



ELGOUNA   
FILM FESTIVAL  
مهرجان الجونة السينمائي  
14-22 OCT 2021 — 5TH EDITION

# PROJECTS BOOK

#GFF21

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CINEGOUNA *platform*  
16 - 21 OCT 2021

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FILM FESTIVAL  
مهرجان الجونة السينمائي  
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CINEGOUNA  PROJECTS  
*platforms* **BOOK**  
16-21 OCT 2021

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## WELCOME TO THE CINEGOUNA *platform*

Dear friends,

We are thrilled to welcome you to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of **CineGouna Platform (CGP)**, the industry arm of **El Gouna Film Festival (GFF)**. Through its vast range of activities, **CGP** upholds its mission of empowering Arab filmmakers by offering them opportunities for artistic mentorships as well as financial support for their cinematic endeavors.

**CGP's** two programs, **CineGouna SpringBoard** and **CineGouna Bridge** work together to support filmmakers in their artistic work.

While **CineGouna SpringBoard**, **CGP's** project development and co-production lab offers filmmakers a top-notch business environment, **CineGouna Bridge** 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 **CGP's** promises of insightful learning opportunities.

For its upcoming milestone 5<sup>th</sup> edition, **CineGouna SpringBoard** has selected **20 projects; 13 in development, 6 in post-production and 1 guest film in post-production.**

**CineGouna Platform** alumni from our previous editions have screened their films at prestigious international film festivals where they have been recognized, acclaimed and awarded.

As **CGP** celebrates its 5<sup>th</sup> edition, it hopes to contribute to improving the careers of filmmakers from the region by supporting them in bringing to life their inspiring stories.

In **CGP's** closing ceremony, the winners will be granted up to US \$250,000 in cash 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 CGP Team**

## AWARDS

The directors and producers of the listed projects will present their projects and works in progress to producers, funding agencies, distributors, sales agents, and festival programmers to receive constructive feedback. In addition, private meetings are scheduled for the filmmakers with experts and mentors to help them fine-tune their scripts or rough cuts, with the aim of improving their chances of regional and international cooperation. All selected **projects in development** and **films in post-production** will compete for awards to be decided by a jury of industry experts.

The best **project in development** and **film in post-production** will receive a **CineGouna Platform** certificate and a cash prize of US \$15,000 each. Additional awards and cash prizes are presented through partnerships with the local and regional institutions listed here:

- US \$10,000 cash grant from **Trend VFX**
- US \$10,000 worth of post-production services from **Trend VFX**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **Rotana**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **Synergy Films**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **Arab Radio and Television Network (ART)**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **Maqam Production Films**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **New Black**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **The Indie Deer**
- US \$10,000 worth of post-production, editing, and coloring services from **Cult**
- US \$10,000 cash grant from **Clackett**
- US \$5,000 worth of services from **Clackett**
- US \$5,000 from **Malmö Arab Film Festival**
- US \$5,000 cash grant from **BEE Media Productions**
- US \$5,000 worth of post-production services from **BEE Media Productions**
- US \$50,000 cash grant per sale from **OSN**
- US \$30,000 as a minimum guarantee on film distribution from **MAD Solutions & Ergo Media Ventures**
- US \$5,000 cash grant from **Sard Writing Room**
- US \$10,000 cash grant for script-development by Mariam Naoum from **Sard Writing Room**
- US \$10,000 worth of a full DCP package from **The Cell Post Production**
- US \$10,000 worth of a full film promotions package from **The Cell Post Production**
- US \$5,000 cash grant from **Gemini Africa**
- US \$7,000 scholarship for a Master's Degree at a United States-based university from **Gemini Africa**
- US \$5,000 worth of post-production services from **Hecat Studio**
- US \$30,000 worth of services and a color-grading package from **Mercury Visual Solutions**
- Selection of 2 filmmakers for IEFTA's Global Film Expression initiative by **International Emerging Film Talent Association**
- Invitation for one project to Rotterdam Film Lab by **Arab Cinema Center**

**MERCURY**  
VISUAL SOLUTIONS



**Ergo,**



## CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD JURY



**Nina Lath Gupta**  
India

**Nina Lath Gupta** served as a Civil Servant in the Indian Government before her long tenure as CEO of National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) in India (2006-2018). As the CEO of NFDC, Gupta repositioned the corporation to facilitate the growth of India's film sector, launching Film Bazaar as well as various film labs that revitalized India's cinema through many international collaborations. She has also set up India's largest film restoration program and produced several acclaimed films, including *Lunchbox* and *Qissa*. Recently, Gupta founded Cinevesture, a platform that acts as a hub for learning and collaborating within the film and media sector.



**Ismaël Ferroukhi**  
Morocco

Born in Morocco, **Ismaël Ferroukhi** is a director/screenwriter, who had his directorial debut with *L'Exposé* in 1992. Following this, he co-wrote the 1994 film *Too Much Happiness* with director Cédric Kahn. Ferroukhi went on to write and direct *The Unknown*, part of the Canal Plus and Arte trilogy *Court Toujours*, in 1995. In addition, he directed two TV films; *Hakim* and *Little Ben*, as well as the films, *The Great Journey* and *Free Men*. His most recent film, *Mica*, won **El Gouna Film Festival** prize at the 2019 Final Cut in Venice Workshop.



**Mohamad Soueid**  
Lebanon

**Mohamad Soueid** is a Lebanese producer, director, writer, journalist, film critic, and film professor, who is currently Senior Producer and Director of the Documentary Department at Al Arabiya News Channel. At Al Arabiya News Channel, Soueid has acquired more than 1,000 hours of television since 2009 and has also developed and supervised the production of hundreds of documentaries. Soueid has directed and produced several features, documentaries, and TV shows, including *The Insomnia of a Serial Dreamer*, *A Spell of Absence*, *Baalbeck*, and *Women in Love*. He also co-wrote Yousry Nasrallah's *The Gate of the Sun* with Elias Khoury.

## CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD MENTORS



**Rula Nasser**  
Jordan

**Rula Nasser** is a Jordanian producer who broke into the film industry by working on several productions for the BBC and Discovery channels. She also worked on the Australian TV series, *Survival*. Nasser joined The Royal Film Commission - Jordan as an Operations Manager, where she established the Filmmaker's Support Program as well as the Educational Feature Film Program. In 2010, she founded her own production house, The Imaginarium Films, where she produced more than 17 films that were eventually selected for world-class film festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, and San Sebastián. The production house is known for providing cutting-edge production services for all kinds of media. She is also a mentor and trainer with many international institutions, where she trains in film development and production.



**Ludmila Cvikova**  
Slovakia

**Ludmila Cvioka** was a programmer and film curator at the IFF Rotterdam from 1997 to 2011. Later, she collaborated with festivals, including: Karlovy Vary, Locarno, Yerevan, Busan, and Anonimul. For her work at the EYE Film Institute Amsterdam, Cvikova curated three programs: Arab Women Behind the Camera, as well as film programs around the exhibitions of Bela Tarr and Jan Svankmajer. Currently, Cvioka is working as an independent creative consultant, festival advisor and curator, and reader for various film funds. As an associate producer, she worked with Kazakh director Emir Baigazin in *The River* and with Emanuel Parvu on *Mikado*. As of April 2021, she is a board member of the Czech Film Fund.



**Hala Galal**  
Egypt

**Hala Galal** is a film director, scriptwriter, and producer. She is the founder of SEMAT Production & Distribution in Cairo, of which she was the executive director for 10 years. She participated in several film festivals, as the president of the Caravan of Euro-Arab Cinema for three years, the artistic director of the Aswan International Women Film Festival for one year, as well as being the (EFF) Educational Film Forum's founder and director at **GFF** and the Aswan International Film Festival for two years. Galal directed more than 18 films and produced over 15. Her feature documentary *Women Chitchat* won the 2006 Arab Rotterdam Film Festival's Silver Prize. She served as a jury member in several local and international film festivals and film funds.



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**ART** owns the distribution rights for the Oscar nominated director **KAOUTHER BEN HANIA'S** new film **"OLFA'S DAUGHTERS"**

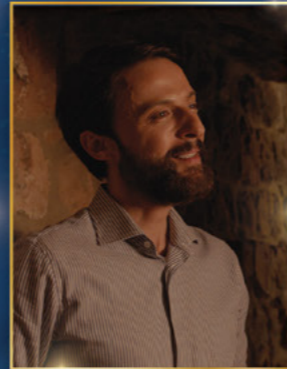


Photo Credit: LAURENT KOFFEL

**& A POCKET OF NEW GEMS**



**MEMORY BOX**  
BY JOANA HADJITHOMAS & KHALIL JOREIGE



**ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME**  
BY LARA SABA



**30 MARCH**  
BY AHMED KHALED MOUSA



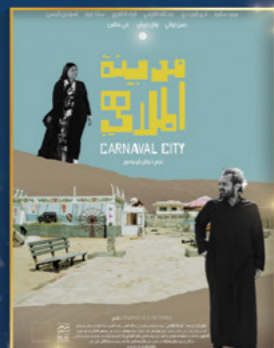
**AROSTY**  
BY MOHAMED BAKIR



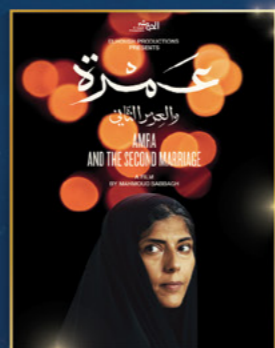
**ELENS & ELNEMS**  
BY SHERIF ARAFA



**40 YEARS AND ONE NIGHT**  
BY MOHAMED AL ALHOLAYYIL



**CARNAVAL CITY**  
BY WAEI ABU MANSOUR



**AMRA AND THE SECOND MARRIAGE**  
BY MAHMOUD SABBAGH



**LAST VISIT**  
BY ABDULMOHSEN AL-DABAAN

**PROJECTS  
IN DEVELOPMENT**



DIRECTOR  
**Ala Eddine Slim**

## AGORA

Tunisia

### Color

Length  
**120 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producer  
**Ala Eddine Slim**

### Information

#### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**US \$1,004,898**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$188,000**

Confirmed Financial Partners  
**-Exit Productions, a Tunisian production company.**  
**-CNCI, Tunisian National Centre for Cinema and Image.**  
**-Hakka Distribution, Tunisian distributor.**

### Contact

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### Log-line

In a remote town, missing people return after many years. Mystery and fear set in, and everyone tries to understand the phenomenon as tensions rise in the air.

### Synopsis

In a remote and reclusive town, the missing people return and appear enigmatic and bizarre. The tension within the families, the community, and the town grows. Fathi, a local police inspector, tries to understand what is happening, with the help of Amine, his doctor friend. As they go about their respective investigations with Fathi investigating and Amine analyzing, the two friends become stuck in the absurdity and strangeness of the case. Then Omar, a police inspector sent from the capital, arrives to the city to solve the enigma. The stories intertwine and intermingle, while the atmosphere becomes oppressive. What happened when they disappeared? Will Omar's arrival bring understanding? Is there still time to understand?

As tension mounts among the inhabitants, some groups form to exclude the returnees, while others call for them to be welcomed back. A curse falls on the town and the matter becomes complicated. Many questions and encounters take place in the city arena and under the gaze of stray dogs.

### Director's Biography

**Ala Eddine Slim** is a Tunisian filmmaker. He is the founder of Exit Productions, one of the first independent production companies in Tunisia. He has directed and produced several films. The short film *The Fall* (2008) premiered at Clermont-Ferrand. The feature documentary *Babylon* (2012) won the lion of the Future at Venice Film Festival. It is with his narrative film *Tlamedss* (2019) premiered at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes that Ala Eddine attains international recognition.



**ALA EDDINE SLIM**  
Director/Producer

### Director's Statement

*Agora* is the place where all the inhabitants of a city gather and discuss current affairs; it is also a place of making decisions. In the film, this place is represented by the public square, which will be shown twice: the first time is when deciding the fate of the returnees and the second time is when covering up the lie. *Agora* is the story of a past, supposedly disappeared and forgotten, which reappears with so much pain and bad memories. The returnees are the image of the different failures experienced both on family and on community levels. All these stories have resonances in their own small circles; the family of each one. The personal stories of the ghosts are merely alibis for a story with the plots and twists of a thriller and/or investigative film. As a filmmaker, my first desires are in the territory of cinema. As a result, all the characters in the film will be carriers of the most classic cinematographic universes. There are two important characters in the film: the city and nature. There will be a kind of hidden war between the city (with its inhabitants, buildings, etc.) and nature (sea, crows, etc.), under the gaze of the stray dogs, which symbolizes the noble decay for me. It is this eternal struggle that stimulates me, as the humans are only actors.

### Producer's Note

*Agora* is Ala Eddine Slim's third feature film. It is a new and exciting adventure in terms of directing, producing and filmmaking. Development of the film began a year ago and partnerships are beginning to materialise, both nationally and internationally. Since the Tunisian producer is also the director, this double task facilitates and allows shortcuts in the making of the film. *Agora* is a film that contains many scenes with special effects and makeup, and it would be preferable to collaborate with renowned technicians. It is also a film that is a logical continuation of the author's two previous films with recurring elements such as the city, the forest and the animals.

*Agora* is a film that mirrors the current state of the world, as it deals with economic, social, health and security problems, etc... It is in the background of each character's investigations that we perceive different realities of today's Tunisia. *Agora* is a challenge on all levels.

### Producer's Filmography

#### Ala Eddine Slim - Exit Productions

- 2021: *On the Hill* by Belhassen Handous (in production)
- 2019: *Tlamedss* by Ala Eddine Slim
- 2016: *The Last of Us* by Ala Eddine Slim
- 2014: *Hecho en casa* by Belhassen Handous
- 2012: *Babylon* by Ala Eddine Slim, Youssef Chebbi
- 2010: *The Mud* by Amen Allah Gharbi
- 2010: *The Bridge* by Ali Hassouna
- 2010: *The Stadium* by Ala Eddine Slim
- 2009: *Ayan Ken* by Ridha Tlili
- 2008: *Silence* by Karim Souaki
- 2008: *The Fall* by Ala Eddine Slim





DIRECTOR  
**Morad Mostafa**

Color

Length  
**100 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producer  
**Sawsan Yusuf**

### Information

#### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**US \$332,112**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$30,000**

### Contact

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## AISHA CAN'T FLY AWAY ANYMORE

Egypt

### Log-line

Aisha; a Somali carer for elderly patients lives in an Egyptian neighborhood witnessing the underworld of African society where there is tension between the groups. Stuck in a loveless relationship, routine and pressure of dreary work lead her into impasse.

### Synopsis

Aisha, a 29-year-old Muslim Somali girl, works as a health carer for elderly patients and lives in Ain Shams: a neighborhood in Cairo, where Africans from various nationalities live and there's tension between the different groups.

Beside her job, Aisha is involved in activities with the Somali community; however dreary job, chronic insomnia, and an abandoned microbus under her house where an Egyptian gang stack their drugs and manage their illegal business make her feels pressured as well as being stuck in a loveless relationship with Abdoun; a troubled Egyptian cook involved with an Islamic group.

Soon after Aisha starts working for the old siblings Khalil and Manal, she feels uncomfortable in their house and a friend, represented in an ostrich, visits her whenever she is in danger. Soon, she gets sexually exploited by Khalil and faced with injustice when she complains at the service office that threatens to fire her. Pressure and insomnia nights increase when tension increases between the Egyptian gang and other African groups in her neighborhood. Meanwhile, she decides to buy sedative pills for Khalil that Manal takes by mistake and dies; Aisha feels guilty but continues to work for Khalil despite his perversion. Meanwhile, Abdoun shows suicidal tendencies and asks her to push him off a mountain and she refuses before he disappears without a trace. Aisha tries to cope with her fears and lost battles but when Abdoun appears again after a while; married, the pressure Aisha bears becomes unbearable and turns to anger and push her to explosion.

### Director's Biography

**Morad Mostafa** is an Egyptian filmmaker, born in Cairo. He worked as an assistant director in several independent films, he collaborated as an executive director the in *Souad* feature film, which was selected for the 2020 Cannes Film Festival and the 2021 Berlinale. He wrote and directed two short films *Henet Ward* and *What We Don't Know About Mariam*, both had world premieres in Clermont-Ferrand and were selected for other major festivals such as: BFI London, Palm Springs, Busan, Thessaloniki, Stockholm, Karlovy Vary, FIFF Namur, Cinemed Montpellier, Shanghai, Durban, GFF, JCC, Carthage, and Cairo and won more than 30 international awards.



