to face the sudden pressure of stepping into adulthood in a country dwelling in tragedies. Beyond struggling with their personal lives, their sexualities, and their relationships, they are also going through inexplicable changes. Their bodies are transforming, their appetite, their tastes, their cravings. Their classmate, Rami, has everything they wish for; the plan is dangerous, and fun, but adulthood and responsibilities are around the corner. None of them has imagined the consequences of their actions, a big tragedy awaits along a big techno party.

Director's Biography

Leila is a Lebanese filmmaker and photographer currently based between Beirut and Prague. She holds a BA in Audiovisual Arts from IESAV in Beirut, and an MFA in Film Directing at FAMU. Through her work, she explores the themes of society, youth, womanhood, and identity. Her second-year FAMU short documentary The Adam Basma Project was short-listed for the 48th annual Student Academy Awards (the Student Oscars) after touring various international documentary film festivals. Her film Sea Salt was selected to premiere at the 80th La Biennale Venice International Film Festival in the official Orizzonti Short Film Competition. Leila is currently developing also her feature documentary Dance with Me, winner of the Robert Bosch Stiftung development award.



LEILA BASMA
Director

Director's Statement

Running with Beasts is a film about today's Beirut taken by the tragic economic crisis. It is a portrait of its tired youth, forced to become the darkest and ugliest versions of themselves to be able to survive, yet showcasing how at the core, these young people just want to have fun, explore their sexualities, and accomplish their most basic dreams. This film follows a group of friends who are driven to become thieves as a means of survival. This harsh reality is what coming-of-age looks like in Lebanon today—adulthood often means stepping into a life of crime.

With the sudden change in social class, the streets of Beirut also got invaded by stray dogs, just like these youngsters, left with only a few options to survive. In the film, this symbolism of becoming stray dogs is translated with Magical Realism elements that start with realistic changes in their bodies. Some experience sudden meat cravings, some have jaw pains, hair growth, a need to bite, and stressful shouting/barking. This is what puts this story on the verge of a genre story. I hope that this genre-bending coming-of-age film connects with anyone who has faced seemingly impossible dreams.



NATÁLIA PAVLOVE
Producer

Producer's Note

I've previously worked with Leila on a short film called "Sea Salt," which is a coming-of-age story from Lebanon, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival in the Orizzonti competition in 2023. Leila has a unique way of capturing the feelings of young people and understands Lebanon's complex society. She has a sensitivity to the human condition, and the ability to transform a local story into a universal journey of self-discovery and transformation.

Running with Beasts paints a vivid and haunting picture of the Lebanese youth's experiences, struggling with a tragic economic crisis and personal dilemmas. While rooted in the specific context of Lebanon, it speaks to shared human experiences of survival, dreams, and the abrupt awakening to adult responsibilities. This project aligns perfectly with my belief that cinema is a bridge connecting different cultures, fostering empathy, and challenging our perceptions. Furthermore, its experimentation with the genre will make stand out in the international market and attract bigger audiences.

It is a bold debut film that engages with the genre, introducing new female Arab talent to the forefront and I am happy to be part of it.



Producer's Filmography

Other Stories is an emerging production company based in Prague, founded in 2021 by producer Natália Pavlove. Our focus is on ambitious projects, particularly those by debut and female filmmakers. With a focus on contemporary social and personal themes, Other Stories aims to create globally resonant content that speaks to today's audience. Our focus lies in identifying projects with the potential for co-production and significant international appeal. We are currently working with a variety of partners in Europe, however we place a special emphasis on international co-productions with partners in the Middle East and Africa. With our projects, we regularly get selected at festivals and industry pitches, markets & training programs – such as Berlinale Co-Production Market, EURODOC, East Doc Platform Prague, Atlas Workshops at Marrakech IFF, or European Short Pitch. The last production of Other Stories is a short film Sea Salt in Czech-Lebanese-Qatari co-production which premiered at the Venice Biennale IFF 2023 at the Official Orizzonti Competition.



DIRECTOR

Mohamed Zedan

Color and B&W

Length
85 min

Languages
Arabic, Italian

Producer
Mark Lotfy

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$350,000

Confirmed Financing
\$30,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
N/A

Contact

mark@figleafstudios.com
+ 201221172554
zedan.rufys@gmail.com
+201119507575

THE COW THIEF

Egypt

Log-line

An investigative documentary uncovers the secrets behind the disappearance of 'The Cow Thief' script and the mysterious death of its director, Kamal Selim, fetching a stolen script that became 'Bicycle Thieves'.

Synopsis

A documentary investigative film addressing the issue of the disappearance of the screenplay for the film 'The Cow Thief,' which was banned from filming in the early 1940s, and the subsequent mysterious death of its writer and director, Kamal Selim. The screenplay vanished after suspicions arose that its idea was stolen by producers in Italy for the production of the famous film 'Bicycle Thieves.' The film explores, in an exciting journey, pivotal events in the history of cinema between Egypt, Italy, and Britain, including the murder of director Niazi Mustafa. It transitions between the past, present, and future, blending action, tragedy, and satire.

Director's Biography

Zedan is an independent filmmaker and co-manager of Rufy's Films Company in Alexandria. He pursued his studies in filmmaking at the Jesuit Cultural Center. His passion for the history of cinema led him to give different lectures and workshops on the subject. He co-directed his first feature film; "The Mice Room," which was screened in the official competition at Dubai Film Festival and Sao Paulo Film Festival in 2014 and other festivals worldwide. Zedan's feature documentary "I Have A Picture" was selected by "Final Cut" at the Venice Film Festival in 2014. The film had its premiere at the Gouna Film Festival in 2017 and won Golden Star for Best Arab Documentary Film; It also won Best Documentary Film at the Tripoli Film Festival, the Egyptian National Film Festival, and Best Feature Film from Sharjah Film Platform.



MOHAMED ZEDAN
Director

Director's Statement

I am interested in the history of cinema, and I always see it as a flexible material for playing with ideas, which is my ongoing project. After making my previous film "I Have a Picture," I discovered intriguing information about the theft of an old Egyptian film titled "The Cow Thief." One of the characters in the film mentioned this information, but I took it lightly, only to find out that it was true, which opened up a larger space for playing with stories, documents, and facts.

Conspiracy theories are appealing because they provide a simple meaning to a chaotic and highly complex world. Conspiracy theorists are often seen as heroic figures exposing corruption, saving humanity, and unraveling the mysteries of art, politics, and war on one hand, and the reality of cinema in Egypt on the other. This is why I decided to make this film, which challenges viewers to adopt a critical perspective on what they see on the big screen.

And how this oppression is exercised in its most dangerous forms, which is the literal and implicit killing of the artist and their creative freedom, potentially leading to actual murder and violence to maintain power and control from their perspective.

In search of the meaning of authenticity, my choice to use the Italian Neorealism wave as a model to express its dimensions during the occupation until now, and how the Neorealism wave is represented, as Sartre said, "It is merely a compromise between critical realism and censorship."



MARK LOTFY
Producer

Producer's Note

When Zedan told me the movie's story, I felt connected to it. I loved Kamal Selim from the very first moment.

Kamal is a role model of the true artist. Who invented, rebelled, and clashed with the authority and censorship powers, but the dictatorship could defeat his talent with its brutal oppression.

Here we are again today in 2024, facing the same scenarios.

Our imagination and all its possibilities are stolen from us or castrated. That's why it became a must to produce such a movie.

I was fascinated by this post's real satirical movie fabric, the journey of a spiral maze with its smart hybridity which Zedan consciously drew because he knew that it is impossible to understand the political and economic reality of our Arab society without going behind the scenes of the cinema industry and politics hand in hand.

Where populist propaganda reaches its maximum and is woven by the hands of politicians and governments, and these national cinematic myths are nothing but instruments to achieve greater influence in favor of the decision-makers themselves

We are still in the development stages, but from now on, I can see the potential inherent in this unique different project that wonderfully emphasizes an Arab crisis with a story of a universal and attractive nature, reality carries its charm, surrealism, madness, that is, it is painful and funny. Disturbing and entertaining at the same time.

Producer's Filmography

Figleaf Studios, founded in 2005 in Alexandria, Egypt, focuses on the independent scene of emerging young filmmakers in the city, quickly rising as one of the most prominent independent production companies in the region,

- Produced Drama 1882 - selected in TIFF & IDFA film festivals 2024,
- Coproduced Amplified - received a special mention at Berlinale 2024.
- Co-produced Mother of Lies- selected in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival 2023 and won the L'Oeil d'Or and Best Director Prize.
- Produced I Am Afraid to Forget Your Face - won the Palme d'Or at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival.

Rufy's Films, founded in 2010, is an independent production house based in Alexandria, Egypt. By producing the city's first narrative feature 'The Mice Room' in 2013, Rufy's Films has established itself as a pioneer in the field. The company has produced since then several other features and shorts, which have been represented in many reputable Film Festivals around the world, collecting a fair amount of awards, our movies The Tedious Tour of M (2023) - Lift Like A Girl (2020), I Have a Picture (2017), The Mice Room (2013).





DIRECTOR
Hend Bakr

Color

Length
80 min

Languages
Arabic, Nubian

Producers
Hend Bakr, Tamer Nady

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$229,969

Confirmed Financing
\$30,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
Doha Film Institute, IMS, IEFTA

Contact

bentelnih@gmail.com
+201100168957
tamernady@gmail.com
+201227908272

DWELLERS OF THE CABINS

Egypt, Qatar

Log-line

My people and I used to live together in the center of the city, but we were completely separated from it as if we were from a distant isolated village.

Synopsis

In the early 1920s, Nubian villages were submerged by the Aswan reservoir, displacing Nubian families to Alexandria to serve King Fuad. The King ordered wooden Cabins to be built on the outskirts of his place as a dwelling for them. At the Cabins, they founded a close-knit community, preserving the culture, language, and purity of their race. The Cabins then transformed into a Nubian village nestled within the City. The film's protagonist and director, Hend, struggles with the government's decision to demolish their Cabins for an investment project. Torn between her conservative Nubian aunt and her father, the rebellious musician who defied his Nubian community, Hend seeks to document their heritage and resolve her identity questions.

Director's Biography

Hend Bakr is a director and producer, with Nubian origins. Who graduated from the Faculty of Islamic and Arabic Studies. She studied filmmaking at the Jesuit Cinema School in Alexandria. She wrote, directed, and produced her first feature film "The Mice Room" 2013 in collaboration with five other directors, and was officially selected for international film festivals in Dubai, São Paulo...She co-founded "Rufy's Films" and later founded "Dessi Films" A film production company. Hend directed and produced her first feature documentary "The Tedious Tour of M" in 2023, which was officially selected in international film festivals in Aswan Women's, Amman, Toronto Arab Film, and Gabes Cinema Fen where Awarded a special mention from the jury and Won a Special Mention for Humanity and Continuity from OZA Festival in Moscow 2024.



