



ARAB SHORTS

2011

27-31 October 2011
Goethe-Institut Kairo

DOCUMENTATION



GOETHE
INSTITUT

THE PROGRAMME

ARAB SHORTS 2011

Arab Shorts Festival Event
27-31 October 2011

Curated Programmes of Short Films and Video Art

Arab Shorts فعاليات مهرجان
٢٧ - ٣١ أكتوبر ٢٠١١

برامج منسقة من الأفلام القصيرة والفيديو آرت

FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

For more details on film programmes and events please see handouts available at the event!

The Viewing Lounge

for film professionals and journalists will be open daily from 10am to 10pm.

برنامج المهرجان

لمزيد من المعلومات عن برامج الأفلام وفعاليات المهرجان، يرجى الاطلاع على المطبوعات الموجودة في المهرجان.

صالون المشاهدة

مكتبة أفلام للجمهور المتخصص والصحفيين، يومياً من ١٠ صباحاً حتى ١٠ مساءً.

Thursday, 27 October



7:30pm Opening

Personal Freedom: Fiction within the truth

A film programme curated by Hala Galal & Ayman Hussein, Egypt

UNDER THE IRON, Agathe Dirani, Egypt / France, 2011

KARIM, Omar El Shamy, Egypt, 2011

FOUR SEASONS, Noha El Maadawy, Egypt, 2011

04:02:2011, Mahmoud Farag, Egypt, 2011

SUSPENDED FREEDOM, May El Hossamy, Egypt, 2011

OUR WEAPON, Ziad Hassan, Egypt, 2011

PAYBACK, Omar Khaled, Egypt, 2011

I AM ASER, Ramy Rezkallah, Egypt, 2010

10:00pm Arab Shorts - Informal

Get-together

Friday, 28 October



6:30pm Childhood: Innocence

A programme curated by Nadira Ardjoun, Algeria / France

CHECKPOINT, Ruben Amar, France, 2010

AMAL, Ali Benkirane, France / Morocco, 2004

SHORT MEMORY, Marwan Khneisser, Lebanon, 2010

ALBUM, Shiraz Fradi, Tunisia, 2010

ROOS DJAJ, Bassam Ali Jarbawi, Palestine/United States, 2009

9:00pm Transcend the Geographies of Fear

A programme curated by Habiba Djahnine, Algeria

DJOÛÛ, Djamil Beloucif, Switzerland/Algeria, 2010

EL BERRANI, Aboubakar Hamzi, Algeria, 2010

UN ALLER SIMPLE (A ONE-WAY TICKET), Ammar Bouras, Algeria, 2007

INSTANTS / ALGER (INSTANTS/ALGIERS), Amina Djahnine, Algeria, 2008

HYSTERESIS, Tahar Kessi, Algeria, 2010

Saturday, 29 October



2:00pm Lunchtime Talks I

- **Madeleine Bernstorff** / International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany

- **Azza Chaabouny** / Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage, Tunis

4:00pm Metaphor and Resistance in Short Tunisian Films

A programme curated by Walid Tayaa, Tunisia

TANDID-CONDEMNATION, Walid Mattar, Tunisia, 2010

THE STADIUM, Ala Eddine Slim, Tunisia, 2010

FOUSKA, Samy El Haj, Tunisia, 2008

COMA, Aladin Aboutaleb, Tunisia, 2010

6:30pm Everything is Alright, Officer

A programme curated by Ala Younis,
Jordan

9:00pm Re-Moving Images

A programme presented by Stefanie Schulte-
Strathaus, Arsenal - Institute for Film and
Media Art, Berlin / Berlinale Forum

Guest programme
from Germany



Sunday, 30 October

4:00pm Paths to Solitude

A programme curated by Masoud Amralla,
U.A.E.