**MORAD MOSTAFA**  
Director

### Director's Statement

The story I'm telling is in the place where I spent my childhood and early teenage years. When I returned after years for some visits, I found that an African colony was starting to form in the heart of Cairo, as many came from different countries looking for work, peace or asylum away from war and starvation. They formed their own world with their own terms and rules. Some work hard in under-paid jobs, but others rebel against their inevitable fate of acquiescence, and become outlaws. However, for both sides and their families, just surviving the day is considered heroic.

While riding a microbus there; an African girl with a tired face sat beside me and slept; she woke up frightened and went into hysterical crying. I wondered a lot about that girl's background; then my character, Aisha, started to answer my questions; a lonely girl who is trapped between the two survival mechanisms of her society is facing the same social pressure from a bigger universe, which is the Egyptian society. Despite living among people who resemble her in color; it is not sufficient to make her feel like she belongs. She feels alienated, like the ostrich, which is a bird but cannot live with them and cannot fly one meter above the surface of the earth. This is what I want to show in this film by following Aisha's life and capturing the slow effervescence under the surface of her calmness till the point of despair and explosion.



**SAWSAN YUSUF**  
Producer

### Producer's Note

This is the 3rd film I make with director Morad Mostafa following two shorts. This project started when Morad was on a visit to my neighborhood; Ain Shams, which he was a former resident of as a kid. He noticed how it turned into an African colony, through the years. However for me, as I lived there my whole life, I thought that it has always been like this since I can remember and they have always been my neighbors but we knew little about each other or maybe our paths never crossed, I wondered why!

Later, Morad knew what his next film would be about, and it was a thrill for me because as a producer, I am always seeking projects that concern me personally as much as they concern and affect the audience.

And here we are once again sharing the same cinematic ambition and interest in making a film that is real and representative of the moment we live in, translating that into a successful teamwork and making films that speak our minds.

I trust that Morad can make such a film through his sincerity in creating moments and documenting worlds, and his unbiased style of representing the characters and stories. I believe all that, together with the experience I acquired through the years in dealing with the obstacles of making low budget films in Egypt, we can use that to benefit our film.

### Producer's Filmography

2021: *Khadiga* by Morad Mostafa

2020: *Henet Ward* by Morad Mostafa





DIRECTOR  
**Ali Al-Fatlawi**

## THE BLIND FERRYMAN – AL BASEER

Iraq, Switzerland

Color  
Length  
**100 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producer  
**Samir Jamal Aldin**

### Information

#### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**€1,650,306**

Confirmed Financing  
**€218,848**

### Contact

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#### Log-line

The blind ferryman Ayoub lives in the Iraqi marshes. One day, he meets a mysterious woman and falls for her. But, nobody believes that she exists. When everyone turns away from him, he carries out a fatal act in desperation.

#### Synopsis

The blind ferryman Ayoub lives with his mother and his religious brother in the Iraqi marshes. He knows how to find his way around despite his lack of eyesight. He earns his money by driving people around the marshes. People like to ride with him because Ayoub sings when he steers his boat through the reed fields. In the evenings, he meets with his friends. They often enjoy drinks together and talk about the mysteries of life until late into the night. On one of these evenings, when they have been drinking quite a lot, they are attacked by a group of religious radicals for consuming alcohol. The friends jump into their boats and make their escape into the darkness of the night. For the very first time in his life, Ayoub is lost. He meets a mysterious woman who disrupts his very existence. Captivated by her, his life revolves more and more around the secret encounters in the thicket of the reed fields. Whenever he tells his friends about these encounters, they shake their heads. Nobody believes him and rumors start to spread about him losing his mind. People no longer want to ride with him. Even his friends are distancing themselves. Thus, Ayoub's self-doubt grows until he no longer knows what is real and what is imaginary. He finally decides to kill the mysterious woman to prove to those around him that he has not fallen into madness. But is it possible to kill what one believes in?

#### Director's Biography

Born in Baghdad, **Ali Al-Fatlawi** is a painter, poet, and playwright. He is a member of the Union of Iraqi Writers. He was studying art at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad before the political situation forced him to leave his homeland. After a long odyssey, he arrived in Switzerland in 1997. In 2002, he graduated from the F+F School of Art and Design in Zurich. He has directed, written, and co-produced several films. In 2007, he started working as a picture designer until he founded his own film company in 2013. He is a member of the Swiss Fiction Movement as well as a member of the Swiss Authors' Rights Cooperative for Audiovisual Works. In addition to his film work, he is a performance artist and has already received several awards for his work, including the 2012 Swiss Art Award, and the 2011 Swiss Performance Prize.



**ALI AL-FATLAWI**  
Director

#### Director's Statement

The crux of **The Blind Ferryman** is the creative implementation of the "inside view" of the blind protagonist. The difficult process of capturing the thoughts of a protagonist is enhanced by the additional challenge that our main character begins to blur reality and imagination. I consider the deviation from classic storytelling a creative challenge since the narrative force in this film can only be achieved through a subjective glance at its characters and their personalities. It requires careful observation through extraordinary pictures of the people in the archaic marshes landscape. Even if many scenes are characterized by a documentary observation of the actions, perception will be heightened by creating a certain rhythm so the film can be transferred into the genre of the fable.



**SAMIR JAMAL ALDIN**  
Producer

#### Producer's Note

When Ali introduced me to the idea of dedicating his first feature film to the story of a blind ferryman in the form of a fable, I was fascinated. When I found out that he plans on accounting for the recent history of Iraq and critically discussing Iraq's society, I offered to support his project as a producer. Having lived in the diaspora for most of my life, I was hooked on the contrast of establishing an imaginative fable in conflict-ridden Iraq as a utopian world and then dismantling it step by step. The motif of the beautiful Genya that plunges those wandering in the marshes into ruin is a topic that occurs in most swamp areas and serves as a model for many mythologies around the world. The film thus has the potential of telling a universal, familiar story with a background that has not been seen on the screen too often.



#### Producer's Filmography

2021: <i>The Blind Ferryman</i>	2010: <i>Escher, der engel und die Fibonacci-zahlen</i>	1998: <i>Projecziuns tibetanas</i>
2021: <i>Ils Giacomettis</i>	2009: <i>Räuberinnen</i>	1997: <i>La eta Knabino</i>
2019: <i>Baghdad in My Shadow</i>	2007: <i>Die Chronomanen</i>	1997: <i>Angélique</i>
2018: <i>Chris the Swiss</i>	2006: <i>Das Fräulein</i>	1996: <i>Take off from the Sand</i>
2017: <i>Go Home</i>	2006: <i>Nachbeben</i>	1996: <i>Miel et cendres</i>
2016: <i>Offshore - Elmer und das Bankgeheimnis</i>	2005: <i>White Terror</i>	1993: <i>Babylon 2</i>
2014: <i>Dora oder die sexuellen Neurosen unserer Eltern</i>	2005: <i>Snow White</i>	1992: <i>(It Was) Just a Job</i>
2014: <i>Dawn</i>	2004: <i>Die letzte Mauer</i>	1992: <i>Pickelporno</i>
2014: <i>Iraqi Odyssey</i>	2004: <i>Strählv</i>	1991: <i>Immer &amp; Ewig</i>
2013: <i>Mon père, la révolution et moi</i>	2004: <i>Muridi - aus zürich</i>	1991: <i>HipHop</i>
2013: <i>Die Libelle und das Nashorn</i>	2003: <i>Tarifa Traffic - Tod in Gibraltar</i>	1989: <i>Daedalus</i>
2012: <i>Operation Libertad</i>	2003: <i>ZwischenSprach</i>	1989: <i>Dynamit am Simplon</i>
2012: <i>Once I Entered a Garden</i>	2002: <i>Forget Baghdad</i>	1988: <i>Filou</i>
	2002: <i>Aline</i>	1987: <i>Morlove - Eine ode für heisenberg</i>
	2000: <i>Summertime</i>	1984: <i>Stummfilm</i>
	2000: <i>Norman Plays Golf</i>	1984: <i>Schiefkörper</i>



DIRECTOR  
**Hicham Lasri**

## HAPPY LOVERS

Morocco, France

### Color

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**French, Arabic**

Producer  
**Lamia Chraïbi**

### Information

#### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**US \$1,482,361**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$481,520**

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### Log-line

A penniless novelist, who's in love with his wife and is soon to be a father, plans to assassinate a famous author in response to a Fatwa to cynically use the reward money to offer his family a place in the sun.

### Synopsis

Set in 1993, France. Serge and May are happy in spite of their financial problems, but the arrival of their first baby is not helping. May is a teacher, while her husband is an author who is finishing his second novel and is forced to find a job when the doctor orders May to stop working because of her delicate pregnancy. Serge starts working as a night receptionist at a fancy Parisian hotel. But the horizon remains bleak: the house they live in is not suitable for a baby and Serge's new novel is rejected by his publisher. How can they make it financially?

One night, Serge realizes that the hotel's new guest is none other than Rahman, a famous writer who has been issued a Fatwa with a massive payoff for the person who assassinates him. Serge has the idea of writing a novel about a character who wants to carry out the Fatwa to collect the prize. But as he gets overwhelmed by financial difficulties, pressure, and certain blindness, Serge starts to consider executing the Fatwa himself. This insane idea becomes an obsession that consumes him and isolates him in a sphere of absurdity and madness accompanied by some colorful companions, such as his brother-in-law, who has just got out of prison, and Nina, his extravagant colleague. While trying to save his family, Serge will gradually lose his humanity as it gets eroded by his selfishness and frailty.

### Director's Biography

**Hicham Lasri** is a renowned filmmaker of the new generation of Moroccan cinema whose work tends to cause challenges and aims to restore more humanity and freedom through stories. In 2011, he made his critically acclaimed debut with his feature *The End*, about the last days of King Hassan. In 2013, he presented the first film in his celebrated *Dog Trilogy*, *They Are the Dogs*, in which he drew parallels between the 2011 Arab Spring and the 1981 Bread Riots in Morocco. The following year, Lasri presented his third film, *The Sea Is Behind*, which won awards at numerous festivals. In 2015, his film *Starve Your Dog* came to light as the third part of his trilogy. His film *Headbang Lullaby* was screened as a Panorama Special at the 2017 Berlin International Film Festival while his film *Jahilya* had its World Premiere at the 2018 Berlin International Film Festival.



**HICHAM LASRI**  
Director

### Director's Statement

I wanted to unfold a universal story that takes place in a secular West, through the prism of an oriental Muslim vision. The singularity of this film lies in this telescoping, avoiding any orientalism to shine a new light on current problems. We speak of radical Islam, Fatwa, Jihad, without being afraid to point out the real culprit: human stupidity. Serge, a man of literature, becomes a mercenary to the radicalism of the madmen of God. Khomeini had not read Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* before issuing his Fatwa, condemning him to 30 years of wandering. As with Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Nazis, Assassin's Caucus, or the KKK, dialogue is impossible. We might as well defend our principles with our weapons: humanism, intelligence, and, for my part, enchanting and celebratory despair. *Happy Lovers* is the polyphonic story of characters who exist between several cultures, religions, and origins. Without dialects, we reveal a world that puts a ransom on a writer's life for the simple reason of having written a book. And how we find ourselves in a ubiquitous world where it seems almost normal to legitimize the murder of an individual because he expressed a different opinion, or because he had a sense of humor in his appropriation of religion.

The choice of telling this story through an interracial couple allows us to get out of certain societal compartmentalization to make it a universal story and allows us to not criticize a particular religion but a global principle: fascism.



**LAMIA CHRAÏBI**  
Producer

### Producer's Note

I wanted to produce a film that examines the consequences of a crucial decision, such as Fatwa on a writer, and shows how madness ends up turning everything into ashes.

Hicham wrote the foundation for this story in January 2015 during the events that hit Charlie Hebdo hard. All the attacks in recent years have made this project imperative in our eyes. It is a film in which violence, darkness, and irony try to encapsulate the era to return it to its almost comical dimension.

Working with Hicham makes it possible to talk about the unspeakable by using cinema as the common language of all humankind. The tone, the poetic, and the aesthetic approach of the film allow a distance and thus enable a dialogue about the unspeakable.

Finding a face of the savagery of the world without going through the horror story; how to look into the eyes of darkness without risking having that look returned?

*Happy Lovers* was developed within the framework of the Cinéfondation of the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. From this adventure emerged a film that takes root in Morocco, a country belonging to an Arab-Muslim sphere in crisis, though it stretches its branches to embrace the Western world by seeking to give - through the tools of cinema - a less Manichean vision, neither documentary nor factual, to the profound existential crisis that we've been going through since the September 11 Attacks.



### Producer's Filmography (Selection)

- 2021: *Ziyara* by Simone Bitton
- 2021: *School of Hope* by Mohamed El Aboudi
- 2021: *Mica* by Ismael Ferroukhi
- 2020: *Urgent* by Mohcine Besri
- 2020: *Achoura* by Talal Selhami
- 2019: *Stateless* by Narjiss Nejjar
- 2018: *Jahila* by Hicham Lasri
- 2016: *Mimosas* by Oliver Laxe
- 2015: *Hier* by Balint Kenyeres
- 2012: *The End* by Hicham Lasri



DIRECTOR  
**Mohamed Siam**

**Color and B&W**

Length  
**80 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Mark Lotfy, Mohamed Siam, Mohamed Hefzy**

**Information**

**Feature Narrative**

Total Budget  
**US \$400,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$160,000**  
**(fees deferrals, investments, minimum guarantee)**

Confirmed Financial Partners  
**-Fig Leaf Studios**  
**-ArtKhane**  
**-Film Clinic**

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**MY FATHER'S SCENT**  
Egypt

**Log-line**

A father-son story, in which each discovers many secrets about the other while they both try to settle their scores during one long night.

**Synopsis**

Omar returns home to Alexandria from his long treatment in Cairo, far away from where his two sons live. His return coincides with the holy celebration of Eid Al Adha when sheep are sacrificed. This social tradition has a religious value as well as a visual impact. Everything contrasts between festivities, lavish traditions, and the expected worry and sadness from the small family. His younger son Amr is 18 and still lives in the family home. He feels alienated from his family and separated from their reality. He especially feels abandoned by and estranged from his distant father, who is almost 70 years old. Omar and Amr, the father and younger son, respectively, have a big age gap that complicates all communication and intimacy. They have huge differences and conflicts that are reflected in their basic daily interactions. Due to the unexpectedly rapid deterioration of the father's health, the father's sudden departure for rehabilitation drops the family's responsibilities, combined with the dire financial situation on Amr's young shoulders.

The father's arrival forces Amr to relive the harsh memories, painful incidents, and major conflicts they experienced. A long, heated discussion eats up the night's hours as their accumulated, unresolved issues and many secrets come to the surface. The son leaves his father at dawn, feeling victorious. He drives away in his father's car that still carries that odor of sickness and mortality mixed with his father's cologne.

**Director's Biography**

**Mohamed Siam** is a Egyptian filmmaker who is a member of the Oscar's Academy. He received grants from the Sundance Institute, Berlin International Film Festival's World Cinema Fund, and Aide aux Cinémas du Monde for his films, which have been screened in festivals such as Karlovy Vary and New York, winning the Best Cinematography and Tanit d'Or awards at the 2017 and 2018 editions of Carthage Film Festival.

His film *Amal* was the opening film at the 2017 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and was screened at other film festivals, including Göteborg, Visions du Réel, and CPH Dox, as well as winning the 2018 Sheffield International Documentary Festival's Youth Jury Prize. It was later sold worldwide. Siam is an alumnus of the Sundance Institute, Berlinale Talent Campus, La Fémis school, Cannes Film Festival's Cinéfondation and Fabrique des Cinémas du Monde.

Siam has served as a jury in the Karlovy Vary and Göteborg film festivals, as well as in the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and the Hot Docs Festival funds.



**MOHAMED SIAM**  
Director



**MOHAMED HEFZY, MARK LOTFY, MOHAMED SIAM**  
Producers



**Director's Statement**

This film is about the image of the father, the role model that we seek but never find. The father figure that we all might have loved, feared, and even, despised. It is a film about this weird mix of feelings between which we all keep oscillating. It's about the resentment we all feel toward authority figures. The resentment that's conflated with the guilt we all carry most of our lives for breaking rules and going against the herd. Feeling an aching, invisible weight on our shoulders, we all wonder if we should obey or rebel. We wonder if we should walk the paved easy way or become outcasts and forge our own paths.