HEND BAKR
Director

Director's Statement

I am the director and the main protagonist. The film documents the narrative of the "cabins", the place where I was born and raised. I am telling my own story and the struggle of my own family between preserving their culture and being included. The world of the cabins was closed in on itself like any group protecting itself, and that created a different meaning for everything around me. The sun of the city is different from the sun of the cabins as if I am in a parallel world. Here I needed to understand my confused feelings towards the world. When I stood before an experience of love with a boy who did not belong to my people, I could not understand myself. Are these feelings real? As if my genes were resisting this. Now that the cabins are threatened with demolition, it was necessary to return to the history of that community to understand the nature of its existence and its attempts to protect itself in order to understand myself and document it, through family members.



HEND BAKR, TAMER NADY
Producers

Producer's Note

The film documents the narrative of the "cabins" and The main challenge is related to the location itself, the Cabins, which are under the threat of being completely demolished at any moment. Some parts have already been torn down, so time is a crucial factor. This means that filming at the Cabins needs to be done as soon as possible. When the Cabins is destroyed, the history of the Nubian community that lived at the Cabins for almost a century will be obliterated

Producer's Filmography

- Dessi Films is an independent film production company, based in Alexandria, Dessi produces a range of diverse film genres in various production stages.
- Cellar Door provides production and post-production services tailored for every format as it actively seeks to develop and produce genuine narratives with the aim to explore the boundaries of film as a medium and language.





DIRECTOR

Issraa Elkogali Häggström

Color and B&W

Length
80 min

Languages
Arabic, English, Swedish

Producer
Lars Lovén

Information

Feature Hybrid

Total Budget
\$333,971

Confirmed Financing
\$44,737

Confirmed Financial Partners
Swedish Arts Council, Malmö Arab Film Festival, Film I Skåne, Kinana Film

Contact

Issy.haggstrom@gmail.com
www.riverflower.se
+46723099107

ELSEWHERE

Sweden

Log-line

In this vibrant story of coming into one's own through remembrance, at a time of war and loss, a mother creates a moving family tree with roots reaching from the River Nile to the peaks of the Swedish Alps.

Synopsis

Tamra Bouna, mother to Elias and Nora, is an immigrant and a storyteller. As she is packing for a trip to Sudan to research a film shortly after the death of her father, news breaks of armed conflict in her old hometown. Reports say the airport is closed and that heavy artillery is being used in the city. Tamra's mother and siblings are under siege in their family home in the old quarter of the city center. The trip is canceled.

As Tamra and her husband Axel, navigate the Eid holiday, in diaspora, monitoring the horrific war, they are confronted with mounting fear for their loved ones. The mixed heritage Swedish family fight feelings of helplessness and maintain a strong desire to hold on to the Sudan they know and love.

Tamra is interviewed by the news about the war. This brings the documentary elements, real archives from news into the film. Word of the family home being bombed reaches Tamra. There is no way to contact the family in Khartoum. The shock and fear of the situation cause Tamra to lose her voice.

Axel first and then Elias take turns weaving stories to keep the family from falling apart, with Tamra struggling to make sense of her grief in silence. Until one afternoon while excavating through souvenirs and family archives Axel and Tamra find a box of old music cassette tapes. This music is the key to unlocking the doors of hope and recovery for Tamra Bouna and family.

Director's Biography

Issraa is a Sudanese-Swedish filmmaker, writer, and producer. She co-produced the feature film GOODBYE JULIA, winner of the Freedom prize in the Un Certain Regard category at Cannes 2023. Issraa is an alumna of the National Theatre of Sweden's writer's residency and a former talent development candidate at Story Ltd. Executive producer and screenwriter of the award-winning short fiction film A HANDFUL OF DATES (2020), her debut documentary short, IN SEARCH OF HIP HOP (Official selection IFFR and DIFF 2013) was shown in festivals in 15 countries and purchased by BBC Arabic. Her art installation work Nora's Cloth received the Ibsen Scholarship in 2011 and toured Norway, Sweden, and the UK until 2014. Nora's Cloth featured performance, animated video, interviews, and still photography.



ISSRAA ELKOGALI HÄGGSTRÖM
Director

Director's Statement

Elsewhere will combine animation, with found and archival material. Original animations in 2-D and stop motion, layer over the story's locations. The common thread for the animators and me is migration and multiple cultures. Elsewhere also explores themes of loss, grief, family, and love.

My parents and I moved back and forth across the Atlantic to Washington D.C., north to Cairo, and back again for much of my life before I started my own family in Sweden. The inherited identities I was given, Granddaughter of the Mahdi of Sudan, bint al nil, El-tayeb, and Habab's youngest daughter, I carry with grace still today. As an immigrant mother, I am anxious about how to keep my culture alive for my children.

What can I give my children beyond the gift of faith and the Arabic Language? I can share music and memories. Particularly the music of the Khartoum Sound genre. It is a unique Sudanese musical genre that gained popularity as a pan-African export from the '70s -'90s. This jazzy, orchestral music, built on the pentatonic scale, with funky violin melodies, synths, and Ethio-jazz-inspired bass guitar riffs, holds profound personal significance for many in the Sahel region and East Africa.

The project is inspired by my assimilation in Sweden, my father's death in Cairo, and my mother and siblings being trapped in the war in Sudan. The story is a universal one, despite its personal nature. Including my children and husband in the story has given my hope for peace a place to grow.



LARS LOVÉN
Producer

Producer's Note

Combining animation styles, music, and history to enchant, ELSEWHERE is a unique family story animated with vibrant colours and songs to create a moving family tree with roots reaching from the banks of the River Nile to the peaks of the Swedish Alps.

When Issraa presented this film idea to me, I was immediately taken by the idea of approaching the topic of migration through music, animations, and a strong personal story. The story itself has universal relevance, but at the same time, it explores a very specific and little-known world, that of the Sudanese diaspora, which the music will help us access.

The way Issraa will be able to portray Sudan and the emigrant experience is bound to surprise an international audience, used to only hear about the country in connection to civil war or famine. Her view of the country is in no way uncritical but is obviously far more nuanced than what you get from the news reporting.

Then reality struck. If Issraa in the film is trying to piece together a lost place and time, it might now be lost to the world for real, as Sudan tragically has been thrown into war between two armed groups which threatens the very memories that Issraa builds her story around. Those current events are worked into the narrative, through the impact they have on the storyteller, Tamra Bouna, and her family.

The tragic war affects the people of Sudan as well as their heritage, making this Elsewhere film even more relevant now.

Producer's Filmography

Riverflower is an independent production company founded by Sudanese-Swedish filmmaker Issraa Elkogali Håggström in Stockholm, Sweden in 2021. The company co-produced Goodbye Julia (Cannes 2023 Un Certain Regard- Freedom Prize) and other highly acclaimed cultural projects.





DIRECTOR
Rama Abdy

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer
Hazar Yazji

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$1,616,38

Confirmed Financing
\$34,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
Doha Film Institute, AFAC, The Cultural Resource, IMS

Contact

hazaryazji.2000@gmail.com
+963938869466

HOUSE NO. 7

Syria, Qatar

Log-line

After escaping their abusive family homes, and their conservative societies, three women rent rooms in an old Damascene house. They manage to create a safe space isolated from the madness of the post-war era, but soon the girls start facing many threats, thus protecting their fragile space becomes a challenge.

Synopsis

After leaving their homes, trying to escape their abusive families, and in pursuit of basic human freedoms, three girls, (Rama, 27), (Marah, 27), and (Lilian, 25), meet and rent rooms in an old Damascene house owned by (Um Mousa, 72), in one of the more liberal parts of Syria. (Bab Touma) neighborhood.

The house -isolated from reality- witnesses the diary of the girls' lives and their journey of self-discovery. A close relationship forms between them, darkness and power outages make for the ritual of staying up by candlelight and exchanging conversations about sensitive subjects none of them dares bring up beyond the walls of house No.7, finding solace and companionship within the walls of the house as the world outside rages with conflict and chaos.

But their peace begins to be increasingly disrupted due to events that occur outside their home, collective emigration of their peers, and the pressure of their families, in addition to struggling to secure the most basic needs. Deterioration is evident in the state of the house; it reaches climax after a devastating earthquake takes place in Syria followed by repetitive bombings, which creates yet another decline.

Exhausted and unable to bear new blows, the girls begin seriously planning another escape outside the country, Lilan and Marah manage to leave, but Rama, torn between her desire for freedom and her attachment to her home, remains uncertain about what the future holds.

Director's Biography

Rama Abdi, born in 1995, is a DOP and an independent director from Damascus Syria, she is a student at the Higher Institute of Cinema in Syria, and a graduate of the Department of Business Administration, she began her filmmaking journey in 2018. Her first short documentary, "Fish Dance" was produced in 2022 and premiered at the 7th 7ème Lune Festival in Paris. She is also currently working on her first feature-length documentary, "House Number 7"



RAMA ABDY
Director

Director's Statement

I spent my childhood moving between several houses, and in each house, I lived in, my father turned its rooms into a scrap warehouse, leaving us stacked against each other in a small room with almost no space to sleep. My mother rejected my father's violent character, but she was unable to leave, for fear of facing society as a divorced woman and her inability to support her children financially. As for me, I spent my upbringing waiting for some miracle to change reality.

The war came, and in 2018 I had the first opportunity to escape what I was living in, only to find myself in a more bitter reality, stuck in the city of Idlib, waiting to cross the border into Turkey. After failing to cross, I returned to Damascus insisting on independence from my father.

Independence was in the form of a room in a shared Damascene house, where I built the first relationship of belonging to the city, and a friendship was formed between me and the girls who lived in the house.

Later, I discovered that the feeling of stability that this house created was nothing but an illusion, all the girls rejected their reality with its social, economic, and political difficulties, waiting for the opportunity to leave or for some miracle to occur for change.

I refused to wait, I took my camera and began monitoring daily life at home, documenting our concerns and similar experiences during our constant struggle in this country.



HAZAR YAZJI
Producer

Producer's Note

I have known Rama for a long time. Our mutual trust and shared values are key in producing a film as personal as this one. Our partnership has fostered an environment of open communication on set, making this film a family project which has resulted in unexpected moments of brilliance and intimacy. The team and characters of the film "House No. 7" are all women, depicting real women's experiences and telling unfiltered, unaltered women's stories and perspectives.

Rama possesses an unparalleled understanding of the world she depicts and a deep connection to her characters. She navigates this complex and sensitive subject matter with care and authenticity. Rama's unique perspective brings a level of nuance and intimacy to the narrative rarely seen in mainstream cinema.

What impresses me most about this production is the delicate balance Rama has struck between the heavy subject matter and the light, entertaining approach. This coupled with the engaging narrative style, and the beautiful cinematography, makes me confident in the film's ability to captivate audiences and spark meaningful conversations.

As a producer, I see this project as both reasonable and ambitious. The team's deep understanding of the world they are portraying, and the stage of development all point to a viable and compelling production. At the same time, the film's potential to reach a global audience and shed light on an important, often overlooked struggle makes it a truly ambitious and impactful endeavor.