6:30pm A State of Fluidity

A programme curated by Maha Maamoun
and Sara Rifky, Egypt

9:00pm

arte CREATIVE - the new network for
contemporary culture

Special Guest



Monday, 31 October

2:00pm Lunchtime Talks II

6:30pm In the Name of the Father

A programme curated by Lara Khaldi &
Yazan Khalili, Palestine

LE MONDE SOUS LA TABLE (THE WORLD UNDER THE TABLE), Mohssin Harraki,
Morocco/ France, 2010

2026, Maha Maamoun, Egypt, 2010

CHILDREN OF FIRE, Mohammed Al Hawajri, Palestine, 2009

MERELY A SMELL, Maher Abi Samra, Lebanon

PAPER DRESS, Kasem Kharsa, Jordan / Egypt, 2009

SAN TITRE, Neil Beloufa, Algeria / France, 2010

AL WADI (The Valley), Firas Taybeh, Jordan, 2011

WITH SOUL, WITH BLOOD, Rabih Mroue, Lebanon, 2006

NATURAL DISASTER CONCERT, DIE TÖDLICHE DORIS, Käthe Kruse/ Wolfgang
Müller/ Nikolaus Utermöhlen, Germany, 1984

CARRYING PICTURES. A CASE STUDY IN VISUAL

POLITICS, Tom Holert, Germany 2010

F 66 GHOST SHIP, Florian Zeyfang, Germany, 2010

GOM O GOUR/ INTO THIN AIR, Mohammadreza Farzad, Iran, 2010

SURFACE NOISE, Paul Rowley / David Phillips / Tim Blue, USA / Germany, 2010

ADVOCAT, Franziska Cordes, Germany, 2009

NULLPANORAMA, Martin Ebner, Germany, 2003



LAND OF THE HEROES, Sahim Omar Kalifa, Belgium / Iraq, 2011

HEAVEN'S WATER, Abdullah Boushahri, Kuwait, 2010

THE POWER OF GENERATIONS, Mohammed Jassim, Bahrain, 2011

SABEEL, Khalid Al Mahomood, UAE, 2010

SPICES, Amer Alrawas, Oman, 2011

RICE CITY, Sherif El Azma, Egypt, 2010

TOMORROW EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT, Akram Zaatar, Lebanon, 2010

TARAH I, Haris Epaminonda, Cyprus, 2006

GIZA ZOO, Solmaz Shahbazi, Germany / Iran, 2010

SHORT WAVE/ LONG WAVE, Vartan Avakian, Lebanon, 2009

80 MILLION, Eslam Zeen El Abedeen / Mohamed Zayan, Egypt, 2009

MY FATHER LOOKS FOR AN HONEST CITY, Basim Magdy, Egypt, 2010

IMAGES OF A CENTER, Iman Issa, Egypt, 2005

Presentation & discussion with Alain Bieber, Strassbourg



- **Emile Slailaty** / Beirut DC & Ayam Beirut Arab Film Festival

- **Sasha Ayoub** / Dox Box International Documentary Film Festival, Damascus

MY FATHER IS STILL A COMMUNIST: INTIMATE SECRETS TO BE PUBLISHED,
Ahmad Ghossein, Lebanon, 2011

AS THEY SAY (KIF MA YI QULU), Hicham Ayouch, Morocco / UAE, 2011

BE QUIET, Sameh Zoabi, Palestine, 2006

MOUSTACHE, Meqdad Al Kout, Kuwait, 2010

THE FORTY SECOND WINTER, Ihab Tarabieh, Syria, 2009

THE TEAM

Arab Shorts Project Team 2011

Dr. Günther Hasenkamp, Ghada El-Sherbiny, Dr. Antje Klesse, Zeinab El Khashab, Lisa Krämer, Edgar Blume, Tamer El-Demerdash, Salma Zaki, Rana Ibrahim, Ghada Kabesh, Samer El-Farouk, Mahmoud El-Farsi, Samah Samir, Caroline Naguib // Viewing Lounge: Emad Mabrouk (programmes), Jean Joseph Michael (IT) // Technical team: Magdi Abdel-Hamid, Ihab Ismail, and team // Trailer production: Ayman Hussein (SEMAT) // Interpretation / Translation / language consultancy: Mostafa Hashish, Isis Hakim, Rim Wegdan, Dr. Manuela Thurner // Director Goethe-Institut Kairo: Gabriele Becker

Thank you

We thank our colleagues at the Goethe-Institut's branch offices in North Africa and the Middle East, the visitors' programme of the Goethe-Institut in Berlin, the colleagues at "57. Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen" and „26. DOK.fest München“ for their hospitality and time and everybody who was supportive in contributing to the study trip, various screenings and the festival event.