Growing up in a religious society, rules are omnipresent and sometimes they are all that our eyes could perceive. When this order is established through the chaos and lack of logic, we feel perplexed. Breaking the rules seems inevitable, even though its consequences can become unbearable. Going against rules – whether it's done in a family, as part of a religion, a school, or in any other institutional setting – gives us the embedded, guilty feeling that we're all sinners for breaking some sort of law. No matter how fair, rational, or even justified our actions may seem, it always comes back to haunt us for the rest of our life.

It is about how we get rid of the odor - the harsh, painful part of our relationships - and how to keep its scent - the cherished memories that made us attached to that person.

**Producers' Note**

The production team consists of internationally recognized and accomplished producers: Mohamed Hefzy (Film Clinic) and Mark Lotfy (Fig Leaf Studios).

When Siam told us this story of the son and his father, we all felt fully connected to this intense film. We became more and more invested in it as time went by and as we started to advance in the collaboration.

This theme of a delayed confrontation doesn't only touch on our personal stories, but it also connects with the delayed generational socio-political conflicts between our generations on a wider scope. We feel the same intense identification with the story, considering how we all are living in a patriarchal society.

One of the premises of the film is to show the underground, magical side of Alexandria city both as a deserted place and also as a "has been" metropolis that is somehow swarmed only by beach goers.

Following our successful selection in **El Gouna Film Festival**, which was our first application, the team intends to devote their concerted efforts to fundraising and finalizing the writing process on another by developing structure, characters and dialogue besides the visual style.

We are looking for co-producers to widen the scope of our financial horizons, and to open different doors on other Arab, EU, and North American fronts. We're looking forward to closing our financial gap shortly in terms of our minimal budget, in order to shoot next year. We are also shortlisted in few funds to be announced soon.

**Producers' Filmographies (Selection)**

**Mohamed Siam - ArtKhana**

- 2017: *Amal* by Mohamed Siam
- 2016: *Whose Country?* by Mohamed Siam
- 2011: *A Leak* by Mohamed Siam
- 2009: *The City of the Dead* by Sérgio Tréfaut

**Mark Lotfy - Fig Leaf Studios**

- TBD: *The Missing Planet* by Marouan Omara
- TBD: *I Can Hear Your Voice... Still* by Sameh Alaa
- 2021: *Captains of Za'atari* by Ali El Arabi
- 2020: *I Am Afraid to Forget Your Face* by Sameh Alaa
- 2020: *Souad* by Ayten Amin
- 2019: *Unaired Interview* by Mohamed Salah
- 2018: *Dream Away* by Marouan Omara

**Mohamed Hefzy - Film Clinic**

- 2021: *Feathers* by Omar El Zohairy
- 2020: *Souad* by Ayten Amin
- 2019: *Luxor* by Zeina Durra
- 2018: *Yommedine* by A.B. Shawky
- 2016: *Ali The Goat and Ibrahim* by Sherif El Bendary
- 2016: *Clash* by Mohamed Diab



DIRECTOR  
**Sofia Djama**

## A QUARTER TO THURSDAY IN ALGIERS

France

**Color**

Length  
**95 min**

Language  
**Algerian Arabic, French, Russian**

Producers  
**Aurélie Turc (main), Chafik Laribia**

### Information

**Feature Narrative**

Total Budget  
**US \$3,471,197**

Confirmed Financing  
**Not Provided**

### Contact

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### Log-line

Goussam is pregnant. She has to have an illegal abortion, however her plans are interrupted when Trump, her friend Riad's dachshund, dies all of a sudden.

### Synopsis

This is the story of three friends, three good-for-nothings, and a dead sausage dog named Trump. Goussam is pregnant and must rely on her two friends to get an abortion in a country, Algeria, where voluntary termination of a pregnancy is strictly prohibited, except for therapeutic reasons.

Riad, an Algerian-Russian citizen who still cherishes the memories of the socialist era pre-1988, is some sort of an ontological, Bukowskian anti-hero of contemporary Algeria. He is also the owner of a dachshund. When the dog dies unexpectedly, its corpse is moved from one refrigerator to another, waiting to be stuffed and buried.

Goussam is also closely acquainted with the extravagant Cherifa Griffa, a woman in her late forties who looks like a fallen marquise. Cherifa Griffa works occasionally as a revue singer in a vintage cabaret run by a bored colonel who has a thing for show business and nightlife.

As she visits every gynecologist in Algiers and its surroundings, desperately looking for an understanding and, more importantly, not too expensive doctor, Goussam finds herself caught in extraordinary and hazardous situations.

### Director's Biography

**Sofia Djama** is an Algerian film director. Her 2017 feature film debut, *The Blessed*, won three awards at the Venice International Film Festival, including the Brian Award which is given to the film which best champions human rights, democracy, pluralism and freedom of thought, the Lina Mangiacapre Award for films that challenge the image of women in cinema and Lyna Khoudri won Best Actress prize.



**SOFIA DJAMA**  
Director

### Director's Statement

Beyond the fact that satire can be used to point out the flaws of a society or a political system, it allows me as an Algerian author to distance myself from the seriousness of the subject. I needed lightness, especially after my experience with *The Blessed*, my first feature film.

I also wanted to give my next film a funnier, even ubiquitous tone through the adventures of my characters, while still dealing with the political and social issues that are specific to my country and are so important to me. My intention is to help audiences, who only know my country through dramatic films, to discover an aspect of Algeria which they are not so familiar with. An aspect that deserves to be portrayed, derisively perhaps, but also affectionately whenever it is still possible to do so.

I mention the Hirak in my script, but its place is necessarily remote, because our characters are disconnected from the upheavals taking place around them. They want to believe in it, but the many past failures have turned them into "ultra-normalized" subjects, on the verge of nihilism.

They are at the margin of society and its demands, whether religious, ideological, political, or economic. They seem incapable of prioritizing values and appearing amoral and skeptical. My desire to add a vintage touch to the film will be expressed in different ways: through music, for instance, the Red Army Choir, through patriotic Algerian songs and traditional rai (guellal, bendir), all mixed with electro sounds.



**AURÉLIE TURC, CHAFIK LARIBIA**  
Producers

### Producers' Note

Satire, as a cinematic genre, requires boldness, talent, creativity, and a convergence of financial and technical support from partners driven by the desire to accompany directors with strong messages.

Thus, it's natural to turn to **El Gouna Film Festival**, which supported the first films of directors and pioneers involved in the exercise of their art. For her next film, Sofia turned to us, young producers whose experience in producing Chafik Laribia's direction on shoots of Abdellatif Kechiche and Hafsia Herzi, and our policy of accompanying the creation-oriented directors, constitute our DNA and the capital on which we assert today our will and affirm today our legitimacy to orchestrate projects as original and essential as *A Quarter to Thursday in Algiers*.

We will take the necessary time to put together the required financing for this film, and to give Sofia the greatest freedom. Your support would be essential to us, and we would be happy to carry the values and editorial qualities that you have always defended and supported through this film.

### Producers' Filmographies (selection)

**Aurélie Turc - K-Rec Films**

TBD: *L'enfant du paradis* by Salim Kechiouche

TBD: *Choisy ton destin* by Rachid Akiyahou

TBD: *Chemcha* by Benjamin Kuhn

2020: *Algerian Chronicle* by Zak Kedzi

2020: *Our Genes* by Salim Kechiouche

**Chafik Laribia**

2019: *Tu mérites un amour* by Hafsia Herzi

2019: *Mektoub my Love: Intermezzo* by Abdellatif Kechiche

2018: *Mektoub my Love: Canto Uno* by Abdellatif Kechiche

2013: *Adele's Life* by Abdellatif Kechiche

2009: *Black Venus* by Abdellatif Kechiche

2007: *The Seed and the Mule* by Abdellatif Kechiche





DIRECTOR  
**Zain Duraie**

**SINK**  
Jordan, Sweden, Canada, France

**Log-line**

When her son falls mentally ill, his mother tries to help him in her own way.

**Color**

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Alaa Alasad, Sahar Yousufei, Helene Granqvist, Gabrielle Dumon**

**Information**

**Feature Narrative**

Total Budget  
**US \$1,444,594**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$20,000**

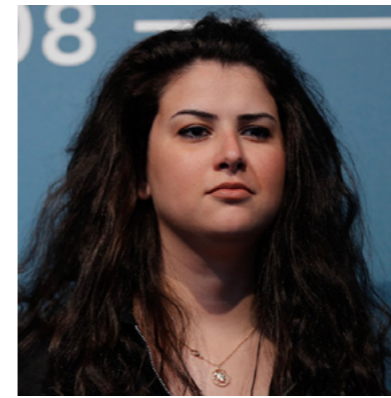
Confirmed Financial Partners  
**-Jordan Film Fund - Development grant -Malmo Arab Film Festival Development fund awarded from Swedish Film Institute**

**Contact**

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**Director's Biography**

**Zain Duraie** is a writer/director. Her debut film, *Horizon*, had its World Premiere at the 2013 Palm Springs International Film Festival, receiving the Best of the Festival Selects. Her last short film, *Give up the Ghost*, was officially selected for the 2019 Venice International Film Festival's Short Films Competition and won several awards including; El Gouna Star for Best Arab Short at El Gouna Film Festival as well as the Vimeo Staff Pick Award at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

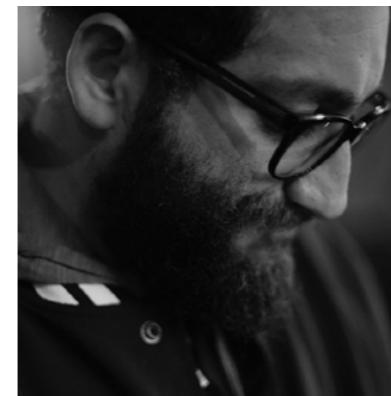


**ZAIN DURAIE**  
Director

**Director's Statement**

This film stems from a very deep place, inspired by my own family tragedy. I always wondered about what the norms really mean in our societies and how to talk about the stigma of mental illness in the Arab world. I am making this film within the belief that a story this personal can become universal and be able to speak to everyone in their own way.

Nadia, 45, is the main character and is a reflection of society's shortcomings. She's in a dark headspace as she struggles with a midlife crisis and tries to control her son's situation in her own way, because this is her only way of avoiding confronting the truth about him. When her teenage son's mental health deteriorates, Nadia embarks on a strange and freeing journey with him, where she slowly loses control over him. This pushes her to look deeper into herself as a mother who has deeply failed in the way she handled her son's situation, slowly letting go and giving into his grave illness. This is a film about acceptance, letting go, and surrendering to reality.



**ALAA ALASAD**  
Producer

**Producer's Note**

When Zain approached me with this project. I knew instantly how passionate she was about it because of her personal connection to it. And I believe such projects are powerful because of the filmmaker's genuine approach to the film after having suffered from an issue and lived through it. Since we finished the production of her short film *Give up the Ghost*, I knew that she's a director that I'd want to be working with on each and every new project. She has a clear vision and the right approach with actors. Zain is a natural-born director. I believe this film is unique to the Arab world and can make a huge difference when such a taboo subject is brought under the spotlight, especially in a country like Jordan. After developing and writing the script, we will approach some markets to raise funds for production. With our Swedish co-producer Helene Granqvist, we believe the film will be fully financed and we aim to secure a French co-producer who can help us secure some European funds. We will be applying for the DFI, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, Malmö Arab Film Festival, Royal Film Commission in Jordan, and CineGouna Platform.



**Producers' Filmographies (selection)**

**Alaa Alasad - Tabi360;**

- 2020: *Champions*
- 2019: *Give up the Ghost* by Zain Duraie
- 2019: *Tala' Vision* by Murad Abu Aysheh
- 2019: *From The Mountain* by Faisal Attrache
- 2014: *Black Out* by Bassam Alasad
- 2018: *Slam* by Partho Sen-Gupta
- 2018: *Born A King* by Agusti Villaronga
- 2018: *Yalla Parkour* by Areeb Zuaier
- 2017: *The Borrowed Dress* by Leen Alfaisal
- 2012: *Life For Rent* by Bassam Alasad

**Helene Granqvist - Nordic Factory**

- 2019: *Give Up The Ghost* by Zain Duraie
- 2018: *The Feminist: A Swedish Inspiration* by Hampus Linder
- 2017: *Väg 13* by Paolo Iskra and Kim Sundbeck

2015: *Granny's Dancing on the Table* by Hanna Sköld

**Sahar Yousufei - Nava Projects**

- 2020: *In the Shadow of the Pines* by Anne Koizumiby
- 2016: *Play your Gender* by Stephanie Joline
- Gabrielle Dumon - Le Bureau**
- 2015: *Sky* by Fabienna Berthaud
- 2016: *Tramontane* by Vatche Boulghourjian
- 2021: *After Love* by Aleem Khan





DIRECTOR  
**Said Zagha**

Color  
Length  
**100 min**

Language  
**Arabic, Hebrew**

Producer  
**Mais Salman**

### Information

#### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**€ 600,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**€ 46,000**

Confirmed Financial Partners  
**-Royal Film Commission**  
**-Robert Bosch Stiftung development prize at Chabaka - Carthage Film Festival**

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## WEDESTINE

Jordan, Palestine

### Log-line

Cannabis farming is thriving in Palestine's Area-C, a lawless no man's land. Abbas, a law-abiding mechanic, is bent on avenging his older son's death. But his task proves lethal when he uncovers his younger son's plans.

### Synopsis

Abbas is a law-abiding mechanic who lives in a West Bank village in Area-C. The Palestinian security forces aren't allowed to enter Area-C without Israel's permission, causing a boom in marijuana cultivation. Abbas's brother-in-law, Ahmad, is the village's ultimate drug lord. Abbas blames Ahmad for the death of his eldest son, who was shot at an Israeli checkpoint while delivering drugs. Grief-stricken, Abbas is unable to connect with his younger son, Hammoud, who secretly plans to escape. Driven by vengeance, Abbas contacts a Palestinian security officer, Hussen, to concoct a plan to arrest Ahmad red-handed in Area-A, where the Palestinian Authority has control. But Abbas's plan backfires when Hammoud gets arrested instead. Hussen offers them a deal: he will release Hammoud if they snitch on Ahmad, so that Hussen can request Israel's permission to enter the village and destroy Ahmad's business. Abbas and Hammoud will have to put their differences aside and work together, only to discover that Hussen is willing to overlook Ahmad's business for a bribe. When Abbas uncovers Hussen's deception, his resentment turns into a raging fire. He plans to steal Hussen's bribe following the exchange, by intercepting his vehicle. But the robbery goes completely awry. Hammoud, who has been snooping on Abbas, steals the money and goes on the run, while an enraged Hussen is on his trail. Abbas must now reevaluate his priorities to save his only remaining son from impending doom.

### Director's Biography

Palestinian writer and director **Said Zagha** completed his undergraduate education at Ohio's Kenyon College in 2011. His second short film, *Lovesick in the West Bank*, premiered at the 2021 Urban World Film Festival. In 2016, he directed his dramedy *Five Boys and a Wheel*, which premiered at the 2016 Dubai International Film Festival and was screened at over 40 film festivals worldwide, winning three awards in festivals, including Mexico, Oman, and Algeria. The film is distributed by MAD Solutions and is currently streaming on OSN. Zagha is currently developing his first feature film, *Weedestine*, a heist thriller set in the West Bank, which has already been selected at several labs and received a production grant from the Royal Film Commission of Jordan. Zagha is also a Berlin International Film Festival's 2020 Berlinale Talents alumnus.



**SAID ZAGHA**  
Director

### Director's Statement

A few years back, the Palestinian security forces arrested my brother in Ramallah while smoking rolled tobacco. They wouldn't believe that his cigarette didn't contain marijuana. My father and I couldn't reach the police station because Israel had blocked several roads in our neighborhood. Some needless beatings later, my brother was released. He left a month later to study in Europe and never returned. I left not long after. This painful moment gave birth to *Weedestine*, a story of being stuck between a rock and a hard place. To heighten the stakes, I set the story in the West Bank's Area-C – an area where the Palestinian security forces need Israel's permission to enter. It's a "no man's land," surrounded by Israeli settlements. Villagers have limited opportunities there and no protection. Many have desperately resorted to marijuana cultivation. With the Palestinian security having no control, they arrest kids like my brother to give the false impression of law and order. What would happen to people when chaos is orchestrated? *Weedestine* is an elevated genre film that blends various forms of the neo-noir thriller with touches of dark humor that will amplify the absurdity of what it means to live in such a chaotic dark place. The story functions as a microcosm of Palestine: people stop playing by the rules when they realize the game is rigged. The choice is either between constant suffering or leaving – a rare privilege. In *Weedestine*, even grief is a luxury.



