

وجهة نظر POINT OF VIEW

DOX BOX News

Syrian directors Nidal Hasan (Flint Mountains), Lina Al-Abed (Noor Al-Huda) and Samer Barkawi (Women Talk) are giving Q&A sessions following their film screenings on March 8th and 9th.

Wastelands by Rania Stephan

Following Lebanon's political crisis in 2005, Lebanese director Rania Stephan roamed the margins of the Solidere square in Beirut city center. Four random scenes with 6 outstandingly frank and spontaneous characters was the result of her fifteen days tour around the square.

Stephan introduced these four scenes without editing the sound and image or doing any montage. Therefore, watching the "Wastelands" is like walking around the square. Having no dramatic plot, no political orientation or historical connotations, "Wastelands" is simply aimed at giving a platform for the marginalized to speak up, to say their opinion and discuss their living conditions and their beliefs.

"Through these interviews, I wanted to see Lebanon through the eyes of the marginalized, stressing that there's no one image of Lebanon! For me, these people are particularly important because they are the unheard. They don't appear on T.V and nobody sees them because nobody walks in Lebanon. Everyone drives cars!" Stephan says.

The four scenes are separated by black screens and music which according to Stephan stand for "all that I didn't want to discuss in this film. It's the empty space that I don't want to fill."

"Wastelands" is about the life of ordinary people in a politically unstable country like Lebanon. It's an amusing film that makes you laugh out loud at some points, and perhaps weep at other.

By Nadia Muhanna, Translated by Sara Abu Assali

8TH MARCH | آذار



ALKINDI | سينما الكندي
ALHAMBRA | مسرح الحمراء

16:30 - 18:15	1958 / ١٩٥٨	Lebanon / لبنان	٦٦ m
	FLINT MOUNTAINS / جبال الصوان	Syria / سورية	٤٦ m
19:00 - 20:30	NOUR ALHUDA / نور الهدى	Syria / سورية	20 m
	ONE DAY IN PEOPLE'S POLAND / يوم في بولونيا الشعبية	France / فرنسا	58 m
16:00 - 17:30	THE MOTHER / الأم	Poland / بولونيا	11 m
	A WOMAN SOUGHT / مطلوب امرأة / حتى الوجع / TILL IT HURTS	Poland / بولونيا	15 m
	WOMEN TALK / كلام حريم	Syria / سورية	23 m
18:00 - 19:30	THE MOON INSIDE YOU / القمر بداخلك	Slovakia / سلوفاكيا	74 m
20:00 - 21:00	SHOUT / أصرخ	The Netherlands / هولندا	54 m

9TH MARCH | آذار



ALKINDI | سينما الكندي
ALHAMBRA | مسرح الحمراء

16:00 - 17:30	HOUSING / إسكان	Italy / إيطاليا	90 m
18:00 - 19:00	BLACK STONE / حجر أسود	Syria / سورية	63 m
19:30 - 21:00	REVUE / مراجعة	Germany & Bosnia / ألمانيا وبنسبا	82 m
16:30 - 18:00	MIRROR / مرآة	Denmark / دنمارك	9 m
	THE ABSENCE OF MR. OR MRS. B / غياب السيد أو السيدة ب	Iran / إيران	72 m
18:15 - 19:45	ZIDANE / زيدان	France / فرنسا	91 m
20:00 - 21:45	HOLD ME TIGHT, LET ME GO / ضمني أفنتني	UK / المملكة المتحدة	100m





Interview with Nidal Hasan, director of "Flint Mountains"

Abu Beram is an architect and sculptor. He worked steadily over the past years to create artworks from stones and rocks that he collects from the area that surrounds his village "Hammam Al-Karahle".

Not everyone is happy about his hobby though. Abu Beram's family considers his artistic endeavors as a kind of madness. Therefore, he decides to abandon his family for the sake of art. "Point of View" met Syrian director Nidal Hasan to find out more about the film.

How did you meet abu Beram? What motivated you to make a movie about him?