DIRECTORS

Mayar Hamdan, Shaima Al Tamimi

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer
Shaima Al Tamimi

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$750,000

Funding received
\$243,000

Confirmed Funders
Doha Film Institute, AFAC, Firelight Media, Watermelon Pictures

Contact

iamshaima84@gmail.com
+974 55106131

THE MYTH OF MAHMOUD

Qatar, Palestine

Log-line

Mayar captures the lives of her Palestinian family who made Doha their home 60 years ago. Led by her mother Amal, who is approaching retirement, they once again grapple with the dilemma of moving or fighting to remain.

Synopsis

Mayar (23) picks up the camera to capture the intricate lives of her Palestinian maternal family, who have resided in Doha for over six decades. Against the backdrop of never-ending conflicts in their hometown, Gaza, the family's Doha home reflects their turmoil, with the focal point being Mayar's mother, Amal (61), whose grief is concealed beneath a veil of sarcasm. Amal navigates an enduring sense of displacement exacerbated by the loss of her father and residency sponsor, Mahmoud. The end of her residency in Doha, marked by the arrival of the "retirement & end of service" letter (given to those who turn 65) is fast approaching – a reality made more pressing amidst the global political turmoil in the family's homeland. Alone, she faces the responsibility of deciding where to go and how to care for her elderly mother, Teta, and her emotionally unstable sister, Wafaa. The film playfully documents the physical clutter of their home, a manifestation of the psychological state of trauma for the family members who have never been able to truly call Doha (or anywhere) their home. From hoarded items to unhealthy amounts of expired medications, fake flowers, multiple clocks, ashtrays and towers of boxes decaying away. As the narrative unfolds, Mayar returns to lend a helping hand in the arduous task of packing up. But, in the face of the current political climate, a haunting question persists: in a world seemingly devoid of refuge, where will this displaced family find a haven?

Director's Biography

Mayar Hamdan, a Palestinian multi-platform writer, director, and producer who explores MENA-centered themes like migration, displacement, and generational trauma through the lens of color theory. With a background in art & technology from CalArts, film training & development via the Doha Film Institute, and game writing for multiple indie studios in Barcelona & Saudi. Her diverse portfolio includes writing, directing, and producing projects like 'Beit Byoot' (2019), available on Sundance TV, 'Don't Get Too Comfortable' (2021), and 'Ibqi: A Visual EP'.

Shaima Al-Tamimi, a Yemeni-East African visual storyteller based in Qatar, uses her lived experiences to address social issues focusing on family, healing, and sociocultural dynamics. She is a fellow of the Emerging Producer's Program by Ji-hlava Film Festival and the American Film Showcase in partnership with USC Cinema. Her short film "Don't Get Too Comfortable" premiered at Venice and was showcased at over 40 festivals worldwide.



MAYAR HAMDAN, SHAIMA AL TAMIMI
Directors

Director's Statement

The film is co-directed by Mayar Hamdan, a Palestinian multi-platform writer, director, and producer, and Shaima Al-Tamimi, a Yemeni/East African artist and filmmaker. Both filmmakers have a long-standing collaboration focused on themes of family, migration, and generational trauma. Mayar, with a background in Media Industries and Technology and an MFA in Art and Technology, excels in crafting visually compelling narratives that delve into complex themes such as displacement and feminism from a MENA-centered perspective. Her projects include acclaimed works like "Beit Byoot". Shaima, a documentary photographer, uses her lived experiences to create powerful visual narratives addressing social issues. Her award-winning short film "Don't Get Too Comfortable," which Mayar collaborated on, showcases her ability to expand storytelling beyond traditional photography. Both filmmakers grew up in the Arabian Gulf [Mayar in Qatar and Shaima in the UAE] and have faced the instability of living in diaspora due to conflicts in their homelands. Their complementary skill sets enable them to tackle generational trauma with creativity and sensitivity. For them, success means creating impactful films that foster understanding and empathy, subverting stereotypes, and overcoming personal and professional challenges. These challenges include the emotional toll of ongoing conflicts and the complexities of representation and funding.



SHAIMA AL TAMIMI
Producer

Producer's Note

I am a Yemeni-East African filmmaker who grew up in the Arab Gulf region. Mayar and I previously collaborated on my short film Don't Get Too Comfortable, which premiered at the Venice International Film Festival. Together with Mayar, I've come to realize that film (and art) are significant mechanisms for self-reflection and a beautiful way to process trauma and share the findings with a wider audience as a form of healing. We have always had a symbiotic and synergistic relationship wherein we both wear multiple hats throughout production. My previous experience adds immense value to this project in tackling topics that relate to dealing with generational trauma and displacement. While Mayar and I are similar, we are also very different. Yet we have, without fail, always pushed each other to explore different perspectives and really reach deep to create something real and beautiful.

We are currently in the late stages of production and simultaneously in the early rough-cut stage. Our financial strategy has so far involved obtaining and applying for as many grants as we can get. We are now seeking co-production opportunities from MENA and Europe and want to also commence conversations about sales and distribution within the coming months.

Producer's Filmography

Y2P Studios is a young multi-platform production house that champions female-led storytelling from the SWANA region. Our projects include the award-winning shorts "Don't Get Too Comfortable" and "Beit Byoot" and are currently in production of the upcoming feature film "The Myth of Mahmoud".





DIRECTOR

Lama Jamjoom

Color

Length
75 min

Languages

Arabic, Miscellaneous

Producers

Rami Alzayer, Maryam Sindi

Information

Documentary

Total Budget

\$194,000

Confirmed Financing

\$8,500

Confirmed Financial Partners

Private Investor

Contact

lamajamjoom2@gmail.com

+966533992188

REMIND ME TO FORGET

Saudi Arabia

Log-line

In a shelter for divorced, widowed, and elderly women in Saudi Arabia, we follow two generations: an elderly woman seeking to belong after relocation and a young woman challenging societal norms to gain her independence.

Synopsis

In a shelter for divorced, widowed and elderly women in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, an elderly displaced woman along with a 20-year-old single mother, find themselves bound by their shared past and uncertain future. The elderly woman, now relocated to a new shelter and separated from her community, faces isolation. She tries to create a new sense of community by enforcing their previously cherished traditions. Meanwhile, a young divorcee returns to the shelter, now with a newborn son. She secretly plans to escape but is constrained by her familial and financial situation, torn between her desire for independence and her loyalty to the elderly woman. Ultimately, both women are confronted with the reality that the safety, independence and belonging they seek comes with a price.

Director's Biography

Lama Jamjoom, a Saudi documentary filmmaker, grew up in a culture with a taboo on photography and no access to cinema, which fueled her passion for filmmaking to preserve the places and faces in her memories. Her short documentary 'Mother Eve' about a young woman who has to fill her mother's shoes after difficult circumstances has been featured in international film festivals. With a formal education in filmmaking, she brings a unique perspective to her work and has trained participants in a documentary filmmaking competition with Art Jameel, ARCWH, and UNESCO. Currently, she is working on her first feature documentary, which spotlights underrepresented women's stories in Saudi Arabia. Her dedication to storytelling and focus on amplifying unheard voices reflects her dedication to the Saudi documentary filmmaking landscape.



LAMA JAMJOOM
Director

Director's Statement

My parents' separation during my childhood deeply affected my upbringing and left me wondering who I might have become if they had stayed together. This personal experience drew me to stories about separation and emotional adaptation. In 2023, I began researching Al Ribat (women's shelters dedicated to widowed, divorced, and elderly women) in Jeddah as they provoked my interest because there was very limited information on them and they were often portrayed through stereotypical narratives. I discovered that life inside Al Ribat was far from the media's portrayal. With the announcement of major urban development plans for South Jeddah, the residents of Al Ribat faced a separation that reshaped their lives; this drew me to the characters and story as I found a piece of myself in their sadness for a loss that was beyond their control. I believe this story needs to be documented urgently, as these communal spaces and the connections within them are quickly disappearing and significantly impacting the marginalized communities within them.



RAMI ALZAYER
Producers

Producer's Note

I was first introduced to Lama Jamjoom when I met her on the day her debut film 'Mother Eve' was screened at an independent cinema in Jeddah. What amazed me was that this film came from a Saudi girl born in 2002. I was captivated by her methods of storytelling, which were both incredibly simple and complex at the same time. What impressed me even more was that she adopted this style in an era of fast-paced content and social media, unlike most girls her age.

I was moved by every moment in the film, and after our meeting, I realized she is a resilient and independent young woman with her camera on her shoulder, setting out to discover new stories in a realistic, documentary style without needing help from anyone. A year after our meeting, Lama sent me some scenes from her new film 'Remind Me to Forget' as she was looking for like-minded producers to help her develop it into a feature-length film. I believe she is highly dedicated to her work, possessing a unique, distinct voice that she continuously strives to refine. She views cinema as her primary and ultimate means of self-expression, and I am certain that Remind Me to Forget carries a theme and story the world will be eager to see.



Producer's Filmography

Random Films, previously known as Station 9, is an independent film production and development company based in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Founded in 2017 by director and producer Rami Al-Zayer, the company has been an innovator in Saudi cinema despite the initial scarcity of cinemas in the country. With a focus on independent films, Random Films quickly made its mark with the release of "The Day I Lost Myself" in 2022, which was featured on Netflix as part of the "New Saudi Voices" program.

Building on this success, the company produced "I Need Your Forgiveness" in 2022, which premiered at the Locarno Film Festival. In 2024, Random Films continued to impress with "Saeed ", a film selected for official competition at both the Red Sea International Film Festival and the Palm Springs International Film Festival. This film was also acquired by Netflix, with a planned release in early 2025. Known for its authentic storytelling and innovative blend of narrative and documentary styles, Random Films has established itself as a leading force in Saudi Arabia's independent film industry.