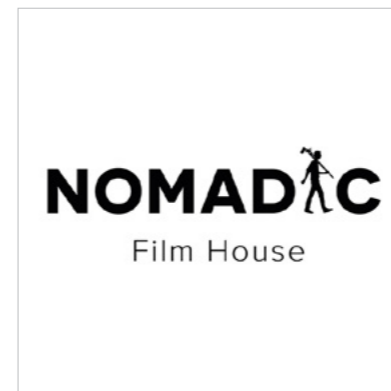
**MAIS SALMAN**  
Producer

### Producer's Note

Said and I have been working together for the past two years on a few projects including, *Lovesick in the West Bank*, a short comedy, and *Coyotes*, a short thriller awaiting financing. I am a big fan of genre cinema, which is why I admire Said's work. Telling complex and socially relevant stories through genre films is a great way to engage audiences. I immediately felt drawn to *Weedestine* after reading Said's very rich and subtle script. Said's films demonstrate his brave aesthetics as well as his clever choices in tackling complicated social and political issues. Though the setting is unfamiliar to viewers, the film's theme, characters, and relationships represent an aspect of the human condition that is deeply relatable. *Weedestine* was written with what I believe is Said's signature strength: commercial appeal, colorful characters, dark humor, and an intelligent theme. The screenplay is structured as a heist thriller, mixing serious tones with dark humor. *Weedestine* utilizes an approach that is both stylized and inspired by the reality of Area-C to make the social commentary it intends. The plan is to finance the film through co-production with European partners, while also raising as much money as possible regionally. We have recently received a production grant from the Royal Film Commission of Jordan. We are also looking for partnerships that could bring additional financing from their respective countries, as well as partners, and pre-sale opportunities.

### Producer's Filmography

2021: *Lovesick in the West Bank* by Said Zagha  
2014: *Hotel Zaatari* by Mais Salman





#### DIRECTOR

**Yomna Khattab**

#### Color

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producer  
**Ahmed Amer**

#### Information

##### Feature Documentary

Total Budget  
**EGP 1,475,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**EGP 200,000**

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## FIFTY METERS

Egypt

#### Log-line

In a city that is unkind to the elderly, a group of men over sixty formed a water aerobics team; my father among them. *Fifty Meters* penetrates this world, reflecting on this generation's life, their long past and short future.

#### Synopsis

In a quiet neighborhood in Cairo, a group of men over the age of 60 form a water aerobics team. For more than a decade now, the team members meet three days a week in Maadi Sports Club. This sport represents the only way to break their monotonous life and their constant feeling of loneliness. After his retirement, my father, Akram Khattab, joined the team and became one of its active members. The film follows these men during their training in a pool that does not exceed 50 meters in length. The slow movement of their scarred bodies, the hilarious tales of the past, and the heated childish conversations of current events, tell the story of the team's attempts to avoid the ghost of a looming end.

This film explores the space that I am trying to find as a woman in her mid-thirties among a group of men who reflect on their past life decisions with a mix of pride and regret. I reflect on my personal decisions and wonder about the future. The film approaches these men, and my father who comes at the heart of the journey. He spent his youth behind the camera, following me as a child playing gymnastics with my team, and now it is my turn to film him.

*Fifty Meters* is a way to explore concepts of authority, patriarchy and masculinity that are essential towards understanding this generation's life and its impact on my own.

#### Director's Biography

**Yomna Khattab** is a Cairo-based filmmaker. She originally acquired an MA in Economics from France in 2008. Yomna's first short stories book *Videotape from the Nineties* was published in 2015 by Dar El Shorouk. Her feature film *Rokaya* won the 2018 Best Script for Young Scriptwriters' by the Sawiris Cultural Foundation. Her short film *The First Sin*, also won the 2021 Film Prize of the Robert Bosch Stiftung's Development Prize. She developed her second feature film *Over Three Days* with the director Tamer Ashry within the 2021 Dahshur Development Workshop for Genre Films with the script consultant Ayman El Amir of Misr International Films. Coming from an economical background, her main interest in her work is to explore the politics and economics affecting women's lives and choices, in addition to modern family dynamics in contemporary times.



**YOMNA KHATTAB**  
Director

#### Director's Statement

My father always had a secret parallel life. He hasn't been a traditional father who finishes his work and comes back home. He has always been surrounded by friends that we never met. I always imagined that he has a magical world full of adventures, outstanding characters, and exciting stories. I grew up looking forward to sharing this world with him. But I never did. We both grew older, and I lost interest in his shrinking life since his retirement – until he joined this energetic aerobics team a few years ago. He regained his exciting private life, and I regained my insecurities as a teenager.

*Fifty Meters* comes as part of a bigger project that I have started since 2016. A project that is interested specifically in the elderly and the concepts of growing old and confronting the life choices made when we were younger. Decisions we take in a cruel city ruled by a patriarchal society that judges life choices and puts a distance between oneself and one's true desires.

I share with my father the fear of getting old. I imagine myself a lonely, regretful old woman. I follow my father and his friends carefully and think about what I will be like when I grow up. I fear loneliness, health deterioration, and a monotonous life. I want to step into the team members' narrow and secluded world. I want to share with them their own journey of reflections so that I may learn something about my own future journey.



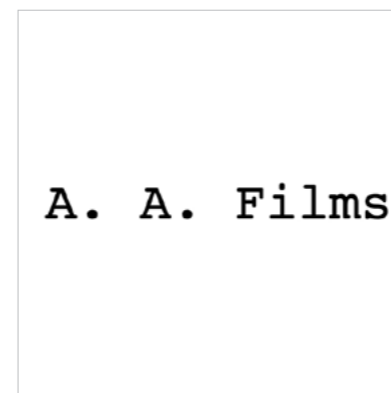
**AHMED AMER**  
Producer

#### Producer's Note

I first met Yomna Khattab when she participated in a screenwriting workshop that I organized in Cairo. From day one, I knew that Yomna was a unique talent with her storytelling skills and complex characters. Not only does she write beautiful scenes and dialogue, but she also has something profound to say through her stories.

When I got to work as a screenwriter on a project that I felt would suit Yomna, I invited her to co-write with me and I witnessed first-hand how collaborative and talented she was.

Later, Yomna shared with me the treatment of her debut film as a director, and I insisted to produce it as I see great potential in helping her tell a story only she can tell. I was immediately taken by her striking concept, hard work and sincerity. I am confident she will bring a poetic sensibility to this documentary project. Telling a story about older men in her milieu, incorporating a female gaze into a male world intrigued me. The archival material that will be used in the film is a treasure. I am willingly prepared to support Yomna in her creative journey and it will no doubt be fun and fruitful.



#### Producer's Filmography

TBD: *Hamlet from the Slums* by Ahmed Fawzi-Saleh

2018: *Looking for Oum Kalthoum* by Shirin Neshat (associate producer)

2018: *Balash Tebusni* by Ahmed Amer



DIRECTOR  
**Fatma Riahi**

**Color**

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**Arabic, English**

Producer  
**Erige Sehiri**

**Information**

**Feature Documentary**

Total Budget  
**US \$332,641**

Confirmed Financing  
**US 52,000**

**Contact**

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## MY FATHER KILLED BOURGUIBA

Tunisia

**Log-line**

The coup of 1987 was not only a political event in Tunisia, but also a personal family event that turned Fatma and her family's lives upside down.

**Synopsis**

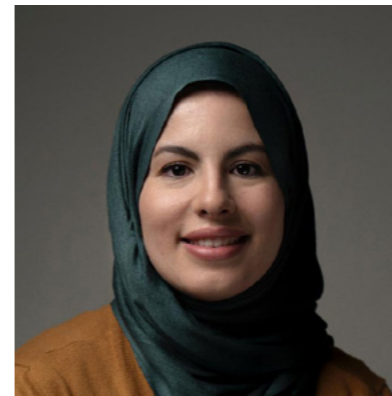
This film depicts the journey of director Fatma Riahi, in search of her father's story, a search that began 15 years after his death and 33 years after his decision to join a group that planned to overthrow the Tunisian regime of Bourguiba in a military coup.

Her father's dream of change turned their family and personal lives upside down, leaving Fatma with increasingly pressing questions that she could no longer hide. A mother in her thirties, she is now trying to understand her father's choices when he was at the same age as well as their impact on the little girl she was then, and the woman she has become today.

This poetic, political and intimate story opens the memory box, flipping through the director's father's notebooks and voicing his friends' testimonies. So many memories, images, and stories to heal their wounds and look back on what happened to him, her, their family, Tunisia, and many others in the same situation; all the people involved in struggles and conflicts they did not choose.

**Director's Biography**

**Fatma Riahi** studied Cinema and Television Technologies at Manouba University in Tunisia. Her first short film, *Busy*, was her graduation project in 2008. She worked as a producer and director on short documentaries in Tunisia. In 2011, Fatma made a mid-length TV documentary, *Tunisia: The Revolution Continues* about the Tunisian revolution. In 2015, she worked on her first feature film, *A Haunted Past*, which was part of the 2018 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam's First Appearance competition. It was also selected for the 2019 Hot Docs Festival, the 2019 Durban International Film festival, and the 2019 Costa Rica International Film Fest. *A Haunted Past* won the Anhar Award for the Best Human Rights Film at the 2019 Karama Film Festival and the Tanit d'Or at the 2019 Carthage Film Festival. Fatma is currently working on her second feature film; *My Father Killed Bourguiba*, which is in the development stage.



**FATMA RIAHI**  
Director

**Director's Statement**

After the Tunisian Revolution in 2011 and following my testimony in front of the Truth and Dignity Commission, the circle of people who knew my story began to expand. I started to narrate, and gradually, I began to feel emotional relief with each new listener to my story, as if I was treating myself with revelation. Surprisingly for me, I found out that those who I was speaking with have had similar stories about their relationship with their parents and the dictatorship and that they used to hide it or ignore it to avoid any ideological judgments. This inspired me more to narrate my story and the story lived by those who had the same experience in the world, in the countries that lived under a dictatorship. These experiences usually leave stories for families and sons who are deeply affected by the stories of relatives in prison or exile or under torture. This stage ends once the country turns from dictatorship into democracy. This transition seems smooth and good on screens and in newspapers, but the psychological and moral remains of this period have in fact remained unmentioned. The true protagonists of these stories, whether activists or victims, hide these remains inside. Even the testimonies recorded for them were just brief TV interviews. I think I need to narrate, and the world needs to listen to the deep human aspect of the story. I need to live with myself and my characters in front of the camera to gradually extract the remains of that period, so as to be able to speak about a real democratic transition and a true transitional justice and go beyond what happened without dormant hatreds and pending stories.



**ERIGE SEHIRI**  
Producer

**Producer's Note**

I know Fatma Riahi's work through her first feature film *A Haunted Past*. What attracted me in the first place is the sensitivity with which she approaches a political and family subject. I appreciated the humanity that emanates from the film and the courage she had to follow such a story. We then met at a festival and I liked our conversations and her passion for cinema. When she contacted me to collaborate on her second film *My Father Killed Bourguiba*, I did not hesitate. I think this is a film that must exist, that it will be told in an original and sensitive way and that these specific points of view on the stories of our families and our countries must be seen and heard.

It is indeed a wonderful challenge and as a producer, I am delighted to support this project. I am already considering that we could participate in workshops to work more on the treatment and the cinematographic approach of the film. We still need to complete the archival research as well as the development of the animated part of the film. We will then consider co-productions.



**Producer's Filmography**

- 2021: *Under the Fig Trees* by Erige Sehiri
- 2020: *The Disqualified* by Hamza Ouni
- 2018: *Railway Men* by Erige Sehiri
- 2012: *My Father's Facebook*



DIRECTOR  
**Sara Shazli**

## SEARCHING FOR WOODY

Egypt

Color

Length  
**75 min**

Language  
**Arabic, French, English**

Producer  
**Marianne Khoury, Sara Shazli**  
Executive Producer  
**Dima Al-Joundi**

### Information

#### Feature Documentary

Total Budget  
**US \$300,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$30,000**

### Contacts

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Dima Al-Joundi  
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### Log-line

Sara remembers Woody, the Ethiopian nanny who raised her in Cairo. 20 years later, Sara decides to look for her. The journey of finding Woody takes Sara on unexpected paths. What if Sara's quest hides another one?

### Synopsis

Sara is Egyptian and is 28-years-old. While she goes through her family's archives, Sara observes the multitude of nannies who carried her in her childhood. Among all the different faces, Woody is the only one she remembers well. The few archives she finds of Woody take her back in time. Sara is a 10 year-old introvert who lives in solitary with Woody and her absent workaholic mother. Day by day, Sara grows more attached to Woody, who begins to fill the void left by her mother, until she one day receives her Canadian visa to immigrate in the hopes of living a better life. This moment of happiness for Woody is Sara's first heartbreak. 20 years later, Sara still hasn't forgotten Woody and decides to look for her. She only knows that Woody lived in Vancouver, had gotten married, and became a nurse. Is this information still valid? What is Woody's real name? Will she be able to find her? From Egypt to Canada, Sara takes us on a journey to find the woman who was once her mother. She will confront her biological mother before searching for her childhood tenderness. Will her mother recognize her absence during Sara's childhood? If Sara manages to find Woody, will Woody have the same feelings towards her?

### Director's Biography

Graduated from the American University of Paris in Film studies, **Sara Shazli** also studied Fine Arts at the Concordia University, Montreal, and in ESEC (Graduate School of Film Studies) in Paris, France. After her graduation, she returned to Egypt and worked as an assistant director and a photographer on set. Her documentary *Jo* was screened at the 2014 Montpellier International Mediterranean Film Festival during a tribute to the Egyptian filmmaker Youssef Chahine. She then did a three-year program at the international film and TV school (EICTV) in Cuba, specializing in directing fiction. Her last short film *Isabel* received the Best Short Film Award at the 2020 Cairo International Film Festival in its official competition, Cinema of Tomorrow. She is now working on her first feature film *Nour*.



**SARA SHAZLI**  
Director

### Director's Statement

Since I began making films, I noticed that the stories I want to tell have to do with my conflicting relationship with my mother. Her absence during my childhood and the lack of affection on her part have affected me greatly. *Searching for Woody* is a total submersion in this subject: a film about childhood traumas in order to heal from them once and for all. To begin with, I have decided to watch the archives of my family in order to dig deeper into the past in the hopes of finding answers. I found myself looking for Woody, the nanny who raised me when I was a child in Cairo. Woody was Ethiopian and she was in Egypt illegally. In the eyes of the people, she was the nanny or the maid. To me, she was my mother. When Woody finally got her visa to immigrate to Canada, I wasn't able to share her joy even though I knew she deserved a better life. The abandonment I felt made me grow up. Today, I feel the need to look for her, but before doing so, I will have to confront my biological mother. I consider this film to be original and unique. A film about a personal quest, mixing archives, images of the present, fiction, and feature-hybrid documentary.

With a delicate editing of all these different elements, *Searching for Woody* can be a very powerful film, dealing with important themes such as childhood traumas, motherhood and the price of emancipation.



**MARIANNE KHOURY, SARA SHAZLI**  
Producers

**DIMA AL-JOUNDI**  
Executive Producer

### Producer's Note

Misr International Films (MIF) has a longstanding history of content production, which began in 1972 and continues today. With a philosophy instilled by the late Youssef Chahine, MIF has carefully chosen its productions ranging from award-winning features and documentaries to mega blockbuster Arab films and TV series. *Searching for Woody* by Sara Shazli is MIF latest hybrid project. Sara joined MIF in 2020 not only as a family member but also as a filmmaker.

### Executive Producer's Note

Last year, I was invited to give a film workshop by my friend and producer Marianne Khoury founder of El-Dahshureya. Among the participants, I met Sara Shazli her daughter who had just come back from the film school in Cuba. She was developing a creative feature documentary film, in a hybrid form entitled *Searching for Woody*. I was immediately seduced by her project, her sensibility and how much she related to the subject. Her short fiction film *Isabel* is also inspired by her relationship with her mother. Seeing it made me discover her talent as a director, her own cinematographic language and how capable she is in mastering the film tools, editing, filming and sound design. Between past and present, through life moments immortalized with her camera, Sara will deliver a strong film that would certainly cross international borders.