THE GUESTS

Stefanie Schulte-Strathaus, Arsenal Institute for Film and Media Art / Berlinale Forum, Berlin, Germany
Madeleine Bernstorff, International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany
Alain Bieber, arte creative – the new network for contemporary culture, Strasbourg, Luxembourg
Sasha Ayoub, Dox Box International Documentary Film Festival, Damascus, Syria
Azza Chaabouni, Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage, Tunisia
Sebastian Fischer, Filminstitut Köln, Germany
Viola Shafik, film historian, Cairo / Berlin
Souad Rishmawi, El Kasaba Theatre and Cinemathèque, Ramallah, Palestine
Abir Boukhari, AllArtNow Festival, Damascus, Syria

Firas Taybeh, filmmaker, Jordan
Tahar Kessi, filmmaker, Algeria
Hamzi Aboubakar, filmmaker, Algeria
Agathe Dirani, filmmaker, France
Basim Magdy, filmmaker, Egypt
Ali Benkirane, filmmaker, Morocco
Aladin Aboutaleb, filmmaker, Tunisia
Omar Kalifa Sahim, filmmaker, Belgium
Jassim Mohammed, filmmaker, Bahrain
Solmaz Shabazi, filmmaker, Germany / Iran
Mohamed Ahmed Elsadiq, filmmaker, Sudan
Salah El Mur, filmmaker, Sudan
Mohamed Hanafi, filmmaker, Sudan

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THE CURATORS



Marcel Schwierin, Berlin



Hala Galal, Egypt



Ayman Hussein, Egypt



Sarah Rifky, Egypt



Maha Maamoun, Egypt



Ala Younis, Jordan



Yazan Khalili, Palestine



Habiba Djahnine, Algeria



Masoud Amralla, UAE



Walid Tayaa, Tunisia



Nadira Ardjoun, Algeria / France



Lara Khaldi, Palestine

Marcel Schwierin

Filmmaker and curator, Berlin

Artistic Director Arab Shorts 2009-2011

Walid Tayaa

was born in Tunisia in 1976. After studying sociology, Walid turned to cinema. He directed short films as part of the amateur cinema movement and participated in independent international festivals. He also worked as first assistant director in many productions. In 2006 his first short film 'Bahja' was shown at the Cannes Festival. He participated in numerous training workshops and seminars in Tunisia, Morocco, Togo, Syria, the Czech Republic, Germany and finally France. Here he pursued continued education at La Fémis in 2007.

In 2008 he directed the short film 'Haylaman', which was shown at the Berlin Film Festival in 2010. In the same year he directed the film 'Life' that won the main prize at the Tetouan International Mediterranean Film Festival in Morocco, the Andalusian Television Award at the African Film Festival in Tarifa, Spain, and the Golden Tanit at the national competition during the Carthage Cinema Days. He also directed a documentary on Issawiya Sufism in Tunisia.

Currently, he is working on two new short films, 'The Age of Marriage' and 'Wrinkles', as well as preparing his first long feature film.

Nadira Ardjoun

has been the co-organizer of the International Short Film Festival in Clermont-Ferrand, France, since 1985.

Hala Galal

is a film director, script writer and producer, and founder and executive director of SEMAT Production & Distribution.

She has directed more than 18 films and produced more than 15. Her long documentary 'Women ChitChat' won the Silver Prize at the Rotterdam Film Festival in 2006. Hala has been a member has participated in several local and international film festivals in recent years, and has been a guest speaker and lecturer in many festivals, conferences and workshops. Moreover, she is a member of the Cinema Committee in the Egyptian National Higher Council of Culture in Egypt.

Ayman Hussein

is an Egyptian Filmmaker who learned filmmaking through a strong passion and workshops.

Since 2005 Ayman has worked for Semat Production & Distribution as a director, producer, and editor of several films and was in charge of different activities. He directed seven shorts, four of which won eight awards at National and international film festivals, and wrote the scripts for all his films.