I met Abu Beram by coincidence when I was visiting some friends. Once I saw his works I knew next time I see him I'll be shooting a film. And I did. I prepared for the film for 8 months and then I presented the project to the General Secretariat of Damascus Arab Capital of Culture 2008, and got funding.

I made the film because I wanted to introduce Abu Beram and his artworks to others. I was extremely happy when I met a girl from Aleppo who after watching the film decided with her friends to visit Abu Beram and see his works.

I focused on Abu Beram's personality and investigated how he influenced those around him through his art. But his passion for collecting peculiar rocks made him lose his family, which suffered because of his passion.

You started your film in a classical way. Though you introduced your guest in a formal way, he finally relaxed and became more spontaneous. Why did you choose to start that way?

I started formally because Abu Beram himself is pretty classical. He speaks classical Arabic, and he believes that his art is a cultural project rather than a hobby. He usually speaks that way so I decided to present him as he is. However, as the movie progresses, he starts to express himself modestly, revealing his true personality. His friend acts equally formal in front of the camera. In fact, formality, education and speaking classical Arabic are the characteristics of Abu Beram's generation of the seventies.

In your opinion, why do western filmmakers make more films about the east than eastern films themselves?

We don't have cinema industry in Syria. Film production is limited to a few films by the National Cinema Organization which produces two films a year at best.

Documentaries aren't popular yet, and the private sector does not want to take the risk of producing documentaries even though they've previously took the risk of producing TV dramas and succeeded. However, TV channels like Aljazeera documentary and Alarabiya are showing more interest in documentaries. We also have a Syrian Documentary Film Festival now, but still, large funding is needed for the cinema industry to grow.

By Rama Al-Jarmaqani, Translated by Mahmoud al-nouri



Shout



More than 290 people attended "Shout" a film by Dutch directors Sabine Lubbe Bakker and Ester Gould. Point of View asked some of the attendance what they think of the film.

Mohamed Ali
Journalist

The characters of the film, in some parts, were very spontaneous which indicates that the two directors spent a reasonable amount of time to get to know them. However, I expected the end to be more tragic, but the directors chose to cut it and complete the story in writing. I haven't seen anything about the relationship between

the Golani students and their Syrian colleagues. I also did not like the music of the film all that much.

Awad Qadour
Cinema Critic

The subject of the film is important in itself. Its importance stems from the fact that it comes from the west; meaning that other people felt the importance of the Golani cause. This is really crucial, even if the idea of the film is not new in itself for us as Syrians.

Hani Mawed
Student of English Literature

The film is beautiful and has all the documentary elements it needs. I like that even though the two main characters are very different in terms of personality, they were very close to each other and communicated very well. However, their emotions didn't seem genuine at some points.

Mai Skaf
Actress

I really enjoyed the film which I found highly sensitive. The film tackles an issue that many Syrians failed to talk about for several reasons. It also captured Damascus with such honesty that the city seemed so real.

It was very realistic and unofficial. The film also portrayed the sense of alienation many Golani students feel in Syria.

They managed to reflect an important psychological condition.

By Rama Jarmakani, Translated by Sara Abu Assali

"Mirror" by Danish filmmaker
Joachim Ladefodge

"To be a real bodybuilder, you have to be very narcissist. A one hundred m. sprinter has the time to fight against, a weightlifter the weights, the bodybuilder only has the mirror!", one of the bodybuilders that were photographed by Ladefodge says.

In "Mirror", we see paint on a brownish wall, a horse being rubbed, and Gothic beasts resurrecting out of the dead: bodies of men and women bodybuilders as Ladefodge sees them through his camera. This might be misleading in a way, we might think that the film is some sort of portrayal of the "wildest" side of what some people perceive as building "perfection".

Whilst for the film director, it is a continuation of a condition that tempted him eight years ago, as a photographer, to shoot this film. To him, these people are "strangely photogenic", they managed to stimulate his imagination to make a highly artistic film that depicts each and every portion of their bodies and faces, creating thus an amazingly rich visual material that enables us to see what we have never seen in a human body.