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Awarded by Cinegouna Platform in cooperation with IEFTA

- ❖ Cash award of €10,000 - Funded by IEFTF

DAE Accelerator Award

For Best Documentary Project

Awarded by DAE (Documentary Association of Europe) in cooperation with IEFTA

- ❖ A free European Film Market badge
- ❖ A travel bursary of €1500, sponsored by IEFTA
- ❖ A one-year free membership to DAE
- ❖ Consultation with DAE team at Berlinale European Film Market
- ❖ Continued follow up and networking support from IEFTA



TFL Next Award

For Best Narrative Project

Awarded by TorinoFilmLab in cooperation with IEFTA

- ❖ A secured place in the 2025 online TFL NEXT Program
- ❖ Online program participation fee of €1700 paid for by IEFTA



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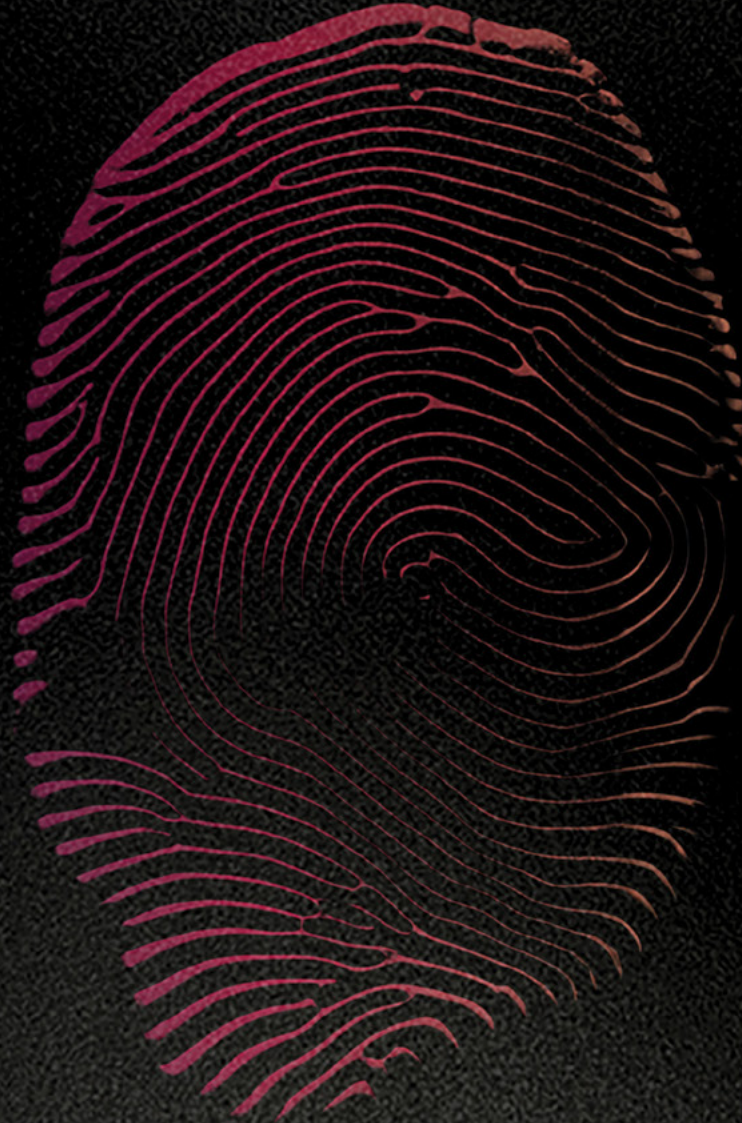
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ALGIERS

by CHAKIB TALEB-BENDIAB

MENA PREMIERE

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION



A PROMISE TO THE SEA

by HEND SOHAIL

MENA PREMIERE

NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION



UPSHOT

by MAHA HAJ

MENA PREMIERE

NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION



THE LAST MESSAGE

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FILMS IN POST-PRODUCTION



DIRECTOR
Mehdi Hmili

Color

Length
120 min

Languages
Arabic Tunisian

Producer
Moufida Fedhila, Mehdi Hmili

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$350,000

Confirmed Financing
\$280,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
**MAD World, Film Fund Luxembourg,
Doha Film Institute, CNC/CNCI Bilateral
Fund, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture
(AFAC), Fonds Image de la Francophonie
(OIF)**

Contact

yol.filmhouse@gmail.com
+21628607703

EXILE
Tunisia

Log-line

Mohamed, a steelworker marked by tragedy and rusting from within, fights against corruption, transforming into a symbol of resistance and sacrifice.

Synopsis

In an industrial world scarred by tragedy, Mohamed, a worker in the country's largest steel factory—a national enterprise on the brink of bankruptcy and about to be privatized—embarks on an unyielding quest for truth and justice. Marked by an accident that claimed the life of his friend Adel, he ends up with a piece of metal lodged in his head, which begins to rust slowly. Demoted from his position at the steel mill to that of a watchman, he confronts loss, isolation, and a conspiracy that extends far beyond the factory walls. As the rust spreads through his body, Mohamed gradually transforms into a man of rust, a physical metamorphosis that symbolizes both his decay and his resilience. His desperate search for answers leads him to face dark forces, change his identity, and risk his own life. Through internal struggles, violent confrontations, and shocking revelations, Mohamed evolves from a mere worker into a symbol of resistance. In a final act of sacrifice, he exposes the depth of corruption and becomes a martyr for the workers' cause, turning his story into a powerful echo of the fight against injustice and betrayal.

Director's Biography

Mehdi Hmili, a Tunisian director, producer, and screenwriter trained in Paris, co-founded "Yol Film House" with Moufida Fedhila in Tunis. The company has produced award-winning films screened at prestigious international festivals including Cannes, Berlinale, and Zurich Film Festival. His second feature film, "Streams," which he directed and co-produced, premiered at the 74th Locarno Film Festival and received critical acclaim, winning Best Director at the 12th Malmö Arab Film Festival, Best Actress at the 43rd Cairo International Film Festival, and the Jury Award at the 27th Kolkata International Film Festival. An alumnus of Torino Film Lab and Film Independent, he remains a key figure in Tunisian cinema, pushing creative boundaries and captivating global audiences with compelling stories.



MEHDI HMILI
Director

Director's Statement

EXILE tells the harrowing and poetic story of Mohamed, a worker in Tunisia's largest steel factory. In my ambition to create this film, I seek to redefine and elevate the social drama genre by blending it with unique visual and narrative elements drawn from genre cinema. By merging the gripping drama of an investigation with the stylistic depth of art cinema, I aim to deliver a cinematic experience that challenges expectations and enriches the genre.

The story of Mohamed, set against the oppressive, industrial backdrop of a steel mill, offers a striking canvas to explore universal themes of alienation, loss, and resistance. The interplay of light, shadow, and texture breathes life into this world, mirroring the protagonist's emotional complexity and depth of his journey.

My cinematic approach focuses on careful shot composition, innovative sound design, and an engaging soundtrack, deepening the viewer's immersion into the steel factory's world. These elements, paired with a narrative that intertwines suspense and introspection, capture the essence of social drama while advancing the genre.

This film is about how humiliation is imposed on men, how alienation is created, and how an oppressed man has the right to reclaim, by force, what was taken from him by force.



MOUFIDA FEDHILA, MEHDI HMILI
Producer

Producer's Note

The film's production was particularly challenging due to the hostile and dangerous location of the steel mill, a setting that shaped the film's identity. Originally conceived as a documentary, EXILE shifted to fiction, allowing Mehdi to fully express his cinematic vision. The narrative, rooted in post-revolution Tunisia, is both personal and universal, exploring themes of struggle, sacrifice, and resilience. The oppressive steel factory becomes a character itself, and the powerful visuals and unique soundscape create an immersive cinematic experience.

For me, as a producer, the greatest challenge was producing this complex fiction film on a documentary budget. This was an incredible cinematic and human experience for both Mehdi, my co-producer, and myself. Although we still need to find some additional funding to finish the film properly.

EXILE is a visceral journey through personal tragedy and societal collapse. Following the accident that claims Adel's life, Mohamed's embedded piece of metal rusts and gradually consumes him from the inside, serving as both a physical ailment and a metaphor for the corruption and decay around him. Mohamed's transformation into the "man of rust" symbolizes his physical deterioration and unyielding resilience. His journey from factory worker to a symbol of resistance and martyrdom speaks to the endurance of the human spirit. EXILE stands as a landmark film, resonating globally with its raw, immersive power.

Producer's Filmography

YOL FILM HOUSE is a leading Tunisian film production company that creates innovative and award-winning fiction and documentary films. The company's aim is to deliver impactful stories that inspire and engage audiences, pushing boundaries of traditional storytelling and exploring new creative forms of expression.

The company supports talented individuals from Tunisia and the Arab world by providing production and distribution opportunities, allowing them to showcase their unique perspectives and stories to a global audience. The company's films have received recognition at esteemed film festivals such as the Locarno Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Red Sea Film Festival, Berlinale, Cairo International Film Festival, Zurich FF, and Sarajevo FF, showcasing the company's dedication to elevating the voices of talented filmmakers and delivering impactful stories.





DIRECTOR

Nadim Tabet

Color

Length
100 min

Languages
Arabic

Producers
Georges Schoucair, Eli Souaiby
Co-Producers
Antoine Waked, Arnaud Dommerc

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$731,577

Confirmed Financing
\$573,483

Confirmed Financial Partners
**Film Clinic MENA Distribution,
Cairo Film Connection Development
Prize, Doha Film Institute- Production
Fund, Red Sea Fund- Production Grant,
Lebanese Film Fund, MAD Solutions-
MG International Sales, About
Productions Investment and deferred
salaries, Private investors, Final Cut in
Venice - El Gouna Film Festival Award**

Contact

georges@aboutproductions.com

IN THIS DARKNESS I SEE YOU

Lebanon, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

Log-line

Strange and life-threatening events in a construction site create tension between the Syrian workers and the Lebanese villagers. Tarek, one of the workers, becomes convinced that the site is haunted.

Synopsis

A Lebanese ghost story. Tarek, a young Syrian deserter, seeks refuge in Lebanon with the hope of eventually making his way to Europe. He finds work at a construction site in a forest near a Lebanese village but quickly discovers that the locals are hostile towards Syrian workers due to the painful memories of the Syrian military occupation of Lebanon in the 1990s. As the construction work progresses, strange and life-threatening events begin. The Syrian workers suspect the villagers of sabotaging their work, which amplifies the tension between the two clans. In the midst of this paranoia, Tarek is subject to strange visions in which he sees a woman lurking in the forest. He gradually understands that she might be the ghost of a woman who was murdered during the occupation. Despite Tarek's warnings, no one believes his theory that she's the one responsible for these occurrences, not even Rana, a young Lebanese villager whom he befriends. Meanwhile, the tension continues to rise between the Syrians and the Lebanese, and Rana resolves to help Tarek unravel the mystery of this woman before it is already too late and the confrontation between the two clans becomes unavoidable.

Director's Biography

Nadim Tabet directed several short films that have been screened internationally. In 2001, he co-founded the Lebanese Film Festival and worked as a film programmer for several European festivals. His first feature film *One of These Days* premiered in Rome Film Fest and was sold by Celluloid Dreams. He is currently in the post-production phase of his second feature *In This Darkness I See You* and developing a series titled *Faraya*. Nadim Tabet also directs fashion films and music videos for several bands coming from Europe and the Arab world and gives conferences on cinema at various universities.



NADIM TABET
Director

Director's Statement

Despite the darkness of its subject, *In This Darkness I See You* is above all a love story. This is why I see a film whose tone will balance between poetry and cruelty.

It's a genre film that I conceive as the contamination of the social drama by genres like ghost stories, horror, and romance.

Thus, if the film begins in a realistic way, adopting an almost documentary approach to describe the lives of the workers at the construction site, it will slowly branch off into a genre film while maintaining its naturalistic approach in its treatment of certain genre-related tropes.

The time spiral, which is the thematic core of the film, will also be visually represented in numerous scenes where the past and the present coexist in the same frame. This coexistence will culminate in the final movement, where the two temporalities will collide to the point of merging and give the impression that the present is definitely contaminated by the past... As is the case in Lebanon today.