### Producer's Filmography (selected)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2021: <i>Back Home</i> by Sara Shazli                      | 2001: <i>Silence We're Rolling</i> by Youssef Chahine        |
| 2020: <i>The Money</i> by Saeed El Marouk                  | 2000: <i>The City</i> by Yousry Nasrallah                    |
| 2020: <i>Mousa</i> by Peter Mimi                           | 1999: <i>The Time of Laura</i> by Marianne Khoury            |
| 2020: <i>The Black Box</i> by Mahmoud Kamel                | 1998: <i>Date Wine</i> by Radwan El Kashef                   |
| 2019: <i>Let's Talk</i> by Marianne Khoury                 | 1997: <i>Destiny</i> by Youssef Chahine                      |
| 2016: <i>Sins of The Flesh</i> by Khaled El Hagar          | 1995: <i>On Boys, Girls And The Veil</i> by Yousry Nasrallah |
| 2015: <i>The Past Will Return</i> by Dina Hamza            | 1988: <i>Summer Thefts</i> by Yousry Nasrallah               |
| 2011: <i>Settou Zad, My First Passion</i> by Heba Yousry   | 1982: <i>An Egyptian Story</i> by Youssef Chahine            |
| 2010: <i>Zelal</i> by Marianne Khoury, Mustapha Hasnaoui   | 1978: <i>Chafika And Metwalli</i> by Aly Badrakhan           |
| 2007: <i>Chaos</i> by Youssef Chahine, Khaled Youssef      | 1976: <i>Return of The Prodigal Son</i> by Youssef Chahine   |
| 2004: <i>Alexandria, New York</i> by Youssef Chahine       | 1972: <i>The Sparrow</i> by Youssef Chahine                  |
| 2004: <i>Women's Chit Chat</i> by Hala Galal               | 1963: <i>Saladin</i> by Youssef Chahine                      |
| 2003: <i>Lady of The Palace</i> by Samir Habshy            | 1953: <i>Only Women</i> by Youssef Chahine                   |
| 2002: <i>Women Who Loved Cinema (1&amp;2)</i> by M. Khoury |  |





DIRECTORS

**Talal Derki and Ali Wajeeh**

## A SONG FOR SUMMER AND WINTER

Syria, Denmark, Germany, United States

Color

Length  
**120 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Sigrid Dyekjær, Heba Khaled, Beth Earl**

### Information

**Feature Documentary**

Total Budget  
**US \$777,469**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$349,000**

Confirmed Financial Partners  
**-Impact Partners**  
**-Catapult**  
**-International Media Support**  
**-Impact Partners Investor**  
**-Rustic Canyon Pictures**  
**-Siggi Productions**

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### Log-line

After 10 years of war, a group of women gather to write a play about being a woman in Syria today. Breaking taboos in the Arab world, they attempt to present how powerless they are over their own lives.

### Synopsis

Eliana, Enana, Farah, Grace, and Suhair are in their late twenties and have been living in Damascus since the beginning of the civil war. They belong to the religious minorities who have managed to preserve their identities and cultures despite the religious intolerance in the region.

They are bound together by an old friendship, in addition to a fellowship of study as they are graduates of the Higher Institute of Theater in Damascus. The young and passionate girls find it almost impossible to get an opportunity to work in acting without having to compromise their integrity in some way. They decide to produce a play that conveys their personal experiences, at a time where it is impossible to work and secure a living in Syria. With the massive collapse of the economy, they must write and execute the play with an exceptionally low budget and scarce funding. The play will be based on their own lives, and will tackle nepotism, corruption, harassment, and sexual exploitation in the show business industry. They find an old abandoned house in the old city that needs repairing and some restoration to make it habitable. With their own bare hands, they renovate the house and begin to use it as a workshop space for their play. Farah presents the general idea of the project as she has been chosen by the group to be the director.

### Directors' Biography

**Talal Derki** was born in Damascus and has been based in Berlin since 2013. He studied film directing in Athens and worked as an assistant director in many feature films, as well as producer and co-producer. He was nominated for an Academy Award in 2019 and became a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He was the 2019 winner of Lola, the German Film Awards. His short films and feature-length documentaries received numerous awards at various festivals. Both of his features **Return to Homs** (2014) and **Of Fathers and Sons** (2018) won the Grand Jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

**Ali Wajeeh** is a screenwriter, director and film critic who was born in Lattakia, Syria. He graduated from the Faculty of Pharmacy, Tishreen University in 2008, and started writing for Syrian TV. Wajeeh is a film critic who writes for numerous Arab publications.



**TALAL DERKI AND ALI WAJEEH**  
Directors

### Directors' Statement

After making two films about the Syrian war and experiencing its harsh reality first hand, I wanted to shy away from filming the country for a while as I needed to heal myself psychologically from the painful trauma of war. For two consecutive years, I was looking for topics that are not related to Syria or its war, but unfortunately I could not find myself in any of them. Rather, I kept finding myself going back to my home country despite being in exile from my hometown since 2012. Exile means to be banned from ever returning to your own home. But to me, it also means that the ghosts of that place are still living within you, as if you were dead and your soul is still following the news of your loved ones who are still alive. I was strongly affected by the UN statistic stating that the economic crisis has plunged 90% of the population into poverty in Damascus. I could not ignore that fact about my hometown, neither as a filmmaker nor a human being. I began preparing for a film where the past and the present meet through Syrian women's struggles and contradictions, a perspective that was absent from my last two films. This film completes my trilogy about Syria and the war. A film showcasing the cruelty of the war, and the softness of a song with a female perspective. A film that flips all what happened and what is happening, knowing that if women in Syria were given power and independence, we could have avoided reaching this destruction.



**SIGRID DYEKJÆR, HEBA KHALED, BETH EARL**  
Producers

### Producers' Note

**Heba Khaled:**

The film follows five emerging actresses who come from Syrian religious minority groups. Their friendship began during their studies at the Damascus Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, before they all graduated from school. As their friendship blossomed, they decided to create a play together about women's exploitation in Syria with a focus on what happens within the entertainment industry. Though the girls are doing their best to begin a career as actresses in Syria, the idea of leaving the country in search of a better life never leaves their minds. Eliana, Enana, Farah, Grace and Suhair are their names.



### Producers' Filmographies (Selections)

**Sigrid Dyekjær-Siggi Productions:**

- 2020: *Scandinavian Star*
- 2019-2020: *The Cave*
- 2019: *Love Child*
- 2019: *I Walk*
- 2019: *School of Seduction*
- 2019: *Hunting for Hedonia*
- 2019: *The Kingmaker*
- 2018: *Aquarela*
- 2017: *A Year of Hope*
- 2017: *A Modern Man*
- 2016: *Bugs*
- 2016: *Amateurs in Space*
- 2016: *Safari*
- 2014: *Something Better to Come*
- 2013: *Ai Weiwei - The Fake Case*
- 2012: *Free the Mind*

**Heba Khaled-Jouzour Film Production:**

- 2017: *People of the Wasteland*
- 2017: *Of Fathers and Sons*

**Beth Earl-Rustic Canyon Productions:**

- TBD: *How to Rob Banks for Dummies*
- 2021: *Faya Dayi*
- 2020: *Blue Code of Silence*
- 2020: *Kings of Capitol Hill*
- 2018: *Skip Day*
- 2017: *The Rabbit Hunt*
- 2015: *Red Nose Day*
- 2012: *The Secret Policeman's Ball*



DIRECTOR  
**Zahraa Ghandour**

## WOMEN OF MY LIFE

Iraq, Switzerland

### Color

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Samir Jamal Aldin, Zahraa Ghandour**

### Information

#### Feature Documentary

Total Budget  
**US \$371,839**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$40,000**

Confirmed Financial Partners  
**-Rober Bosch Film Prize 2020**  
**-International Media Support (IMS)**  
**-DMZ Industry**  
**-French cultural center in Baghdad**  
**-Investment IQ producer Zahraa Ghandour**

### Contact

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### Log-line

The demon of death has been following her since childhood. With time, the demon grew to be as expansive as her city, Baghdad. Zahraa goes on a journey to find a lost girl to release her nightmares.

### Synopsis

Zahraa, 30, is a Baghdad-based actress. She confronts daily news about the killing of women in her city. It tortures her in her waking state and her slumber. She goes back to the house where she was born and raised. It is her maternal aunt Hayat's, 65, home. She is the woman whose hands Zahraa was born into, as she is a certified midwife who enjoys nothing other than smoking cigarettes while watching horror films and hearing children cry upon their birth. Zahraa confronts her aunt about a little girl, Noor, who went missing from their house in Zahraa's childhood. She believes her aunt was involved. She had seen that girl on national TV talking about how her family threw her out on the street, haunting her ever since. Zahraa goes on a journey to search for Noor alongside her friend and mentor Hanaa Edwar, 74, a pioneer human rights activist. Between confronting her family history and searching for Noor, Zahraa comes up against her nightmares and the daily stories of women getting killed by their families in different ways in Baghdad. Will the excuses for why girls are killed stop in Baghdad? Will the nightmares stop if the missing Noor is found?

### Director's Biography

**Zahraa Ghandour** is a filmmaker and actress based in Baghdad. Starting her career as a writer, TV presenter, and director, she also built a freelance career as a director and producer for the last 5 years through formats by the United Nations Development Programme, Al Araby TV, BBC Arabic, and Breakthrough Media Productions. Years later, she successfully started acting, winning several international awards for roles in productions like *Baghdad in My Shadow* and *Baghdad Central*. She has written and directed *I Dream*, an experimental short film about the subjective experience during quarantine and women, who spend their entire lives in a compulsory quarantine. In 2018, **Zahraa Ghandour** attended intensive courses at MetFilm School in Berlin. She's the founder of Iraqi Women Around Creativity, an initiative for training and improving young women's skills in different creative fields.



**ZAHRAA GHANDOUR**  
Director

### Director's Statement

I am making this film to tell my personal story and the stories of other women whose lives and survival have depended on each other. Our lives, as girls and women here, are determined from the first moments we are born into this world. Many girls are unwanted since birth. I witnessed the disappearance of a girl from my aunt's house, my childhood house, who was abandoned by her birth mother and drugged by the family that took her until she became disabled. I was too small then to reach out to her and to feel for what she was going through. Now, I go on a journey of searching for her through my first film. The creative team working on this film is a local Iraqi one. I believe that making a film here will honor our vision and our experience. We all belong to an emerging generation in Iraqi filmmaking, having our first experiences together to express ourselves and produce a representation of the identity, which we feel is all that is left for us after all the wars and crises that we lived and are still living through.



**SAMIR JAMAL ALDIN, ZAHRAA GHANDOUR**  
Producer

### Producers' Note

It's been four years since I started this professional and in-depth working relationship with Zahraa Ghandour in the cinema business. She had impressed me at the time as an activist for women's rights in Baghdad, as well as an intrepid journalist in the Iraqi media. Then, she convinced me to cast her in the lead role in my last feature film *Baghdad in My Shadow*, and then an even closer collaboration began. During this time, I discovered her ability to quickly assess the situation and draw efficient conclusions for further activities. I also liked the fact she was able to understand many social and political contexts and to incorporate them into her work as an actress. Excellent conditions for realizing a cinematic work, not only in front of the camera but also behind! What is extraordinary about Zahraa's project is that her two protagonists (herself as an actress and as a director) come from different social classes, but can assert their claims through the question of women in a joint film. For me, as a producer and as a fellow filmmaker, this project is extraordinary and urgent to implement.



### Producer's Filmography

2021: <i>The Blind Ferryman</i>	2012: <i>Operation Libertad</i>	2003: <i>ZwischenSprach</i>
2021: <i>Ils giacomettis</i>	2012: <i>Once I Entered a Garden</i>	2002: <i>Forget Baghdad</i>
2019: <i>Baghdad in My Shadow</i>	2010: <i>Escher, der engel und die fibonacci-zahlen</i>	2002: <i>Aline</i>
2018: <i>Chris the Swiss</i>	2009: <i>Räuberinnen</i>	2000: <i>Summertime</i>
2017: <i>Go Home</i>	2007: <i>Die Chronomanen</i>	2000: <i>Norman Plays Golf</i>
2016: <i>Offshore - Elmer und das bankgeheimnis</i>	2006: <i>Das fräulein</i>	1998: <i>Projecziuns tibetanas</i>
2014: <i>Dora oder die sexuellen neurosen unserer eltern</i>	2006: <i>Nachbeben</i>	1997: <i>La eta Knabino</i>
2014: <i>Dawn</i>	2005: <i>White Terror</i>	1997: <i>Angélique</i>
2014: <i>Iraqi Odyssey</i>	2005: <i>Snow White</i>	1996: <i>Take off from the Sand</i>
2013: <i>Mon père, la révolution et moi</i>	2004: <i>Die letzte mauer</i>	1996: <i>Miel et cendres</i>
2013: <i>Die libelle und das nashorn</i>	2004: <i>Strähl</i>	1993: <i>Babylon 2</i>
	2004: <i>Muridi - aus zürich</i>	1992: <i>(It was) Just a Job</i>
	2003: <i>Tarifa Traffic - Tod in gibraltar</i>	



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2020

- Ala'a Al Qaisi (Jordan)  
*The Day of Arafah*
- Ahmed Fawzi Saleh & Ahmed Amer (Egypt)  
*Hamlet from the Slums*

2019

- Ali El Arabi (Egypt)  
*Captains of Za'atari*
- Rim Mejdi (Morocco)  
*Plum Season*

2018


- Marwa Zein (Sudan)  
*Khartoum Offside*
- Ruba Atiyeh (Lebanon)  
*A Home of One's Own*

2017

- Kesmat El Sayed (Egypt)  
*Abo Zabaal Prison 1989*
- May Odeh (Palestine)  
*200 Meters*

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**FILMS IN  
POST-PRODUCTION**



**DIRECTOR**

**Ahmed Yassin Al Daradji**

**HANGING GARDENS**

Iraq, United Kingdom, Palestine

**Color**

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Huda Al Kadhimi, Margaret Glover, May Odeh**

**Information**

**Feature Narrative**

Total Budget  
**US \$485,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$385,000**

Confirmed Financial Partner  
**-Ashur International Bank**  
**-AFAC**  
**-Iraqi Cinema & Theater Foundation**  
**-Melon City**  
**-OBR Taxi**  
**-Trash Film Production**

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**Log-line**

When a young Iraqi rubbish picker rescues an American sex doll from the Baghdad dumps, he crosses into a perilous red zone, where friends become enemies and nothing is certain.

**Synopsis**

Brothers Taha, 27, and As'ad, 12, rise with the first call to prayer and head for Hanging Gardens – a multi-coloured mash-up of an environmental disaster – AKA Baghdad's municipal dump. While Taha searches for scrap metal to sell by weight, As'ad chases after US Embassy trucks, with their higher grade of trash.

One lucky day, As'ad uncovers an American sex doll, takes her home, washes and dresses her. Taha flies into a violent rage and disowns his little brother. As'ad makes a home for his American girl in an abandoned armored personnel carrier. When his friend, Amir, catches up with As'ad, he immediately spots the doll's potential and believes it's their duty to offer this virus-free entertainment to their male peers.

It's not long before the local patriarch learns of this unwelcome foreigner in his closely patrolled community. As'ad just about manages to negotiate a clear path between his friend's enterprising scheme and the patriarch's fundamentalism until the American girl goes missing. A frantic search begins. The patriarch's henchmen grab As'ad and Amir before they can find the doll. As punishment, the patriarch dismantles Amir's café and abuses As'ad for his own pleasure.

**Director's Biography**

Iraqi-UK writer/director **Ahmed Yassin Al Daradji** is an alumnus of Berlin International Film Festival's 2018 Berlinale Talents. The success of his short film, **My Name Is Mohammed**, earned Ahmed a place at the London Film School. There, he received an MA with distinction in 2013 for **Children of God**, a multi-award winning short, that won the Muhr Award for Best Arab Short, the FIPRESCI Prize, and the Seoul Guro for Best Live Action Short, as well as Cannes Film Festival's Jury Award for the Disabled Film Festival. His short **Stray** premiered at London's East End Film Festival. **Hanging Gardens**, Ahmed's debut feature film, received development support from the Royal Film Commission Jordan and AFAC. The film won the jury award for best film in post-production at the 2021 Venice International Film Festival's Final Cut in Venice Workshop.