Ushering the start of the film, curtains open to a black screen that gradually turns into a pouncing hawk: a man with looks full of tension and pain, or strength, perhaps?! The viewer sees all the preparatory process preceding the bodybuilding show: rubbing bronzing oils, warming up, wearing plastic



bags prior to putting on the show clothes... details that women body builders share as well before going on stage.

Here, we see a combination of anxiety and desire, strength and weakness, fear and trust, humanity and bestiality, and all other contradictions embodied in the film through the game of shadow and light.

Through abandoning colors and turning to black and white, the camera has, indeed, drifted from reality and created its own story where viewers see what they choose to see. It's a unique production that imposes itself on viewers, yet, it staggers all the time on a thin line separating beauty from ugliness.

By Kinana Issa

POINT OF VIEW

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وجهة نظر

An interview with Diana Fabianova, director of "The Moon Inside You"



Menstrual cycle or the period! Who wants to talk about it? Slovakian Director Diana Fabianova asks questions about this «lunar creature» inside her. She roams the world in search for answers to this «complicated issue» in a humorous and often scientific approach that challenges our timid way of talking or rather not talking about one the world's biggest taboos.

1. Why would anyone make a film about menstruation?

I was having a hard menstrual time myself and was wondering why something which brings life and should be a gift, is accompanied by so much pain and mood swings. It just didn't fit. I started to investigate and found very interesting information.

Suddenly a whole menstrual universe opened up, while my personal experience shifted 180 degrees as well. I wanted to share these findings with other women (and men), to help women in easing their pains, and men to better understand their wives, partners, friends and daughters...

The other reason is, when a young girl has to deal with menstruation every month, but nobody speaks about it, obviously, she starts to think that it is something shameful.

2. There are fiction elements in your film, animation clips and other parts that are more similar to reportages than documentaries. What form of documentary would you consider "The Moon Inside You"?

For me it's a "menstrual road movie". It shows the process of discovery which I went through in real life. This film started out of curiosity and as a revolt against tabooing a natural biological function. It's a reflection of what it means to be a woman in our society, through exploring the most obvious aspect of womanhood.

3. You handled the menstrual taboo very well, you approached it humorously without becoming too ironic, you weren't too scientific or spiritual either; how did you

create this balance?

Menstruation is not a sexy topic. If I wanted to make people interested, it has to have some humor, to bring new elements and unknown facts, to recreate the concept so people would start seeing it from a different angle. My aim was to lighten up the subject and show the positive and sometimes funny side of it.

4. The film seems to discuss the issue from so many angles; anthropological, spiritual, sexual and even Human Rights. How did you manage to combine all of these within one context without leaving the viewer completely lost?

For me menstruation is a mixture of all of these. Some are hidden or unperceived. I just pointed them out and made the connection between them.

5. You tackled the topic quite audaciously, even shockingly sometimes. At some points, such as where you licked the menstrual blood, one couldn't help saying "yech"! What was your aim?

In TV we see dramatically induced blood everyday. The only blood which is never shown is menstrual blood. I wanted to break the myth that menstrual blood is more dirty or "worse".

The mentioned scene is within my "fantasy"; the surrealistic humorous fiction part which deals with the most tabooed aspect. I used humor, fantasy and hyperbole to make it more "digestible".

Also because some people think they are open and have no objections to the menstruation. But when they see that scene and say "yech", they realize that they do have prejudices. Sometimes we are just not aware of them. We think we are modern and cool. So ok then, let's put that to the test!

6. You met experts in the fields of medicine, sociology, anthropology, psychology and philosophy. I read that you also met a clergyman, Is that true? If yes, why did you finally decided to leave him out of the film?

That's true; there are 150 hours of great materials. Leaving them out was only to maintain a certain film structure. I had to make choices, sometimes very hard ones. But the interview with the clergyman will be on DVD bonus and we want to make a series of





different aspects of menstruation: menstruation and religion, world rituals, menstruation through human history etc...

7. How did you get the funds for your film. Compared to other films, did the menstruation issue make it easier or harder to get it produced?