GEORGES SCHOUCAIR, ELI SOUAIBY
Producers

ANTOINE WAKED, ARNAUD DOMMERC
Co-Producers

Producer's Note

As a producer, my passion for cinema often leads me to seek out stories that address themes both crucial and representative of our region. Genre films are almost absent in the region, even though they provide a fertile space for political and socio-economic criticism. *In This Darkness I See You*, the second feature by Nadim Tabet is a ghost story thriller and our first production since the Lebanese crisis and the Beirut blast, which destroyed our offices. The film started shooting while the South of Lebanon was at war. Additionally, the film's subject matter took a meta turn when the murder of a Lebanese official was blamed on Syrians, sparking a mass movement of riots and threats against Syrian residents across the country and threatening our Syrian cast. However, all this turmoil only strengthened our belief that the film's subject is urgent and timely. Despite these challenges, we completed the shoot and are excited by the result that we presented in the Karlovy Vary and Venice festivals work in progress. The film is currently in post-production. We are working with editor Loïc Lallemand, known for his work on award-winning films such as *Divines* and *My Son*. However, we are still in need of additional funds and in-kind services to complete post-production and ensure this ambitious film is finished under the best possible conditions. Participating in the CineGouna Funding is a significant opportunity for us to present the project and gain both creative and financial support.

Producer's Filmography

About Productions produces feature films and documentaries with a distinctly Arab voice, expressing the identity of the region. Since 1998, the company managed to bring together an important network of Arab and Lebanese filmmakers and artists and produced award-winning films. About Productions has enabled emerging talents to work with leading industry figures, often collaborate with international partners, and receive support from international institutions. It has established close working relationships with leading sales agents and film distributors in Europe and the Arab World and has a strong partnership with MC Distribution, a distribution company dedicated to distributing independent films in the Middle East and North Africa along with priority access to the sole art house theater in Lebanon, Metropolis Cinema.

About Productions is one of the most ambitious production companies in the Middle East. Its main objective remains to help structure the Lebanese and Arab cinema craft into a solid industry.





DIRECTOR

Malek Bensmaïl

Color

Length
105 min

Languages
Arabic, French

Producers
Hachemi Zertal, Fred Premel

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget
\$3,082,352

Confirmed Financing
\$2,445,285

Confirmed Financial Partners
FDATIC, CADAC, French CNC, Région Île de France, Dulac Distribution, Cineworks, TV5 Monde, Red Sea Foundation, Medialgeria, National Cultural Office, AFAC, Archipel 35

Contact

f.premel@titaprod.com
cirtafilms@yahoo.fr

THE MEURSAULT INVESTIGATION

Algeria, France, Switzerland

Log-line

Haroun is an old man who lives in Oran, Algeria. He has an incredible secret: he would be the brother of « The Arab », a fictional character killed in Camus' world-renowned French book: "The Stranger".

Synopsis

Haroun is an old bachelor who has lived in Oran for several years. As a retired civil servant, he leads a reclusive life until the day he meets Kamel in a bar, a journalist to whom he tells an incredible story dating back to 1942: he claims to be the brother of 'The Arab' killed in a story told in one of the most famous novels of the 20th century, "The Stranger", written by Albert Camus. An 'Arab' with an erased name: 'Moussa'.

By dint of anger, assertions, details, and confidences, Haroun finally convinces the journalist to listen to his story.

His confession is a cry of freedom and a cry of distress, but mainly a cry of revolt: against an abusive mother, against a country that failed to achieve independence, against a book, against a famous French writer.

The story blends past and present alongside Algerian history, from 1940 (colonization, despoilment, and exclusion) until 1996 (the civil war known as "The Black Decade").

An impossible romance, the country's failed independence, a never-ending book, and a difficult final truth to live through.

Director's Biography

Born in 1966 in Constantine (Algeria). After studying cinema and in the Lenfilm studios in Saint Petersburg, he devoted his filmography to the Réel Cinema, entirely committed to his country. As a major figure of documentary cinema, he has been filming and drawing the contours of complex humanity through his films for 20 years: democracy, modernity-tradition, language, Islam, identity, and society. A desire to make the cinema a stake of democracy and debate. Applauded by critics, his films have been awarded at various festivals around the world. Winner of the Villa Kujoyama in 2009 (Villa Medici Asia).



MALEK BEN SMAÏL
Director

Director's Statement

When I was born, Algeria had been Algerian again for four years. Throughout my schooling, I learned how to 'reintegrate' the Arab nation, its language, culture, and religion after 150 years of French colonization and 7 years of war.

When I first read Kamel Daoud's novel « The Meursault Investigation », I felt an intense thirst for images that play with the codes of fiction and reality. Daoud gives a name to the 'Arab', and eventually to all the Arabs.

I also thought about my first memory of cinema. It was at the Cinematheque of Constantine where I discovered, fascinated, one of the masterpieces of Italian neorealist cinema "The Bicycle Thief", by Vittorio De Sica. I was also undeniably and deeply marked by Pontecorvo's "The Battle of Algiers", and by his documentary way of filming with non-actors. Faces and bodies in the Casbah that just came out of an appalling war.

I suppose that this neo-realist world has had an impact on my approach to filmmaking. This real/fictional approach gives Haroun's story the right mix of fantasy, fiction, and reality.

I would like to evocate the cinematography of Andrey Zvyagitsev, linked to my years in Russia, as well as Sokourov and Guerman. In their stagings, there is this sought-after, profoundly human dimension; intertwining of feelings and intimate nightmares with the broader, an uncompromising portrait of a country and its history.

This is what I hope to achieve with this feature film.



HACHEMI ZERTAL, FRED PREMEL
Producers

Producer's Note

This cinematographic adaptation of Kamel Daoud's novel, winner of a Prix Goncourt (Best Debut Novel award), its openly anti-colonial stance, and its acerbic criticism, is of major importance.

To produce 'Meursault, contre-enquête' is to bring a voice of Arab cinema to the screen, that of Malek Bensmaïl, who for 25 years has been constantly trying to open its compatriots' eyes and audiences around the world through an exceptional filmography: 'La Bataille d'Alger, un film dans l'histoire' in 2017, (World Premiere at IDFA and broadcasted on Canal+/RSI), "Contre-Pouvoirs" in 2015 (World Premiere at Locarno), or "China is still far" in 2008 (Jury Prize at FESPACO).

Young Franco-Algerian actor Dali BENSSALAH and international Palestinian actress Hiam ABBASS play the lead roles, next to Ahmed BENAÏSSA (in his last film), Nabil ASLI, and Amina BEN SMAÏL.

In terms of distribution, the rights are assigned to Dulac for France, MediAlgeria, a leading Algerian company, and Cineworx for Switzerland. French-speaking channel TV5 Monde and Red Sea Foundation are financial partners of the project.

In picture editing at the moment, the film will be completed in the spring of 2025. Production costs are far from being covered, so we still need to include new partners (equity investors, co-producers, international sales agents, distributors). Egypt and the MENA region are key territories in terms of promotion and distribution, that's why CineGouna Funding is a great opportunity to introduce the film.

Producer's Filmography

HACHEMI ZERTAL (Hikayet Films, Algeria): After studying economics, he fought for the opening of Constantine's Cinémathèque, where a Panorama of Cinema was organized with famous filmmakers such as Jane Campion, Costa-Gavras, Youssef Chahine, Mohamed Lakhdar-Amina,...

During the black decade, he moved to France and worked for the CNC where he was in charge of film restoration and then participated in the creation of several cinémathèques in Africa. He became a distributor through his company Cirta Films and then created the production company Hikayet Films.

FRED PREMEL (Tita B Productions, France) founded Tita Productions in 2006 to produce independent feature films for the international market. His productions have received numerous awards and have been presented at major film festivals: Cannes, Berlin, Locarno, Sundance, and San Sebastian. The company has produced and coproduced more than 100 films: documentaries, feature films, shorts, and TV series.





DIRECTOR

Mohamed Rashad

Color

Length
95 min

Languages
Arabic

Producer

Hala Lotfy

Co-Producers

Etienne de Ricaurd , Kesmat El-sayed

Information

Feature Narrative

Total Budget

\$656,849

Confirmed Financing

\$600,000

Confirmed Financial Partners

Hassala Film, Caractères productions, Seera Films, ART - Arab Radio and Television, Hubert Bals Script & Development, AFAC Development Fund, Red Sea Development Fund, Hubert Bals + Europe - minority co-production support, Berlinale World Cinema Fund (Production grant), AFAC Production Fund, Doha Film institute Grant (post production grant), Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Contact

mohamed.rashad31@gmail.com

+201002860934

THE SETTLEMENT

Egypt, France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

Log-line

A factory witnessed their father's death. The only compensation offered to Hossam and Maro to relinquish their legal rights is to work in the same position as their father. They try to integrate the factory's community.

Synopsis

Hossam, a 23-year-old troubled young man, is getting ready to go to the factory where he's just been hired. His father was accidentally killed on the job a month earlier and Hossam finds himself inheriting his job, to ensure his family an income. By doing so, they have accepted his employment as a form of settlement. Meanwhile, his 12-year-old brother Maro is threatening to slit his wrists if Hossam does not take him along. He eventually agrees to be accompanied by his younger brother. Maro has given up on attending school and is thrust into the world of labor. Hossam, having previously spent most of his time on the streets, is now responsible for his mother and his younger brother's sustenance. Maro looks at Hossam, who was absent from home during their father's life, as the highest, and is fascinated by him.

They are welcomed by the factory manager Karim and Ehab, security manager. They meet Mostafa, another laborer, whom they learn was partly responsible for their father's death. They try to integrate the factory's community of workers. The other employees, however, remain suspicious of them. Hossam provides Karim with drugs, upon his request.

The brothers know the reason for their father's death is the lack of security measures.

Hossam wrongly manipulates his machine and mortally wounds Ehab, he runs away and is suspected of having intentionally caused his death.

Director's Biography

He was born in Egypt, started working in filmmaking in 2005, wrote and directed two short fiction films "From Afar", 2005, and "Maxim", 2007. With Hala Lotfy and some other filmmakers, they founded their own production company "Hassala Films" which is an independent production house to produce long debut projects (fiction and documentary) for talented young artists. In 2016, he finished his first feature documentary film "Little Eagles" which had its premiere in "Dubai International Film Festival 2016-official selection". Rashad also participated in a number of script development and editing workshops such as the Docmed workshop and the Documentary Campus workshop. Rashad is currently working on the post-production of his first feature fiction 'The Settlement'



MOHAMED RASHAD
Director

Director's Statement

My own father worked in textile factories for over 40 years. Due to the ills my father encountered, I hold workers' stories close to my heart. I relate to them and the way in which they earn a living through patience, and as a filmmaker.

I find industrial spaces visually appealing, yet one rarely sees them in Egyptian cinema. The Settlement was shot in an operating factory and in the actual neighborhood in which Hossam lives, El-kilo 21, close to where Bedouins live in Alexandria. These spaces are expressive of the roughness these workers endure daily. The characters' harsh life is reflected visually through shots of the factory machinery, the cargo trucks, the construction blocks in Nawar's car, the highway...Spaces that confine our characters to a life of hardship and anguish. These locations also provide a rich soundscape: the machines are shot to embody a monster eating the workers alive, their sounds producing the same effect.

The characters' emotions are brought to the screen with an overall dark imagery, achieved with low lighting and its scarce usage. Colors, however, will remain vivid. The film also heavily relies on static takes: the characters are often suspended in space within wide shots, they are not separated from the spaces in which they were brought up, where they live, where they work and interact with each other: they are inextricably linked to them.