**AHMED YASSIN AL DARADJI**  
Director

**Director's Statement**

The idea dates back to the time the Americans occupied Iraq. I witnessed the chaos, and during the civil war and the militia-controlled life in Baghdad, my friend Atheer asked me to accompany him to a safe place. Atheer carefully opened a bag; it was an American sex toy. He had gotten it from a relative who worked for the US military. It was the first time in our lives that we'd seen such a creature. Not long after that, another friend washed the sex toy with boiling water! The toy shrank beyond recognition and use. Atheer's fledgling business stopped before it ever really got started.

This story led me to explore in depth the problems of historical cultural confrontation of a society isolated from the world for 12 years due to war, politics and dictatorship. The transition that Iraqi society has been undergoing since 2003 is completely surreal. My purpose in making this film is to bring audiences – both in Iraq and around the world – face to face with what the people, on whom my characters are based, have been going through in real life.



**HUDA AL KADHIMI, MAY ODEH, MARGARET GLOVER**  
Producers

**Producers' Note**

We are thrilled to be back in **El Gouna Film Festival**, three years after Margaret and May met and shared their enthusiasm for this uniquely Iraqi story told with a spirit of independence by Iraqis themselves. The dramatic subject matter combined with truly strong and captivating characters provides an intimate and surprising portrait of life in Baghdad now. Despite a complex and at times overwhelming shoot in Spring 2021, Ahmed and his DoP, Duraid Munajim, have delivered exciting material on this delicate and difficult topic, with great first-time actors. We've received invaluable feedback from Venice International Film Festival, where the film won the 2021 Final Cut in Venice Workshop's jury prize for the Best Film in Post Production. The footage is now in the expert hands of our editor, Kamal El Mallakh, yet we lack the funds to complete the film. We are looking forward to meeting potential partners, sales agents and festival programmers.



**Producers' Filmographies (Selections)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Huda Al Kadhimi - Ishtar Iraq Film Production</b>            | 2017: <i>Undocument</i> by Amin Bahkshian and Kyla Simone Bruce |
| TBD: <i>Door Of The East, Taboo</i> by Medoo Ali                | 2016: <i>The Book of Gabrielle</i> by Lisa Gornick              |
| TBD: <i>Happy Hour In Baghdad</i> by Ayman Al Shatri            | 2013: <i>Blackbird</i> by Jamie Chambers                        |
| TBD: <i>Papion On The Water Tank</i> by Yahya Al-Abdallah       | 1997: Snap, tv series   |
| TBD: <i>Dunia</i> by Yasir Kareem                               | <b>May Odeh - Odeh Films</b>                                    |
| 2021: <i>The Last Displaced</i> by Muhannad Al-Sudany           | 2020: <i>200 Meters</i> by Ameen Nayfeh                         |
| 2019: <i>Mosul 980</i> by Ali Mohammed Saeed                    | 2019: <i>Maradona's Legs</i> by Firas Khoury                    |
| <b>Margaret Glover</b>  | 2017: <i>The Crossing</i> by Ameen Nayfeh                       |
| 2019: <i>The Deathless Woman</i> by Roz Mortimer                | 2013: <i>Izriqaq</i> by Rama Mari                               |
| 2018: <i>Stray</i> by Jessika Kelly and Ahmed Yassin Al Daradji | 2012: <i>Diaries</i> by May Odeh                                |
| 2017: <i>The Invisible Words</i> by Alberto Boldini             |   |



#### DIRECTOR

**Hicham Lasri**

#### Color

Length  
**114 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producer  
**Hicham Lasri**

#### Information

##### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**US \$235,100**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$175,100**

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## HAYSH MAYSH: FALSE DRAMA

Morocco

#### Log-line

It is the worst day in the life of Khadija, a Casablanca-based woman who's known for her uncontrollable bursts of anger. She is struggling to survive the post-apocalyptic environment in her hometown.

#### Synopsis

Khadija is a young woman who's living in a working class neighborhood in the heart of Casablanca. She is known for her constant uncontrollable anger episodes and verbal outbursts. She will soon be 30 years old, which makes her even more angry and triggers a conflict of self-reflection about her future. When the story begins, she doesn't know that she is going to have the worst day of her life, where she is going to lose her job, her fiancé, her house, her family, her friends, a strange dwarf who gives out free hugs, and has the police on her back. This day, to be marked with a black stone, will redefine her destiny in this post-apocalyptic Casablanca between nightmares and hallucinations.

#### Director's Biography

**Hicham Lasri** is a Casablanca-based artist; director, producer, screenwriter, novelist, comic book creator, and lately also a singer in his own group Chic Chocs. Since the age of 16, Lasri has been involved in art in all its forms. Lasri began his career writing scripts and plays. In chronological order, he has written for theater: *(K) Dream* (2007), *Tears of Joy One Day of Zemzem* (2008), and *The Invisibles* (2019), which he also directed, and finally *F.A.Q* (2021). His films, *The End* (2012), *They Are the Dogs* (2013), *The Sea Is Behind* (2015), *Starve Your Dog* (2016), *Headbang Lullaby* (2017), and *Jahilya* (2018), have all premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, and Berlin International Film Festival.



**HICHAM LASRI**  
Director/Producer

#### Director's Statement

As in my other films, Morocco is a sick man who undergoes the scrutiny of a scalpel, but this time, we are in a modern Morocco, torn by the weight of an amused third worldism, and of a thwarted modernity. The Morocco described in the film is as hybrid as the film itself with its narration, its filming, its aesthetics, and its sound, which allow it to break the 4<sup>th</sup> wall shamelessly. This gives the main character a stature that tears her away from the portrait of a female victim in a typical patriarchal society. Luckily, we escape this cliché to nuance the social struggle of this young woman who realizes that she will soon be 30-years-old and that her future is as jammed as the boulevard Zerktouni in Casablanca. This film is a black comedy, sardonic, unapologetic, and dismantling the clichés of Arab cinema on social issues, injecting a corrosive humor that does not shy away from attacking the viewer himself. I always dreamed of making a Spaghetti Western with a female character in the alternative part of Casablanca, and here we go. Moreover, it's a tribute to the Arab, Moroccan, Casablanca woman in the most poetic and meta way without even stooping to make her a victim, nor to sexualize her, nor even to make the man her torturer. It is the first film about Arab stoners and, knowing that Morocco is the first exporter of cannabis in the world, we can say that justice is done.

#### Producer's Note

This film is a self-production that stems from the need to make a film in these COVID-ian times when the whole cinema machine is jammed. This is a film made in the urgency of the "before world" in an alternative mode with my usual team, the usual suspects, who have followed me on most of my cinematographic adventures, with a story that needed urgency, lightness and relevance. Furthermore, the subject was impossible to finance by the Moroccan Cinematographic Center because of its abrasive nature, and also because of the irony of its narrative process that transforms social precariousness into an argument of science fiction, where the streets of Casablanca resemble a mixture of Mad-Max and Alphaville to better tell the journey of this young woman who is left to her own devices. It is also my first film with a female lead; a Casablanca woman.

#### Producer's Filmography

- 2019: *Cruelty Free* by Hicham Lasri
- 2019: *Androides & Zombies* by Hicham Lasri
- 2019: *The Last Arab Movie* by Hicham Lasri
- 2018: *The Male Gaze* by Hicham Lasri
- 2018: *Love In Aleppo* by Hicham Lasri
- 2018: *Wasteland* by Hicham Lasri
- 2018: *Jahila* by Hicham Lasri
- 2017: *Headbang Lullaby* by Hicham Lasri
- 2016: *Starve Your Dog* by Hicham Lasri
- 2015: *The Sea is Behind* by Hicham Lasri
- 2013: *They Are the Dogs* by Hicham Lasri
- 2011: *The End* by Hicham Lasri



**DIRECTOR**

**Bassam Mortada**

**Color**

Length  
**85 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Kesmat ElSayed  
Anne Bolster**

**Information**

**Feature Documentary**

Total Budget  
**US \$257,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$158,000**

Confirmed Financial Partner  
-**Jyoti Film**  
-**GFF Development Fund**  
-**AFAC**  
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**ABO ZABAAL 1989**

Egypt, Germany

**Log-line**

Bassam revisits and reconstructs traumatic memories of his father's political arrest in 1989, which had distractive ramifications on his family. Can an immersive experience into the memories of the past help them heal?

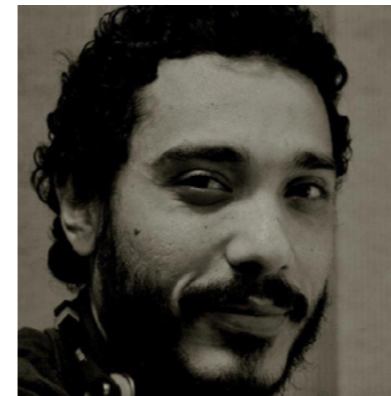
**Synopsis**

*Abo Zabaal 1989* is a hybrid autobiographical documentary of Bassam, the director, and his journey as he shares with this film how he deals with the trauma that he and his family suffered through. At five years of age, Bassam engraved in his mind the morning that his mother woke him up to help her prepare a huge number of fish to take to his father in the Abo Zabaal prison. The events that happened in 1989 had consequences on the whole family. Bassam witnessed, heard, and felt events beyond his capacity to comprehend. Bassam's father comes out a changed man and leaves the family after a short time to live in Vienna. Bassam also explores the point of view of his mother, Fardous. She shares her unrecognised trauma and disappointment with his father while she carries the burden of her illness.

Bassam performs the reenactment using 16 mm film in an experimental distorted manner, giving the film a visual language and feel that are different from the present. The immersive experience also includes listening to audio tapes that his father used to send him when he left the family. They listen together for the first time in 25 years. Bassam's journey of reconnection is interrupted when his mother passes away. He and his father attempt to deal with the past by visiting a forgotten piece of land owned by the latter. Then, together with Egyptian actor Sayed Ragab, Bassam stages a unique private performance to give a home to these painful memories.

**Director's Biography**

**Bassam Mortada** is a director, producer, trainer and co-founder of See Media Production. He was the co-founder of the web-TV platform of Al Masry Al Youm. In addition to directing, producing short documentary and audio visual work, he also trained journalists on visual storytelling. His first feature documentary, *Reporting a Revolution*, premiered at the 2012 Berlin International Film Festival, and was selected at many other festivals worldwide. Bassam is dedicated to working on neglected narratives, social injustice and activists' biographies. For his company, See Media Production, he directed two short films. *Waiting for His Descent*, which won the first prize for a documentary at the Jesuit Film Festival, and *Searching for Ghazala*.



**BASSAM MORTADA**  
Director

**Director's Statement**

My childhood was spent in a political-activist household that shaped me for life. My parents belonged to the socialist movement. Socialism and the struggle for justice and change in Egypt were the most important values to them. On the one hand, I felt proud that my parents were so engaged politically; on the other hand, it had a massive impact on us. We only discussed politics, and our feelings were always related to the political events happening around us. Even my parents' friends shared the same ideas, upbringing, and political views. Our family life was secondary to a noble cause. What happened in Abo Zabaal Prison in 1989 and its consequences illustrate this struggle the most, having had the most profound effect on my life. It is a story I grew up with, and in which my family is still stuck. Revisiting the past would help bring us closer and find ways of healing. I will use the medium of film to create visual references for a history that has been lost, and will try to create from painful memories a path to a brighter future by allowing myself to use art as a form of healing and expression.



**KESMAT ELSAYED**  
Producer

**Producer's Note**

I got to know Bassam in 2008. He was working passionately on documentaries telling stories of social justice. During this time, I got to know that his drive to tell stories of the oppressed and voiceless stems from his own trauma and the legacy of his family. He's finally ready to share his own story. I admire how he exposes his own vulnerability and personal story while transforming painful memories into an artistic expression. What is particularly special in this project is its visual concept with the different layers and the immersive experience Bassam is putting himself through.

It's a personal story of family trauma yet it transcends beyond it. The film explores how we deal with memories and how family traumas have lasting effects.



**Producers' Filmographies (selection)**

**Kesmat Elsayed - Seera Films**

- 2021: *My Mohamed is Different* by Ines Marzouk
- 2019: *Searching for Ghazala* by Bassam Mortada
- 2015: *Fathallah Mahrous* by Omar Khaled
- 2015: *Chronicles of Quarry Workers* by Bassam Mortada
- 2012: *Reporting a Revolution* by Bassam Mortada

**Anna Bolster - Jyoti Films**

- 2020: *Women with Purple Violets* by Sezen Kayhan,
- 2019: *Lift Like a Girl* by Mayye Zayed
- 2017: *Video Hunters* by Daniel Hyan



DIRECTOR  
**Reine Razzouk**

**Color**

Length  
**95 min**

Language  
**Arabic, English**

Producer  
**Reine Razzouk**

**Information**

**Feature Documentary**

Total Budget  
**US \$139,200**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$104,700**

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**HYPHEN**  
Lebanon

**Log-line**

Shot over the span of 10 years, *Hyphen* explores womanhood, generational trauma and the aftermath of war on Lebanese society through the lens and relationship of a recovering heroin addict and her filmmaker cousin.

**Synopsis**

When Nicole reveals to her childhood friend and cousin, Reine, that she's been addicted to heroin since she was 13, they decide to document Nicole's rehab journey. *Hyphen* follows the ups and downs of their relationship as well as Nicole's struggle to move out into the world as an adult and grown woman despite the lack of economical opportunities and a poisonous cultural upbringing that teaches young women to suppress their ideas and sexuality to follow a set of religious and cultural rules.

**Director's Biography**

**Reine Razzouk** is a Lebanese filmmaker, writer and assistant director. Having worked on many major commercials and feature films with prominent directors, including Ziad Doueiri, and Mira Nair, Reine is now developing her first narrative feature and is in the post-production stage of *Hyphen*, her first feature documentary.



**REINE RAZZOUK**  
Director/Producer

**Director's Statement**

Growing up in Ain El Remmaneh, the epicenter of the Lebanese Civil War, I was, logically, immersed in the divisive mentality of "us" and "them". When I began filming Nicole's healing journey, I wanted to shed light on the issues of my community, the emotional wounds of the war and the consequences of growing up in such a divided society. However, over the span of 10 years, my motivation behind the film evolved and expanded. I realized that Nicole's relationship with her parents, her addiction and her struggle for self expression mirrored the disconnect and anger many young Lebanese people feel towards the older generation and their parents. This younger Lebanese generation is eager to break free from the conservative religion-focused norms that stigmatize self-expression, sexuality, feminism, and political freedom. As it takes a harsh look at family strife, addiction, female sexuality and the post-war Lebanese society, *Hyphen* is a devastating essay on the precariousness of becoming the woman you want to be when you've had little guidance to that end.

**Director's Filmography**

2016: *Joule* by Reine Razzouk  
2015: *Stillness* by Reine Razzouk



#### DIRECTORS

**Latifa Doghri, Salem Trabelsi**

#### Color

Length  
**80 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producers  
**Latifa Doghri, Salem Trabelsi**

#### Information

##### Feature Documentary

Total Budget  
**US \$185,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$86,020**

#### Contact

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## NOTHING ABOUT MY MOTHER

Tunisia

#### Log-line

Tortured and prostituted during her childhood, between the age of six and eight, an 18-year-old girl uses her own past as an example to restore hope for other children in her situation and most importantly for herself.

#### Synopsis

A five-year journey that encompasses the reconstruction of Siwar's life. Between the ages of six to eight, Siwar was raped, tortured and prostituted by her mother and stepfather. When it was discovered, she was placed into foster care, and her parents were sent to jail for six years. Today, Siwar is 18, and lives with Wassila - an elderly woman of 70, who took her in as her own. They live an isolated life in an apartment with 20 cats. In spite of her horrible past, Siwar will not give up. With the help of Dr. Moez; a pediatrician who is also the leader of an organization fighting for children's rights in Tunisia, she attempts to bring her case to the justice system by filing lawsuit against her biological mother for human trafficking, amongst other things. But, Tunisia does not have any laws that protect children. It does not even consider children as citizens of the state; they are considered a property of the parents. So, the suits never make it to court.

In the midst of all this, we see Siwar slowly growing and changing. By using her own life as an example, she joins her theater group on tour and helps other children in her situation. Through this, she starts to restore hope for her own future.