He curated programmes for film festivals and different events and has been working for the past six years, as a volunteer representing Semat, with over 70 NGO's and civil society organizations on the issue of street children in Egypt.

Maha Maamoun

lives and works in Cairo, Egypt. As an artist she primarily works with photography and video. Most recently she co-edited, with Haytham el-Wardany, a book titled The Middle Ear, for Sharjah Biennial 10.

Her recent exhibitions include: 'Second World', Steirischer Herbst (2011), Outres Mesures, La Galerie – Contemporary Art Centre in Noisy-le-Sec (2011), 'The End of Money', Witte de With – Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2011), 'Mapping Subjectivity', MoMA, New York (2010), and 'Live Cinema', Philadelphia Museum of Art (2010). She was co-curator of 'PhotoCairo3' (2005) and assistant curator for 'Meeting Points 5' (2007). Maamoun is a founding board member of the Contemporary Image Collective (CiC).

Sarah Rifky

lives and works in Cairo and elsewhere. She has been curator of the Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art since 2009 and has taught at the American University in Cairo and MASS Alexandria in 2010.

She studied visual art and mass communication at the American University in Cairo and received her MFA in Critical Studies from the Malmö Art Academy, Lund University in Sweden. She co-edited the artist book *Damascus: Tourists, Artists Secret Agents*. Her projects include 'Invisible Publics' (Cairo, 2010), 'The Popular Show' (Cairo, 2011), an accord is first and foremost a proposition (New York, 2011) and 'The Bergen Accords' (Bergen, 2011). She is a curatorial agent for documenta (13) and founding director of CIRCA, the Cairo International Resource Center for Art.

Masoud Amralla

Al Ali was born in Sharjah, UAE, in 1967. He is the curator & director of the Emirates Film Competition (2002-2007), artistic director of the Dubai International Film Festival, and director of the Gulf Film Festival, and served as a jury member in several Arabic and international film festivals. His writings comprise poetry, including a collection of poetry entitled 'Hymns of a Seagull', and cinematic critiques and have been published in Arab magazines and newspapers. He also directed several shorts and documentaries including 'Al-Rumram' (1994), 'The Rainbow Room – 100 Years of Cinema' (1996), 'Horizontals and Ornament in the Baroque Age' (1999), and 'The Mountain Keepers' (2005).

Habiba Djahnine

is a film director born in 1968 in Algeria. She is the initiator and the one in charge of the workshop 'Bejaia Doc' specialized in documentary creation. This workshop is organized by two associations: Cinéma et Mémoire (Bejaia) and Kaina Cinéma (Paris) in Bejaia, Algeria.

She is the author of several short stories and humorous texts published in journals in France and in Algeria. In 2003 she published a poetry collection entitled 'Outre-Mort' (Beyond Death) with El Ghazali. A poem from this collection was also published in an anthology entitled 'Je est un autre' (I is someone else), published by Seghers.

Since 2003, she has collaborated in various festivals and cinematographic events as a curator. She is the co-author of 'Associations algériennes, parcours et expériences' (Algerian Associations: paths and experiences) published by PCPA in 2008. In 2006 she directed a documentary film entitled 'Lettre à ma sœur' (Letter to My Sister) and in 2008 'Autrement citoyens' (Otherwise Citizens), a movie about associations in motion in the Algerian civil society. In 2010 she directed 'Retour à la montagne' (Back to the Mountains) and in 2011 'Avant de franchir la ligne d'horizon' (Before Crossing the Horizon).

Ala Younis

is an independent artist and curator based in Amman.

Through art, film, and publication projects, Younis investigates the position of individuals in a politically driven world, and the conditions in which historical and political failures of the collective become personal ones.

In 2011, Younis curated 'Maps, Timelines, Radio Programmes' for La Galerie, Contemporary Art Center in Noisy-le-Sec (Paris), 'Out of Place' with Kasia Redzisz for the Tate Modern (London) and Darat al Funun (Amman), and 'Momentarily Learning from Mega-Events' for Makan (Amman).

Lara Khaldi

was born in Jerusalem sometime in the eighties, and received her B.A in archaeology and art history with a minor in English literature in 2005.