Hala Lotfy
Producer
Etienne de Ricaud, Kesmat El-sayed
Co-Producers

Producer's Note

This is my second collaboration with the director Mohamed Rashad after producing his first feature documentary "Little Eagles" in 2016. Our collaboration reflects the harmony we have as a team that shares the same vision with regards to reality and cinema, and the same ambition of making films that are personal yet capable of expressing Egyptian society in a moment of unrest. In The Settlement, Rashad intelligently captures a neglected, random, isolated, and almost taboo area, weaving a wonderful tale where the characters' feelings of helplessness are blended with the viewers' feelings of anticipation and fear for the fates of the characters. The film is characterized by a heavy realistic touch that resembles Mike Leigh's films which take place in workers neighborhoods, yet it engages brilliantly with human psychology. What motivates me personally to this project is the great drama that speaks about the human condition and how fragile it is.

We intend to tackle the difficult lives of Egyptian workers to attract the attention of a large sector of audience to the film. The film is being shot in the actual locations where workers live, and we intend to use this as a promotional awareness-raising campaign that aims at improving their life conditions and amending the laws that protect stakeholders' rights, denying workers the minimum requirements of a decent life.

Producer's Filmography

An independent collective based in Cairo, founded by a group of filmmakers (Hala Lotfy, Mohamed Rashad, Mahmoud Lotfy, Heba Othman) who seek to produce films that step out of the mainstream. Hassala mainly works with up-and-coming filmmakers directing their first or their second feature length fictions or documentaries. In 2012, Hassala released its first

Feature film Coming Forth by day, written, directed by Hala Lotfy. It premiered at the Berlinale Forum. In 2014, (Mother of the Unborn), by Nadine Salib, premiered at IDFA, and won the Jury award at the first appearance competition. In 2019, Exterior/Night, directed by Ahmad Abdalla, which premiered at TIFF. Hassala has recently produced The profession, a documentary by Ramez Youssef, On the Fence by Nesrine Al Zayat (Cairo IFF), and co-produced Light Upon Light by Christian Suhr, which premiered at CPH:DOX in 2022. Hassala is a founding member of Euro Mediterranean distributors network.





DIRECTOR

Namir Abdel Messeeh

LA VIE D'APRÈS

France

Color and B&W

Length
85 min

Languages
French / Arabic

Producer
Camille Laemle
Co-Producer
Ali El Arabi

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$412,000

Confirmed Financing
\$140,000

Confirmed Financial Partners
CNC, AFAC, Marrakech Film Festival

Log-line

After his mother's death, Namir, a 40-year-old filmmaker, decides to honor a promise he made to her: to make a new film with her. But can filmmaking bring back the dead?

Synopsis

Life After Siham tells the story of Namir, a 40-year-old filmmaker, and his journey through grief. This first-person documentary spans over a decade, showing Namir's evolution as a grieving filmmaker through his various cinematic attempts. It captures his journey from being unable to accept his mother's death to his determination to keep her memory alive through a film involving his father, family, and their complex history. This history stirs up traumas from Namir's own childhood, marked by separation and exile.

The film explores the power of cinema, which gives Namir the illusion of controlling time and reviving the ghosts of loved ones, fearing they might disappear without a trace. Facing the imminent loss of his father, the last surviving member of his family legacy, Namir learns that cinema can also be a way to express love and honor the fleeting nature of life.

Contact

namirbox@gmail.com
+33673033607

Director's Biography

Namir Abdel Messeeh was born in 1974. After spending his early childhood in Egypt, he came to France where he still lives now.

He studied film directing in la Femis (French national film school) and directed two short fiction films before deciding to explore more personal questions through his documentary "You, Waguih", the story of his relationship with his father, a former political prisoner under Nasser in Egypt.

His first feature "The Virgin, the Copts and Me" which deals, in an original way, with his relation to his motherland, Egypt, and to his Coptic family was selected in a lot of festivals all around the world, like Cannes, Berlin and Doha.



NAMIR ABDEL MESSEEH
Director

Director's Statement

I didn't believe that my mother could die and that one day, that there would be a life without her. My first reaction after my mother's death in 2015 was to film her funeral and my father's distress. It was as if making this film could bring her back to life, however superficially.

Then, my co-writer and I spent a long time trying to find a balance between fiction and documentary. In the script, we integrated my story into a writing workshop in Egypt at filmmaker Youssef Chahine's residence. Documentary sequences were mixed with dream scenes in which the ghosts of my mother and of Youssef Chahine appeared to me.

But fiction had one limitation: it tried to freeze on paper a process that was still in motion. So, I decided to go back to a more documentary approach, filming what was happening to me in the present moment, and write the story with living images.

We began to edit this material, integrating personal family archives, and images from the Egyptian cinema repertoire to fill the missing images of my parent's story, and give a more universal dimension to my story.

One obvious point emerged: through my personal evolution between the death of my mother and that of my father, the film tells the story of how we learn to let go of the memories that haunt us while keeping the love that motivates us alive within ourselves.



CAMILLE LAEMLE
Producer

ALI EL ARABI
Co-Producer

Producer's Note

Camille met Namir Abdel Messeeh after the success of his film *The Virgin, the Copts and Me*, which captivated 110,000 French viewers. Following the loss of his mother, Siham, Namir began documenting this period for a new project, driven by his belief that cinema is a way to revive those we have lost. Encouraged by editor Benoît Alavoine, Camille felt an immediate connection to Namir's vision and eagerly joined him as a co-producer on *Life After Siham*. Together, they explored the boundaries between reality and fiction, life and death, believing that their complementary skills will enrich the film's unique narrative.

For Ali, Namir is more than a talented filmmaker; he is a close friend. Their conversations often focused on the profound impact of parental loss. As Ali faced his mother's terminal illness, Namir provided invaluable support, guiding him through his grief. When Namir's mother passed away, Ali asked Namir how he would cope with her loss. Namir found his answer in filmmaking, leading to *Life After Siham*. This project represents his artistic response to loss, creating a cinematic space for shared memories and second chances.

Camille and Ali (Note for Moktar: Can we make Camille and Ali in bold?) share a deep commitment to *Life After Siham*, seeing it as a tender exploration of grief and remembrance. Their collaboration aims to honor the past while offering solace and connection to those navigating similar experiences. The project received acclaim at the Cairo Festival in 2021, where they won two awards.

Producer's Filmography

Life After Siham is a coproduction between Oweda Films, the director's Company and Les Films d'Ici - Camille Laemle.

Les films d'ici filmography:

- *Life after Siham* directed by Namir Abdel Messeh,
- *Republic of silence* by Diana el Jeiroudi,
- *Athenian Material* directed by Laure Vermeersch.

In development today:

- *Call Me May* directed by Darina Al Joundi,
- *Hyper-Places* by Michel Lussault and Stan Neumann (6X26 mn)



Founded in 2016 by Ali El Arabi (CEO, Producer and Director), Ambient Light is an international film production and distribution company based in Cairo (Egypt) and Los Angeles (United States). Ambient Light is producing and co-producing scripted and unscripted films on four continents with the aim to give a voice to the people who are not heard, to empower artists from the MENA region, and to build bridges between the region and American and European markets.



DIRECTOR

Jihan

Color

Length

90 min

Languages

English, Arabic, French

Producers

Jihan, David Guenette, Mohamed Soueid

Information

Documentary

Total Budget

\$398,130

Confirmed Financing

\$319,700

Confirmed Financial Partners

Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, Doha Film Institute, Quiet, IDA Enterprise Grant, Hot Docs Blue Ice, Malmo Arab Film Festival

Contact

info@mansurkikhia.org

MY FATHER AND QADDAFI

USA, Libya

Log-line

A daughter unravels the disappearance of her father, the peaceful opposition leader to Qaddafi, and pieces together her mother's 19-year search to find him.

Synopsis

When Jihan was six years old, her father flew to Cairo and never returned. Mansur Rashid Kikhia was the Foreign Minister of Libya, ambassador to the United Nations, and a human rights lawyer. After serving in Qaddafi's increasingly brutal regime, he defected from the government and became a peaceful opposition leader. Kikhia was obsessively loyal to his country but ultimately, his determination to reason with Qaddafi led to his disappearance from a hotel in Egypt in 1993.

Jihan's mother Baha, a strong-willed Syrian-American artist, began searching for him, launching the family into an international political maze. Her mission to find justice brought her to the Libyan desert in the middle of the night, face to face with Qaddafi to negotiate her husband's release. Yet it wasn't until after the regime's fall, 19 years later, that his body was found in a freezer near Qaddafi's palace.

My Father and Qaddafi takes the audience on a raw and reflective journey as Jihan pieces together a father she barely remembers, while discovering the troubling history and politics of Libya. Her journey starts from fading personal memories, leading to encounters with family members, her father's peers, and historical archive footage.

Hoping at first to uncover the truth, Jihan instead transforms the mystery into a curiosity that brings her closer to her father and her Libyan identity. She approaches politics not as a distant subject, but as a lived experience that penetrates into every human relationship - even between a little girl and her father.

Director's Biography

Jihan received her BA in International and Comparative Politics with a concentration in Human Rights, Philosophy, and International Law at the American University of Paris. Her MA was at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study with a focus on art education and storytelling. In 2012, her article "Libya, My father, and I" was published in Kalimat Magazine: Arab Thought and Culture. Jihan is committed to discovering how free expression can be a vehicle for empowerment and understanding.



JIHAN
Director

Director's Statement

I don't want my father to disappear a second time. I feel an urgency to overcome my void in the midst of Libya's relentless chaos and instability, which I fear will eventually bury my Libyan identity. In my documentary film, My Father and Qaddafi, I search through other people's memories trying to create a clearer picture of my father who I don't remember. Making this film helps me understand the importance of a father figure and the impact of losing a father on a family, a community, and even a country.

As I reconstruct my father's portrait, I plant the seed for a deeper, more honest connection and to free my hidden voice. Instead of compartmentalizing my father as a one-dimensional hero from the past, I search for the man behind the myth and try to reintegrate him into my present life as a loving father. The wound of his disappearance begins to transform into new possibilities.

Despite my fragmented memories, my fears, and my cultural limitations in Libyan society, I am trying to reconnect with my father and with Libya on my own terms, as an open hearted woman. This is one of the ways I am hoping to hold my father before he disappears completely from my memory and even potentially from Libya's memory.



JIHAN, DAVID GUENETTE, MOHAMED SOUEID
Producers

Producer's Note

My Father and Qaddafi sheds light on Mansur Rashid Kikhia's case and the thousands of other cases of enforced disappearance in Libya. The lack of closure is a nightmare for families of disappeared victims. Through Jihan's raw and personal lens, audiences get a glimpse into the families' perpetual tension, confusion, and sense of powerlessness, while also feeling inspired by their resilience and hope. Jihan's journey reveals the challenges of retracing and honoring the life of one human being, and how political movements can harm the families left behind.