#### Director's Biography

**Latifa Doghri's** repertoire includes the award-winning *Boxing with Her*, which marks her debut feature documentary. Her second feature documentary was *Made in Gougou*, which won the Best Documentary prize at the 2014 Luxor African Film Festival. In 2017, she directed her third documentary, *Sisters Courage*, and in 2018, she directed *The Gift*, marking her first short film, which was an official selection at the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of **GFF**.

**Salem Trabelsi** has worked as a journalist and novelist. He produced and co-directed his first documentary, *Boxing with Her* in 2011. In 2014, he produced his second feature documentary, *Made in Gougou*, which won the Best Documentary Film award at the 2014 Luxor African Film Festival. In 2017, he co-directed the feature documentary, *Sisters Courage*. In 2018, he produced the short fiction *The Gift*.



**SALEM TRABELSI, LATIFA DOGHRI**  
Filmmakers

#### Directors' Statement:

Siwar's story touched us deeply, because she awakened a childhood sensibility in us: the memory of our friends who were sad and we did not understand what was happening to them. Today, Siwar is 18-years-old. Siwar still bears the traces of the abuse imposed by her parents on her body as well as serious after-effects that will not allow her to have a social, emotional and sexual life as an ordinary woman. But our film is more than that. Because Siwar is also a force of life that tries to overcome her terrible past and reconcile herself with the world through acting. We want to make this film about Siwar because this girl alone summarizes all the violence committed on the children in the world. We are not making this film to tell the story of this girl's past and make her a victim. We're making this film to restore her dignity while watching her grow and hope.

#### Producers' Note:

Our project was selected for the inaugural edition of the industry program of the Movies that Matter Film Festival in Netherlands. An international panel granted us the Doc's up Fund's MTM Award, among eight rough-cuts from eight countries. Movies that Matter Film Festival is a founding and leading member of the Human Rights Film Network, which today brings together more than 40 human rights film festivals from all over the world.

We are particularly interested in the grant of CineGouna SpringBoard because it represents an anchoring of our project in the Arab region and will give much more visibility to our film, in addition to the fact that it can support us to finalize the film. This project is a sign of urgency for us: the consideration of children's rights in Arab societies, especially in the case of sexual abuse, must evolve. We want the film, beyond raising awareness, to have a tangible impact not only in Tunisia and the other countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East, but also in Europe and the USA. We hope that the story of Siwar will not leave you indifferent and that you will want to help us in the making of this ambitious and necessary film.

#### Producer's Filmography

2018: *The Gift* by Latifa Doghri and Salem Trabelsi

2017: *Sisters Courage* by Latifa Doghri and Salem Trabelsi

2013: *Made in Gougou* by Latifa Doghri and Salem Trabelsi

2011: *Boxing with Her* by Latifa Doghri and Salem Trabelsi





DIRECTOR  
**Hind Shoufani**

**Color**

Length  
**90 min**

Language  
**Arabic, English**

Producers  
**Ossama Bawardi, Rafia H. Oraidi**

**Information**

**Feature Documentary**

Total Budget  
**US \$80,000**

Confirmed Financing  
**US \$30,000**

Confirmed Financial Partner  
**-AFAC**

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**THEY PLANTED STRANGE TREES**

Palestine

**Log-line**

A poetic metaphorical exploration of the ancient beauty and rituals of minority Christian Arabs in Galilee. Hind Shoufani, a Palestinian in diaspora finally returns 'home' after decades marked by grief, to listen and learn.

**Synopsis**

From dancers to goat herders, journalists, priests, carpenters and tobacco farmers, *They Planted Strange Trees* converses with communities in mystical Galilee. Who are these Palestinians who kept the land and the faith under a new citizenship?

The film celebrates the sensations of Arab Christians from villages like Miilya, Fasouta and Tarsheeha, the destroyed remnants of Iqrith/Biriim, and the cities of Haifa and Nazareth, weaving these stories into the emotions of the returning daughter, Hind- now orphaned and unsure of who she is in this unknown landscape.

Blending sensitive family moments with scripture, poetry, delicate life scenes in the land, and improvised interviews, the film speaks of the contradictory existence and mythology of these insular communities.

Hind's quest challenges the idea of "home" and hunts for solace to heal her mourning in mountains and coastlines, as she debates difficult questions on faith, muddled minority ethnography and allegiance under an ongoing occupation.

The ensemble invites us into their intimate gatherings, speaking from their heart as we travel from weddings to mountain views, from churches to coffeeshops in abandoned Arab quarters, from ruins and temples to happy living rooms, and from lush fields to loving kitchens as Hind embraces her ancestry, and is in turn, saved by it.

What would have happened to her had she been born in these wonderful lands of her exiled parents?

Why were these people of her homeland so beautiful? So strong? So alone?

**Director's Biography**

**Hind Shoufani** is a filmmaker, writer and poet. As a Fulbright scholar, she holds an MFA in filmmaking from NYU, and she attended Iowa University's IWP as a poet.

She co-wrote *The Present*, which won a BAFTA and was nominated for an Oscar. She is currently directing her second personal documentary feature. Hind has been producing, directing, editing, and writing films and literature for over 22 years, as well as performing poetry. Her award-winning first feature documentary *Trip Along Exodus* was screened in over 35 film festivals worldwide.

Hind authored two poetry books and edited two anthologies of literary essays, poetry and photography. She has lived in Damascus, Amman, Beirut, NYC and Dubai while maintaining her ancestral Palestinian identity at the center of her being, her politics and her work.



**HIND SHOUFANI**  
Director

**Director's Statement**

I'm a Palestinian writer and filmmaker, born in Lebanon as a refugee from the Galilee, and grew up in Amman and Damascus. Like many exiled Palestinians in the diaspora, I moved around the world from Dubai to New York, and despite never knowing my Palestinian parents' homeland, always keeping the Galilee at the core of my identity.

My extended family had stayed in their homes, kept the land, the love. My parents were extremely secular, as am I, so my attraction to these communities is anthropological, personal, curious, investigative rather than religious.

Our village, Miilya (A Melkite Catholic Arab village of 3000 people in Western Galilee) was always a distant myth, though it was an hour-long drive from where I was born in Sidon, south Lebanon. The last time I visited it was in 1997, with my dying mother. After her death, I never went back. I am now re-discovering my ancestral home after obtaining my mother's citizenship, after 4 decades of being stateless. My large family and their community in other towns, revere my exiled deceased father, & they've granted me kind, intricate & unrestricted access to their homes, spirits, fears & everyday moments.

The stories are full of love & ancient Mediterranean magic. I, the returning storyteller, will develop new memories, questioning where I fit in this tapestry. Why did my accent in Arabic change to their mountain dialect the first week I visited? Why do I dream so comfortably in the village? Laugh so loudly?



**OSSAMA BAWARDI, RAFIA H. ORAIDI**  
Producers

**Producers' Note**

The day Hind spoke to me about *They Planted Strange Trees*, I realised how much it reflected our own life: our history, our family and friends, the communities we come from, and the places we call 'home'. The Palestinians living within the 1948 area, those who survived and stayed in Palestine until today, despite the brutality of forced displacement, are now living an identity crisis that is dividing society apart, fed by the Israeli policy to identify and categorise people according to their religions, while constantly trying to impose a nationality they created from a religion on the natives of Palestine.

Palestine, like many ancient lands in the region, is known for its rich pluralistic society, embracing diverse ethnicities, religions and people who all count as Palestinians, and so it has been for decades. The Christians Palestinian old cities and villages are constantly facing challenges; a life overwhelmed with contradictions, contrasts and confusion. Will they surrender and melt into the new identity, or will they stand solid as Christian Palestinians opposed to occupation surrounded by their Muslim heritage and culture? While they struggle to search for their sense of belonging, trying to digest the struggle and embrace their true identities, we at Philistine Films believe that it is fascinating to explore and contemplate this dilemma.

Working with Hind on this project is already a rewarding experience, for her determination and cinematic honesty make it a unique journey. We look forward to sharing the film with global audiences who care to explore what lies beneath the isolation of those holding on to their homes and lands in the areas of 1948.

**Producers' Filmographies**

<b>Ossama Bawardi - Philistine Films</b>	2010: <i>Haneen</i> by Ossama Bawardi
2022: <i>They Planted Strange Trees</i> by Hind Shoufani	2008: <i>Salt of this the Sea</i> by Annemarie Jacir
2022: <i>A Gaza Weekend</i> by Basil Khalil	<b>Rafia H. Oraidi - Philistine Films</b>
2021: <i>Huda's Salon</i> by Hany Abu-Assad	2022: <i>They Planted Strange Trees</i> by Hind Shoufani
2021: <i>Kazoz</i> by Amira Diab and Hany Abu-Assad	2022: <i>The Cut</i> by Marzi Rezaei
2020: <i>The Translator</i> by Rana Kazkaz and Anas Khalaf	2022: <i>Displaced in Heaven</i> by Khaled Jarrar
2019: <i>The Present</i> by Farah Nabulsi	2022: <i>Palestine 87</i> by Bilal Alkhatib
2017: <i>Wajib</i> by Annemarie Jacir	2021: <i>Night</i> by Ahmad Saleh
2016: <i>Mare Nostrum</i> by Rana Kazkaz and Anas Khalaf	2019: <i>Waiting for Farajallah</i> by Nidal Badarny
2016: <i>The Rendezvous</i> by Amin Matalqa	2018: <i>Blockade 365</i> by Rafia Hussain Oraidi
2015: <i>3000 Nights</i> by Mai Masri	2015: <i>Roshmia</i> by Salim Abu Jabal
2014: <i>In Overtime</i> by Rami Yasin	2015: <i>Aid But No State</i> by Sabrina Dittus
2013: <i>Horizon</i> by Zain Duraie	2014: <i>Villagers</i> by Nidal Badarny
2012: <i>When I saw You</i> by Annemarie Jacir	





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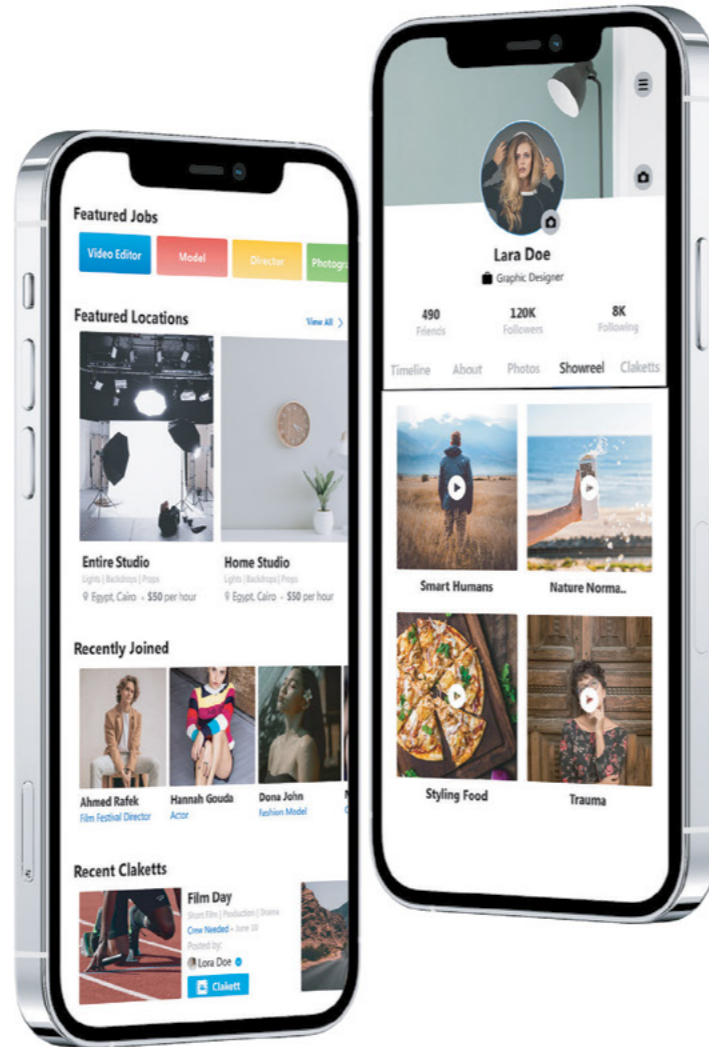
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“Sard” provides a unique model in the Middle East, it was established as a writing room and developed to be a content creation company for originals and adaptations (novels- international formats) for cinema and TV. Additionally, it expanded to coproduction.

“Sard” is the first kind of incubator for both talents and great ideas in the MENA region market. The team consists of 9 writers and other freelance/contracted writers. Get to know them more on-screen and physically at GFF21 and CineGouna Platform.

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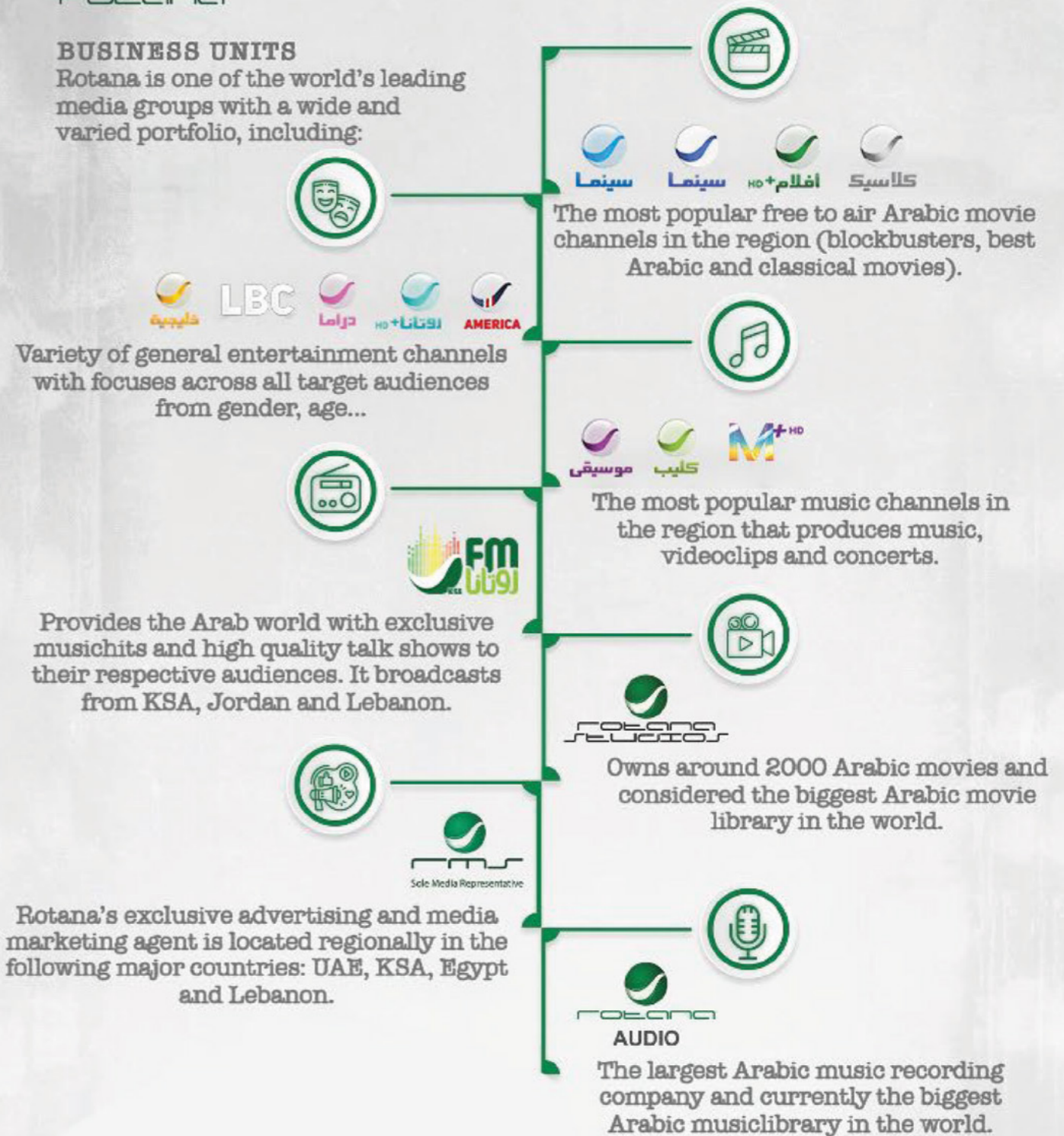
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**GUEST  
FILM IN  
POST-PRODUCTION**



DIRECTOR  
**Erige Sehiri**

## UNDER THE FIG TREES

Tunisia, Switzerland, France

### Color

Length  
**100 min**

Language  
**Arabic**

Producer  
**Erige Sehiri**  
**Palmyre Badinier**  
**Didar Domehri**

### Information

#### Feature Narrative

Total Budget  
**€ 367,422**

Confirmed Financing  
**€ 110,000**

Confirmed Financial Partner  
**-Akka Films**  
**-Maneki Films**

### Contact

[heniaproduction@gmail.com](mailto:heniaproduction@gmail.com)  
+21694579363

### Log-line

Amongst the trees, young women and men are working in the fields, collecting the summer harvest, and developing new feelings, while they flirt, try to understand each other, and find - and flee from deeper connections.