This was my first film and I had hard times dealing with some issues, but I was, at the same time, pretty lucky. As the topic was unexplored, it received attention and interest. We got support from different countries and individuals. Some channels like ARTE was on board immediately, some (for example US Public TV channel) said that they could never ever broadcast this film.

8. A film about menstruation, people usually perceive it as either obscene or silly! How difficult it is to promote a documentary about menstruation?

It's hard with people who decide the programming or with TV buyers, sometimes they are afraid because they don't know how the audience will respond to it and because it's risky, they dismiss it. But then there are others who would fight for it. You always get these extremes. Luckily there are so many active women (and men) who take the initiative and organize the screenings even themselves; sometimes reserving the cinema hall/theatre, calling their friends and family. That indicates the need to open up the issue.

9. While digging into such a taboo, was it difficult to convince people to take part in your film?

Not at all! The opposite was the case. They wanted to contribute in creating this movie, giving their time and work for free. It was amazing. There is a scene in the film where 40 men are belly dancing. Everybody ask me how I persuaded them to do it. The truth is, they asked to be part of it! They enjoyed it so much; they didn't want to leave the gym. I felt it was a gesture of solidarity from their side. They showed that they are with women, that they want to understand them. It was a beautiful experience.

10. How was your film received in Europe and the US? Menstruation is a taboo all over the world, but it's more of a taboo here in the Arab world. What reaction do you expect to get from the Syrian audience?

There are always very extreme reactions- some love the idea and others who get offended. But until now the reactions were very positive. I am receiving emotional emails from women, and sometimes also from men, which stresses the importance of talking about menstruation. In the end, every woman has her own menstrual story or a little secret drama which need to be released. There is always a big discussion after the movie. I am so curious how it will be in Syria.

It's the first screening for the film in Arab world. And I am so happy that it's happening, after the US dismissal. It shows how we sometimes live in hypocrisy and false openness.

11. What will your next film be about?

The new film deals with human fear of aging.

By Nadia Muhanna





Golden Pomegranate Seeds by Ghada Terawi

Once upon time, from here starts our journey with "Golden Pomegranate Seeds"; a journey full of secrets. Palestinian filmmaker Ghada Terawi links the folk story of "Golden Pomegranate Seeds" the little girl who gets abused repeatedly and remains silent which makes her vulnerable to further abuse with that of Palestinian women who experienced abuse.

The filmmaker handles very sensitive and important topics like sexual abuse and force marriage with a very simple and straightforward approach without being too provocative or intimidating.

The luminous animated cartoons the director used in depicting Golden Pomegranate Seeds' story lies in sheer contrast with the dark shadows of the Palestinian women who lived the experience.

Though simple in style, Terawi communicates her message very well: if you remain silent once, you will be silent forever. Silence is another form of abuse. While Golden Pomegranate Seeds has a tragic ending, the abused Palestinian women who testified in the film could eventually break their Silence.

By Muzna Al - Naeb

Six Weeks by Polish director Marcin Janos Krawczyk

Six weeks! That's all the time a mother in Poland gets to rethink her decision of giving up her newborn baby. In no more than 18 minutes, director Marcin Janos Krawczyk gives us a feel of what it is like to abandon a child.

Krawczyk's sympathy for the babies is evident in his immense use of close ups of the abandoned babies; so much that you almost see their pores. The most powerful scene however is when the mother reads aloud the letter she wrote to her abandoned daughter explaining why she had to leave. While we hear the mother's trembling voice as she reads the letter, Krawczyk fixes his camera on the baby's face making her excuses seem worthless; a feeling further emphasized by the nurses' mechanical way of taking care of the children.

The camera then moves to show us the world from the baby's perspective; we see through blurry images a big and often scary world.

But don't get depressed, six Weeks isn't that melancholic after all. Krawczyk finishes his film with a cheerful scene; that of a couple who have just found out that they will be able to adopt a newborn baby. As the film draws to an end, Krawczyk takes us back to the beginning of his film, we see another woman giving birth, another newborn baby and another six weeks to find out about its future.

By Nadia Muhanna