Kikhia's case reflects the continuous social and political divides in the MENA region. When he disappeared in 1993, he was one of the most influential and visionary members of his generation to be silenced. Qaddafi's 42-year rule disrupted several generations of Libyans, who continue to suffer with the country's unrelenting troubles and instability. Qaddafi's cult of personality veiled the collective memory of life before his rule, leaving many like Jihan, still piecing together the fragments of their Libyan identity.

The film's relevancy reaches beyond the MENA region, and will look at the long-term impact of totalitarianism, including how it can destroy civil society, silence free expression, and even hijack one's sense of self. Jihan addresses questions such as, "What does justice and rebuilding look like in the aftermath of a disappearance?" The documentary is a timely and important part of ongoing global conversations about the rise, inner workings, and aftermath of dictatorships.



Producer's Filmography

Desert Power is a film production company owned and operated by filmmaker Jihan. The company's first documentary film is My Father and Qaddafi, which has received grants from AFAC, DFI, Quiet, IDA, Hot Docs Blue Ice Fund, and the Malmo Arab Film Festival. The film is being distributed by Mad World (a Mad Solutions company), Arab cinema's first global sales company. Desert Power is committed to exploring the complex realms of diaspora and identity from the MENA region through honest and introspective storytelling.



DIRECTOR

Mohammed Almughanni

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Arabic

Producers
Rashid Abdelhamid, Glib Lukianets

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$392,558,60

Confirmed Financing
\$357,438,88

Confirmed Financial Partners
Lodz Film Commission, Palestinian Cultural Fund, Gaza Films, Polish Film Institute, Arab Fund of Arts and Culture (AFAC), Beirut DC, International Media Support (IMS), BBC, Doha Film Institute, Red Sea Fund, Aljazeera documentary

Contact

mohamugha@gmail.com
+48534616064

SON OF THE STREETS

Palestine, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon

Log-line

Against all odds, a stateless Palestinian child in a Beirut refugee camp embarks on a courageous journey for recognition, education, and a brighter future in Son of the Streets.

Synopsis

Son of the Streets is a poignant and inspiring film that follows Khodor, a Palestinian child growing up without identification in a Beirut refugee camp. Despite facing numerous obstacles, Khodor's story is one of resilience, family support, and the pursuit of a better life. Through his journey for citizenship, education, and healthcare, the film showcases the power of hope and determination in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, leaving viewers with a profound sense of upliftment and admiration for the human spirit.

Director's Biography

Born in Gaza in 1994, Mohammed Almughanni is a film director and screenwriter. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Film Directing from Łódź Film School in Poland.

His films, focusing on racial justice and socio-political life amid wars, have garnered awards at festivals including Ji.hlava (2020), IDFA (2023), and Clermont-Ferrand (2024). Almughanni raises awareness about collateral issues faced by innocent civilians in war, including national identity and unregistered children.



MOHAMMED ALMUGHANNI
Director

Director's Statement

During my studies at Lodz Film School in Poland, I made a short documentary about Khodor. Now, I'm developing it to make it into a feature documentary. I'd like to follow the life of Khodor and keep filming him as he grows up and realizes how important his ID issue is.

This project is mainly to help Khodor get his ID and raise awareness about people who are unregistered as citizens, refugees, or humans of any community. I have never experienced life conditions like the one in Shatila. Definitely, Shatila is an underreported part of the world, where three generations of Palestinians continue living with a lack of basic human rights, and we decided to represent that through the eyes of Khodor, an unregistered non-existing Palestinian child. Spending a lot of time with Khodor and his family helped build a relationship that is based on trust between me and the family, to the point that Sobhia -His stepmother- used to call me "Son" and I called her "Mom".



RASHID ABDELHAMID, GLIB LUKIANETS
Producers

Producer's Note

This story is universal and can relate to many parts of the world. It is a story that takes place today and resonates with aspects of migration and exile that are as relevant today as throughout world history. The essence of the story is the problem of identity - so close to us all in the current world, where people are not themselves sometimes even for themselves. The film also depicts the everyday life of the Palestinian Diaspora in Lebanon, in a refugee camp. As a teenage boy, our hero confronts a system that denies him the dream of a normal and peaceful family life.



Producer's Filmography

Gaza Films is a production and post-production company born from a passion for storytelling and the search for new horizons. We are inspired by the challenge of sharing a dream so that another can live it firsthand. We are looking for stories that leave something and investigate who we are and why. Gaza Films is currently producing a feature documentary film entitled "Son of the Streets" directed by Mohammed Almughanni, as well as it co-produced a short narrative film entitled "An Orange from Jaffa" supported by well-known entities such as CNC and ARTE.



DIRECTOR
Karima Saïdi

Color

Length
90 min

Languages
Syrian and Iraqi Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French, Sicilian, Greek, Aramaic and Turkish

Producer
Julie Freres

Information

Documentary

Total Budget
\$285,000

Confirmed Financing
\$316,820

Confirmed Financial Partners
Centre du Cinéma (Belgium), CBA, RTBF, Tax Shelter, VAF, Creative Europe CNC (France), Doha Film Institute (Qatar)

Contact

julie@derives.be
+32474931742

THOSE WHO WATCH OVER

Belgium, France, Qatar

Log-line

In a multi-faith cemetery in Brussels, the film reveals the dialogues between the deceased and their descendants, through personal rituals and imaginative narratives.

Synopsis

An immigrant ceases to be a traveler when he lies to rest in his host land. In Brussels, the world's second most cosmopolitan city, on what was once a military airport now a multi-faith cemetery, a new narrative unfolds - the story of our ancestors. Many immigrants of Arab and African descent have anchored themselves, their children, and families here in Belgium, and upon completing life's cycle, are now buried in their host land. As we, the living, visit our missing ones, our rituals and imagination strive to maintain a connection, weaving and extending the stories their traces recount. How do we communicate with our dead? What do they convey to us? How do they safeguard us, and how do we reciprocate? The film delves into these personal encounters, exploring them from intimate and diverse perspectives, interweaving these narratives. I observe Those Who Watch Over in this place where care is taken to honor the diversity of the deceased and their living kin, seeking to foster dialogue and understanding.

Director's Biography

Karima Saïdi (Belgium, Morocco) is currently developing *Those Who Watch Over*, a film about the multifaith cemetery in Brussels, which is now in post-production and the second opus of her work on exile. Her first feature documentary, *A Way Home*, was selected at IDFA in 2020 and won awards at the Millenium and Aflam festivals in Brussels. In 2016, she made a short documentary, *Aïcha*. In 2013, she created *Mur-murs et 10 voix*, a series of sound portraits of Moroccan immigrants in Brussels. Since 1997, she has worked as an editor and continuity supervisor for feature films and television. She graduated from INSAS Film School and holds a master in screenwriting and film analysis from ULB University in Brussels. Karima Saïdi also lectures at the University of Liège and teaches at INSAS and ESAV in Marrakech.



KARIMA SAÏDI
Director

Director's Statement

A new history is being written on a virgin land once used as a military airport: that of our ancestors. By ending their life journey and choosing to rest here, many immigrants have anchored us, their children, and their families in their land of welcome. I discovered the multi-faith plot in 2015 when my mother chose to be buried there. Having only known Moroccan cemeteries as whitewashed tombs where no photo or text other than a sura was permitted, I was speechless and taken aback to see my mother's grave surrounded by such a diverse and motley neighborhood. I was in the Muslim plot, where no two graves were alike. Everything was the opposite of what I knew. As free as it is structured, as polyphonic as it is singular, this beautifully manicured site welcomes families of all origins, some of whom even come to picnic next to their dead. It's a truly shared place, where people talk to each other, help each other, and visit each other, much like in the life of a working-class neighborhood. These features make it a place that is more joyful than sad, and more frequented than the average cemetery.



JULIE FRERES
Producer

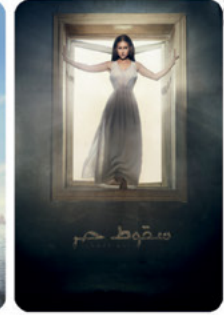
Producer's Note

This is the second of Karima Saïdi's films that I've produced, after her first long feature documentary *A Way Home*. This new film was shot over the past two years in a unique multi-confessional cemetery in Europe. The visitors to the cemetery who were filmed shared the most intimate aspects of their lives with the camera, expressing their thoughts and gestures toward their deceased loved ones. These moments, typically private and concealed, make the film very powerful and cinematic. The film is currently in the image editing stage and will be finished early 2025. We're interested in the feedbacks we'll receive on the project, and still need to work on the picture editing to enhance the film's potential. We are seeking for post-production grants, international sales agent, and broadcasters.



Producer's Filmography

Dérives, a non-profit association founded in 1977 by directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, develops feature-length documentary and hybrid films made by new talents and first-time filmmakers. Titles include 'A Way Home' (IDFA 20), 'Elsewhere, Everywhere' (IFFR 20), 'In A Silent Way' (CPH:DOX 21), 'A Life Like Any Other' (Dok Leipzig 22 - Silver dove), 'Porcupine' (IFFR 23), Paragate (IDFA 23) and 'Crushed' (VDR 24 - Best short film Doc Alliance Award).



Meet us at CineGouna Market - Sard's booth #3

“

Sard was founded by Mariam Naoum in 2016. The word **Sard** is an Arabic word that means storytelling. Sard is a unique model in the Middle East, a writer's room and leading content creation company for originals and adaptations for cinema and TV. **Sard** is the first kind of incubator for both talents and great ideas in the MENA region market. It has a team of 9 writers, and many freelancers and researchers.

This year, Sard is expanding to film and TV productions.

”



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sard-eg.com

mariamnaoum.com

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Mariam Naoum

Screenwriter
Sard's Founder & CEO

U.S. EMBASSY IN CAIRO AND FiLM iNDEPENDENT PARTNERSHIP AT EL GOUNA FiLM FESTiVAL

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo in partnership with Film Independent will award one mid-career filmmaker from Egypt with a special residency in Los Angeles in February 2025, valued at \$13,000.

The award, which will be awarded at the CineGouna Springboard Platform, is a week-long residency of curated programming, which include project-based consultations and meetings with U.S. film professionals, cultural engagement and networking opportunities, as well as attendance at the Film Independent Spirit Awards in Los Angeles.

The U.S. Embassy has invested over \$400,000 in building the capacity of Egyptian filmmakers since 2019 through its partnership with Film Independent.

Film Independent is the nonprofit arts organization that champions creative independence in visual storytelling and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision. In addition to helping filmmakers make their movies and build an audience for their projects and producing the Spirit Awards, Film Independent works to diversify the film industry.