### Synopsis

For Melek, Sana, Fidé and Meriem, long days of work in the fields are a way to be together and escape the monotony of their lives in the countryside. They are always finding ways to have fun, sometimes at the expense of others. When they create trouble - a broken branch or damaged fig - they know a generous smile will get them off the hook with Saber, the youngest of the overseers. But it's not so easy with the elders.

In this vast orchard, Saber is in charge, deciding who works and for what price. He uses his power to buy respect and get close - sometimes uncomfortably close - to younger women, especially Melek. From dawn to dusk, the older workers keep note of the happenings around them, picking up on every story, argument, complaint, and glances shared under the trees.

### Director's Biography

**Erige Sehiri** is a director and producer based in Tunis. A former journalist, particularly drawn to the world of laborers, she places workers with invisible destinies at the heart of her films. In 2018, she made her first feature-length documentary film with Tunisian railway workers, *Railway Men*, reflecting on their daily struggle against the failures of the national railways. The film was presented at the 2018 Visions du Réel Film Festival, and the 2018 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, receiving a notable mention by the jury at the 2018 Montpellier International Festival of Mediterranean Film, and the public prize at the 2019 Association Filmer le travail. In 2020, for her first feature-length fiction film, she chose to direct young day laborers to pay tribute to the many female farm workers who are victims of road accidents every year.

Erige Sehiri is also the producer and manager of the production company Henia, where she develops author-driven films like Hamza Ouni's *Disqualified* (2020).



**ERIGE SEHIRI**  
Director/Producer

### Director's Statement

In my previous film, *Railway Men*, I transformed a journalistic investigation into a tragic-comedy about the daily life of Tunisian railway workers. Combining political and poetic dimensions, unraveling endearing personalities, and taking a sincere and empathetic look at personal stories are all essential components of my treatment of films. In this film, I show the relationship between two groups of women - young, seasonal workers and the older, permanent workers - their discussions, their secrets, what separates them, what brings them together, and what they undergo together. Reflecting this reality, the film also serves as a sort of rebuke of the status quo for these women. From an initially intellectual approach, I realize that my work is moving towards an intimate, sensory experience by showing, the breaking of a branch, the humiliations and arguments, the moments of respite in the shade, the hands that graze each other, the group meals, the long awaited moment of the paycheck. By giving the women the opportunity to live one final day of work in the image, in the unknowing of the drama to come, I want to reveal how "life is worth nothing, but nothing is worth life".

### Producers' Note

Given the unorthodox approach to the development of *Under the Fig Trees*, which isn't anchored to a classic screenplay, we had therefore not been able to apply for development funds, for which Henia Production has fully assumed the cost and responsibility, bringing together financial investment, sponsors, family credit and equity investments.

Totally seduced by the first images, and in solidarity with Erige's commitment, Akka Films and Maneki Films decided to co-produce *Under the Fig Trees*. We decided to invest in this film and appreciate Erige's impulse to create and the urgency that mobilized her.

We are also very impressed by the gesture that the shooting of this film represents. Erige was able to attract an incredible pool of talent, both on screen and at her side in the directing. She has been able to adapt to formidable economic but also human and artistic constraints. One can undeniably see the strength of these efforts in the result. Week after week, a film is emerging from the editing bench that is deeply rooted in its cinematic territory. Raw and rough in form, it is also gentle and generous as it releases, in the almost chemical sense of the word, its characters.



### Producers' Filmography (Selection)

#### Erige Sehiri - Henia Production

2021: *Under the Fig Trees* by Erige Sehiri

2020: *The Disqualified* by Hamza Ouni

2018: *Railway Men* by Erige Sehiri

2012: *My Father's Facebook*

#### Palmyre Badinier - Akka Films

2021: *A Thousand Fires* by Saeed Taji Farouky

2021: *L'étincelle* by Antoine Harari and Valeria Mazzucchi

2020: *Maisonnette, à l'école du vivre-ensemble* by Nicolas Wadimoff and Emmanuelle Walter

2019: *Maria Cobra Preta* by Erika Nieva da Cunha

2018: *L'Apollon de Gaza* by Nicolas Wadimoff

2018: *Railway Men* by Erige Sehiri

2017: *Ghost Hunting* by Rae Andoni

2014: *Spartans* by Nicolas Wadimoff

2012: *A Respectable Family* by Massoud Bakhshi

2012: *Operation Libertad* by Nicolas Wadimoff

2009: *Buried Secrets* by Raja Amari

#### Didar Domehri - Maneki Films

2020: *Under the Stars of Paris* by Claus Drexel

2018: *Girls of the Sun* by Eva Husson

2017: *The Summit* by Santiago Mitre

2015: *Degradé* by Arab Nasser and Tarzan Nasser

2012: *Seven Days in Havana* by Laurent Cantet and Benicio Del Toro

# CINEGOUNA SPRINGBOARD SCHEDULE

## PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2021

9:30 - 1:00 AM	<b>CGP OPENING PARTY</b>
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### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2021

TIME	TITLE IN ENGLISH	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER	VENUE
10:00 - 10:30 AM	<b>A Quarter to Thursday in Algiers</b> Feature Narrative   France	Sofia Djama	Aurélie Turc	G32/31 - TU BERLIN SPRINGBOARD PITCH ROOM
10:35 - 11:05 AM	<b>Agora</b> Feature Narrative   Tunisia	Ala Eddine Slim	Ala Eddine Slim	
11:10 - 11:40 AM	<b>Aisha Can't Fly Away Anymore</b> Feature Narrative   Egypt	Morad Mostafa	Sawsan Yusuf	
11:45 - 12:15 PM	<b>Weedestine</b> Feature Narrative   Palestine / Jordan	Said Zagha	Mais Salman	
12:15 - 12:35 PM	<b>Break</b>			
12:35 - 1:05 PM	<b>Searching for Woody</b> Feature Documentary   Egypt	Sara Shazli	Dima Al Joundi	G32/31 - TU BERLIN SPRINGBOARD PITCH ROOM
1:10 - 1:40 PM	<b>The Blind Ferryman - Al Baseer</b> Feature Narrative   Iraq / Switzerland	Ali Al-Fatlawi	Samir Jamal Aldin	
1:45 - 2:15 PM	<b>A Song for Summer and Winter</b> Feature Documentary   Syria/Denmark/United States/Germany	Talal Derki	Sigrid Dyekjær	
3:30 - 4:00 PM 3:30 - 4:00 PM	<b>One on one Meetings</b>			G30 - TU Berlin CGP PRIVATE LOUNGE

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021

TIME	TITLE IN ENGLISH	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER	VENUE
10:00 - 10:30 AM	<b>Happy Lovers</b> Feature Narrative   Morocco / France	Hicham Lasri	Lamia Chraibi	G32/31 - TU BERLIN SPRINGBOARD PITCH ROOM
10:35 - 11:05 AM	<b>Fifty Meters</b> Feature Documentary   Egypt	Yomna Khattab	Ahmed Amer	
11:10 - 11:40 AM	<b>Sink</b> Feature Narrative   Jordan/Sweden/Canada	Zain Duraie	Alaa Alasad	
11:40 - 12:00 PM	<b>Break</b>			
12:00 - 12:30 PM	<b>My Father's Scent</b> Feature Narrative   Egypt	Mohamed Siam	Mark Lotfy	G32/31 - TU BERLIN SPRINGBOARD PITCH ROOM
12:35 - 1:05 PM	<b>Women of My Life</b> Feature Documentary   Iraq / Swaziland	Zahraa Ghandour	Samir Jamal Aldin	
1:10 - 1:40 PM	<b>My Father Killed Bourguiba</b> Feature Documentary   Tunisia	Fatma Riahi	Erige Sehiri	
3:00 - 3:30 PM 3:30 - 4:00 PM	<b>One on one Meetings</b>			G30 - TU Berlin CGP PRIVATE LOUNGE

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021

3:00 - 3:30 PM 3:30 - 4:00 PM	<b>One on one Meetings</b>			G30 - TU Berlin CGP PRIVATE LOUNGE
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## PROJECTS IN POST PRODUCTION

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2021

TIME	TITLE IN ENGLISH	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER	VENUE
10:00 - 10:45 AM	<b>Abo Zabaal 1989</b> Feature Documentary   Egypt / Germany	Bassam Mortada	Kesmat ElSayed	SCRN. 3 Sea Cinema
10:50 - 11:35 AM	<b>Hyphen</b> Feature Documentary   Lebanon	Reine Razzouk	Reine Razzouk	
11:35 - 11:55 AM	<b>Break</b>			
11:55 - 12:40 PM	<b>Nothing about my Mother</b> Feature Documentary   Tunisia	Latifa Doghri	Salem Trabelsi	SCRN. 3 Sea Cinema
12:45 - 1:30 PM	<b>They Planted Strange Trees</b> Feature Documentary   Palestine	Hind Shoufani	Rafia H. Oraidi	
1:30 - 2:30 PM	<b>Cold Lunch Break</b>			Sea Cinema Space
2:30 - 3:15 PM	<b>Hanging Gardens</b> Feature Narrative   Iraq/United Kingdom/ Palestine	Ahmed Al Daradji	Margaret Glover	SCRN. 3 Sea Cinema
3:20 - 4:05 PM	<b>Haysh Maysh : False Drama</b> Feature Narrative   Morocco	Hicham Lasri	Hicham Lasri	
6:00 - 6:30 PM 6:30 - 7:00 PM	<b>One on one Meetings</b>			G30 - TU Berlin CGP PRIVATE LOUNGE

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021

10:00 - 12:00PM	<b>One on one Meetings</b>			G30 - TU Berlin CGP PRIVATE LOUNGE
5:00 - 7:00 PM	<b>CGP CLOSING PARTY</b>			

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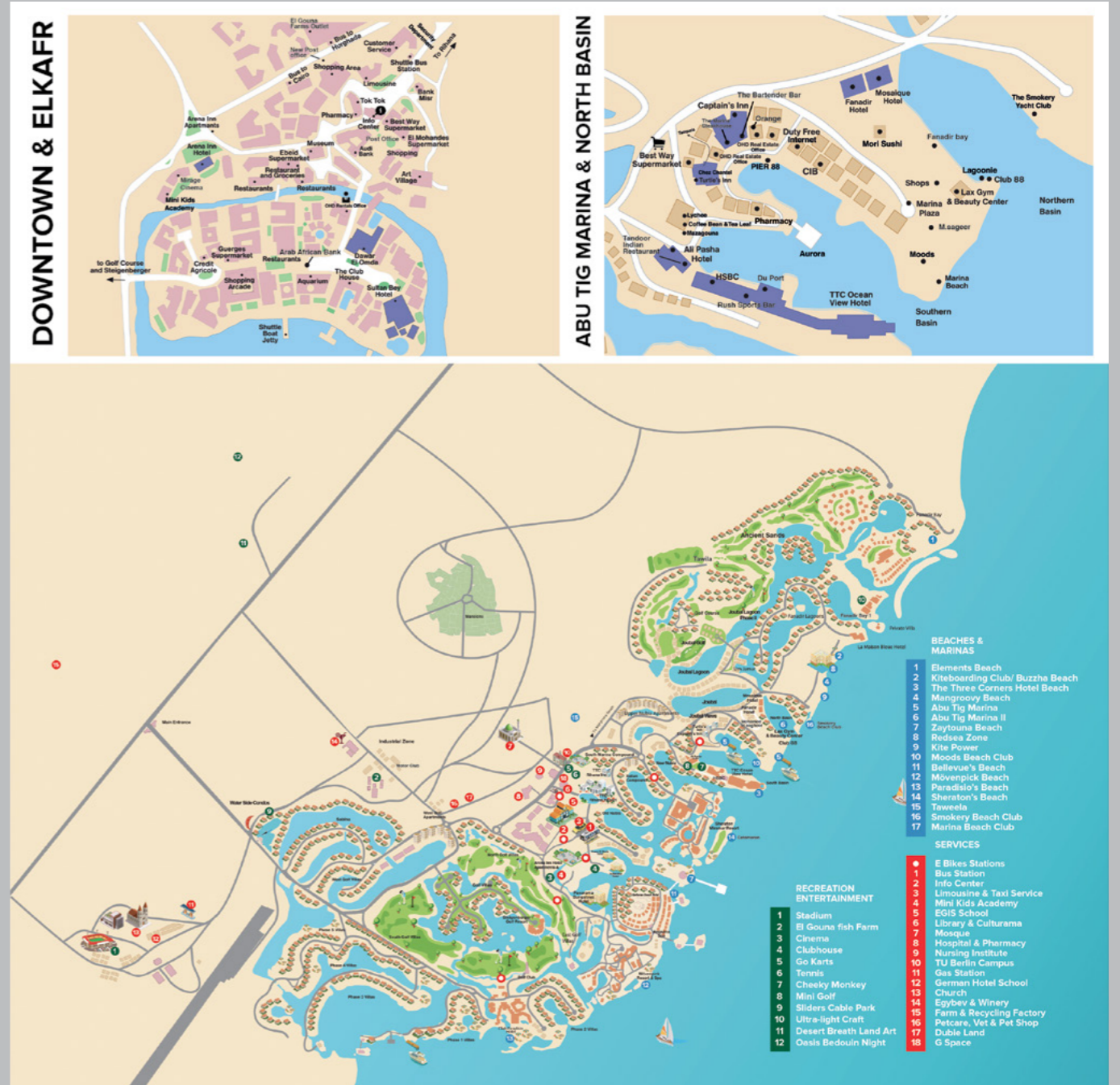
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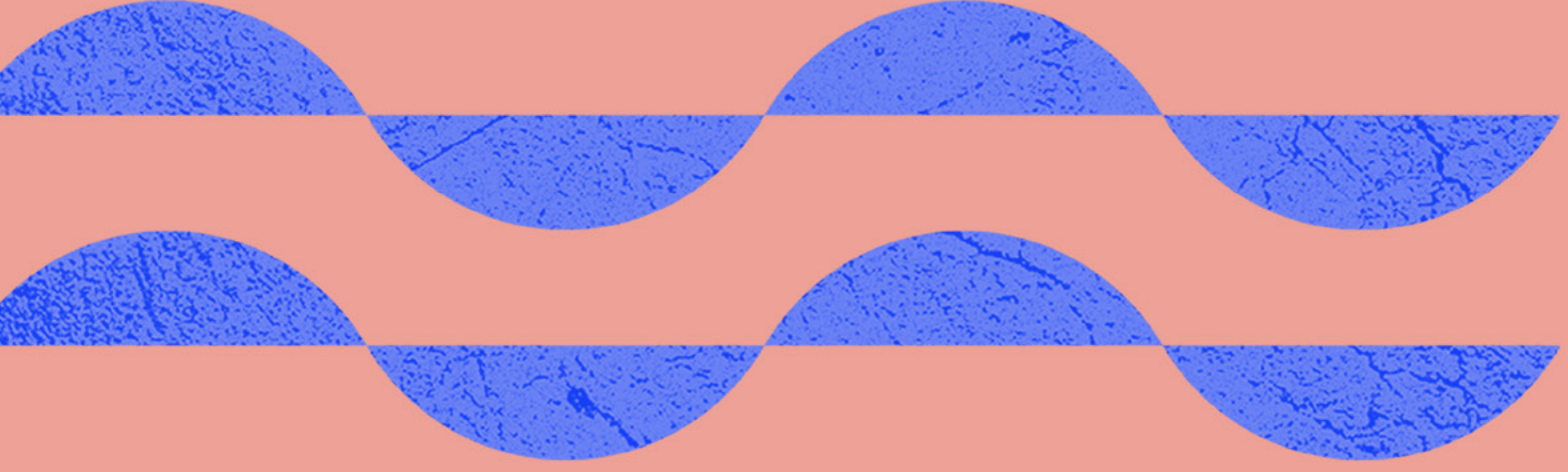
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