U.S. Embassy Cairo

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CINEGOUNA FUNDING SCHEDULE

MENTORS MEETINGS WITH DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS & CGP OPENING

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2024

8:30 - 9:00 AM	Coffe Break	FESTIVAL HUB
9:00 - 12:00 PM	Mentor General Meeting with Development Projects	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break	FESTIVAL HUB
1:00 - 8:45 PM	Mentor One on One session with Development Projects	CINEGOUNA COMMON ROOM
8:30 - 1:00 AM	CGP Opening	MEGUMI

PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2024

8:30 - 9:00 AM	Coffe Break	FESTIVAL HUB		
9:00 - 9:30 PM	Orientation	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM		
TIME	TITLE IN ENGLISH	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER	VENUE
9:30 - 10:00 AM	House No. 7	Rama Abdy	Hazar Yazji	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Documentary	Syria, Qatar		
10:05 - 10:35 AM	Leila's Trial	Charlie Kouka	Cyrine Sellami, Dora Bouchoucha, Caroline Nataf	
	Feature Narrative	Tunisia, France		
10:40 - 11:10 AM	The Cow Thief	Mohamed Zedan	Mark Lotfy	
	Feature Documentary	Egypt		
11:15 - 11:45 AM	The Guardian	Lamin	Lynda Belkhiria Co-Producer: Maytham Jbara	
	Feature Narrative	Algeria		
11:50 - 12:20 PM	Dwellers of the Cabins	Hend Bakr	Hend Bakr, Tamer Nady	
	Feature Documentary	Egypt, Qatar		
12:25 - 12:55 PM	Running with beasts	Leila Basma	Natália Pavlove	
	Feature Narrative	Czech Republic, Lebanon		
1:00 - 3:00 PM	Lunch Break	FESTIVAL HUB		
3:00 - 3:30 PM	One on One Meetings with all Projects	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM		
3:30 - 4:00 PM				
4:00 - 4:30 PM				
4:30 - 5:00 PM				
5:00 - 5:30 PM				
6:00 - 7:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR	THE SMOKERY BEACH		
10:00 - 1:00 PM	Mentor General Meetings with Post Production Projects	CINEGOUNA COMMON ROOM		

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2024

9:00 - 9:30 AM	Coffe Break				FESTIVAL HUB
TIME	TITLE IN ENGLISH		DIRECTOR	PRODUCER	VENUE
10:00 - 10:30 AM	Remind Me to Forget		Lama Jamjoom	Rami Alzayer	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Documentary	Saudi Arabia			
10:35 - 11:05 AM	Elsewhere		Issraa Elkogali Häggsström	Lars Lovén	
	Feature Hybrid	Sweden			
11:10 - 11:40 AM	The Masters of Magic and Beauty		Jad Chahine	Yousry Nasrallah	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Narrative	Egypt			
11:45 - 12:15 PM	Break				
12:15 - 12:45 PM	A Pair of Shoes in the Dark Corner of the Moon		Ayman El Amir	Nada Riyadh	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Narrative	Egypt			
12:50 - 1:20 PM	The Myth of Mahmoud		Mayar Hamdan & Shaima Al Tamimi	Shaima Al Tamimi	
	Feature Documentary	Qatar, Palestine			
1:25 - 1:55 PM	Al-Madeeneh 2008		Yousef Assabahi	Ala'a Amer	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Narrative	Yemen			
2:00 - 2:30 PM	Amara		Michelle Keserwany	Tine Mikkelsen, Nadim Cheikhrouha Co-Producer: Alaa Alasad,Michelle Keserwany and Noel Keserwany	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Narrative	Denmark, France, Lebanon, Jordan			
2:30 - 3:30 PM	Lunch Break				FESTIVAL HUB
3:30 - 4:00 PM	One on One Meetings with all Projects				CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
4:00 - 4:30 PM					
4:30 - 5:00 PM					
5:00 - 5:30 PM					
6:00 - 7:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR				THE SMOKERY BEACH
10:00 - 3:05 PM	Mentor One on One session with Post Production Projects				CINEGOUNA COMMON ROOM

PROJECTS IN POST PRODUCTION

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024

TIME	TITLE IN ENGLISH	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER	VENUE
9:30 - 10:00 AM	Coffee Break			FESTIVAL HUB
10:00 - 10:35 AM	Son of The Streets	Mohammed Almughanni	Rashid Abdelhamid, Glib Lukianets	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Documentary	Palestine, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon		
10:40 - 11:15 AM	The Settlement	Mohamed Rashad	Hala Lotfy Co-Producer: Etienne de Ricaurd, Kesmat El-Sayed	
	Feature Narrative	Egypt, France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia		
11:20 - 11:55 AM	The Meursault Investigation	Malek Bensmaïl	Hachemi Zertal, Fred Premel	
	Feature Narrative	Algeria, France, Switzerland		
12:00 - 12:35 PM	Those who watch Over	Karima Saïdi	Julie Freres	
	Feature Documentary	Belgium, France, Qatar		
1:00 - 2:00 PM	Lunch Break			FESTIVAL HUB
2:00 - 2:35 PM	In This Darkness I See You	Nadim Tabet	Georges Schoucair, Eli Souaiby	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
	Feature Narrative	Lebanon, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia		
2:40 - 3:15 PM	La Vie D'Après	Namir Abdel Messeeh	Camille Laemle, Ali El Arabi	
	Feature Documentary	France		
3:20 - 3:55 PM	My Father and Qaddafi	Jihan	Jihan, David Guenette, Mohamed Soueid	
	Feature Documentary	USA, Libya		
4:00 - 4:35 PM	EXILE	Mehdi Hmili	Moufida Fedhila, Mehdi Hmili	
	Feature Narrative	Tunisia		
4:35 - 5:00 PM 5:00 - 5:30 PM 5:30 - 6:00 PM	One on One Meetings with all Projects			CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
6:00 - 7:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR			THE SMOKERY BEACH

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2024

9:30 - 10:00 AM	Coffee Break	FESTIVAL HUB
10:00 - 2:00 PM	One on One Meetings with all Projects	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
2:00 - 3:00 PM	Lunch Break	FESTIVAL HUB
3:00 - 5:00PM	MEET THE PRESS	CINEGOUNA FUNDING ROOM
6:00 - 7:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR	THE SMOKERY BEACH

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2024

9:30 - 10:00 AM	Coffe Break	FESTIVAL HUB
10:00 - 3:10 PM	JURY MEETING WITH ALL PROJECTS	CINEGOUNA COMMON ROOM
3:00 - 4:00 PM	Lunch Break	FESTIVAL HUB
6:00 - 7:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR	THE SMOKERY BEACH

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2024

4:00 - 6:00 PM	CGP CLOSING CEREMONY	PRE - FUNCTION AREA PLAZA
6:30 - 8:00 PM	MEET THE WINNERS	PRE - FUNCTION AREA PLAZA

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SERIES

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مختبر مسلسلات لكتاب السيناريو هو برنامج سنوي لتطوير السيناريوهات مدته خمسة أيام ويستهدف كتاب السيناريو العرب المستقلين الذين يعملون على مشاريع مسلسلاتهم الروائية الأولى أو الثانية.

سيتم عقد المختبر في الأردن من 1 حتى 7 أيار (مايو) 2025 في الأردن.

سيبدأ المختبر باستقبال الطلبات للدورة القادمة ابتداءً من:

14 تشرين الثاني (نوفمبر) 2024 حتى 4 كانون الثاني (يناير) 2025

About Mosalsalat Screenwriters Lab

Mosalsalat Screenwriters Lab is an annual five-day series script development lab aimed at independent Arab screenwriters working on their first or second narrative series projects. The lab will be held in Jordan from the 1st until the 7th of May 2025.

The lab will start receiving applications for its upcoming edition on:

November 14, 2024, until January 4, 2025.

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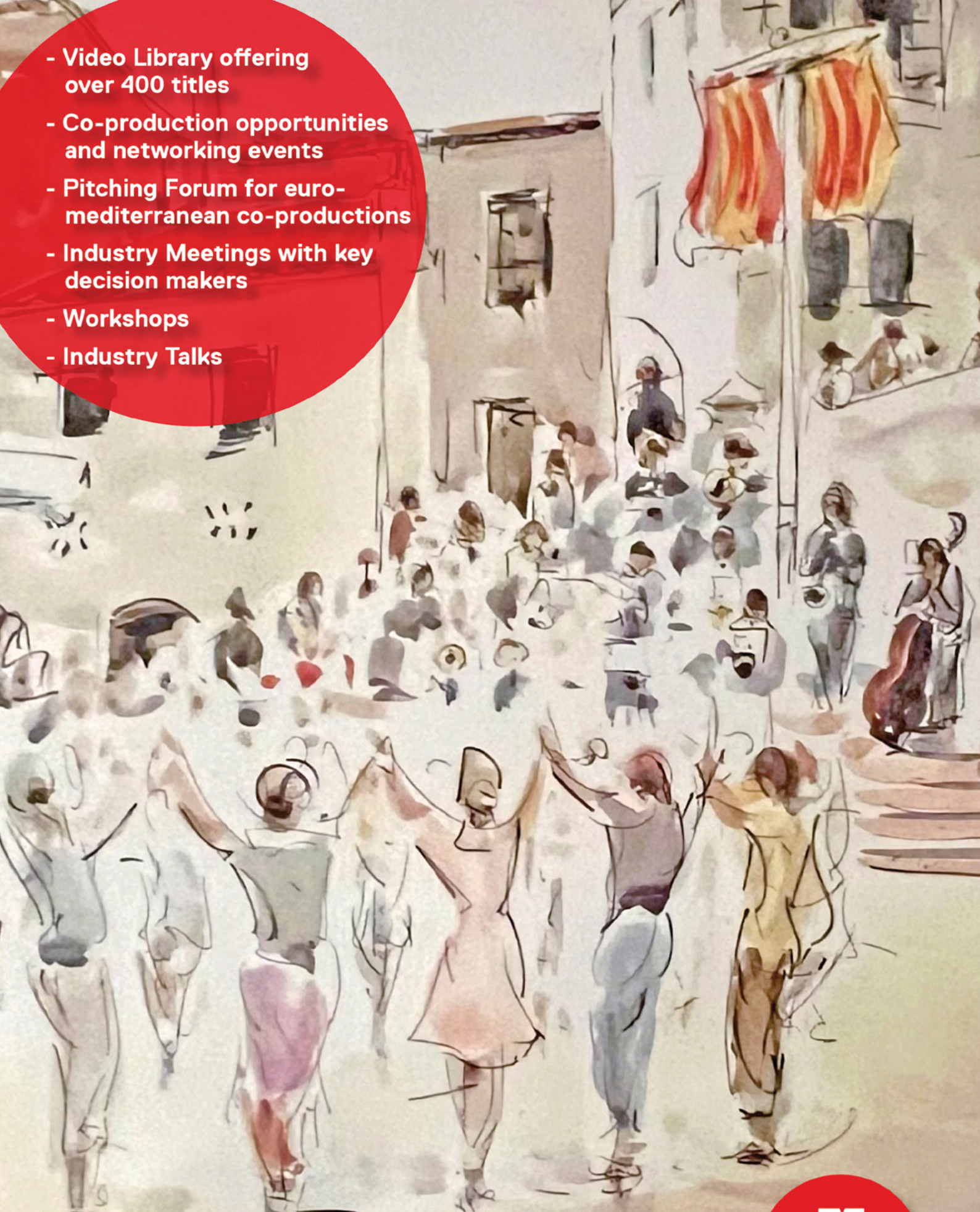
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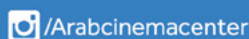
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