Yazan Khalili

was born in 1981, and lives and works in and out of Palestine. Yazan Khalili received a degree in architecture from Birzeit University in 2003 and in 2010 graduated with a master's degree from the Centre for



Documentation Arab Shorts 2011 Goethe-Institut Kairo

Reality Recaptured

A New Culture of Discourse

Visiting the Arab Shorts Film Festival at the Goethe-Institut in Cairo

By Amira El Ahl

Payback

It could have been a good day. "I felt your love" the Egyptian singer was crooning on the radio, "my hope is for you to be happy", transporting the taxi driver to a better place other than his low-class neighbourhood somewhere in Cairo. And the young boy, who was queuing for some beans in the morning at the 'fool' stand had succeeded in squeezing in front of all the big men and ran down the street beaming with success. It could have been a good day.

But then it all turned sour.

The boy got a slapping from his father for bringing too small a portion back home. The taxi driver had an accident and the culprit got away with it, thanks to his *wasta* – his privileged contacts. The taxi driver was left with no papers and no compensation.

Where to go with all this anger and frustration from this injustice?

The taxi driver, a teacher during the day, has a favourite tool: a wooden stick that he keeps in the trunk together with his schoolbooks. Once he enters the schoolroom, the victim from the street turns into the perpetrator who abuses his position for power and submission. Dark eyes and grim faced, he walks through the small classroom; scared eyes looking up at him. Who will be his victim today? The boy, whose day had started so promising at the 'fool' stand, knows that it is his turn when the teacher points at him. He does not know the answer to the teacher's questions who is waiting in anticipation for the whipping. Wailing, struggling and fighting with his schoolmates who are asked to bring him to the front of the room, the boy knows that there is no escape. Although his feet show marks of previous beatings, the teacher knows no mercy. He beats the boy over and over again on the soles of his feet, taking out his anger, avenging all injustice he had suffered from earlier.

Violence, social injustice, corruption – issues deeply rooted in Egyptian society.

The boy gets a beating because the taxi driver had a bad day. The taxi driver gets punished for an accident that someone else had committed. The officer who acquits the culprit, forces the young woman who was sitting in the back seat of the cab to give him a blowjob – otherwise she will end up in a prison cell. The young woman has to prostitute herself to make a living for herself and her mother. She gets molested even at home, where the father of the little boy rents out a room to her and her mother. "I am here to collect the rent," the father says and forces himself on her. Her disgust at herself and the life she has to lead shows when the young woman sees her reflection in the mirror over the sink. She cannot look at herself without throwing up her feelings of utter disgust.

The lives of the characters in Omar Khaled's short narrative *Payback* are intertwined, and we watch them facing a world of oppression, violence and social injustice. Screened at the Arab Shorts 2011 of the Goethe-Institut in Cairo, this short film was shown as part of a programme titled *Personal Freedom: Fiction Within The Truth*. Curated by Hala Galal and Ayman Hussein, the programme explores questions of fiction and truth and how the difference between both can be gauged. "There is always truth in fiction, and much of reality is too unacceptable to be conceived as true", they write in their curatorial statement. "This programme represents reality, where what is real may seem unreal to many." More than any other programme in this year's festival, their selection of short films deals exclusively with current events.

In *Our Weapon*, Ziad Hassan tells the story of a group of friends who use graffiti to express their opinions after the 25 January Revolution.

Suspended Freedom by May El-Hossamy follows a housekeeper around Cairo, who travels half the city every day to work in different houses, scraping a living for herself and her children. We see her cleaning houses, cooking and struggling through Cairo's traffic while talking about her personal life. Her husband,

imprisoned for seven years, had escaped during the 25 January Revolution - a fact that does not seem to make her life any easier.

For the two Egyptian curators it was a conscious decision to show films only from their home country. "Based on what was happening here and all the new work we had been exposed to, we wanted to focus on films from Egypt," says Ayman Hussein. All but one film were made in 2011, focusing on the day-to-day life in Egypt after 25 January or the conditions that led to the revolution, as portrayed so harshly in Omar Khaled's fiction *Payback*.

Fictitious or realistic/fiction or reality? This was one of the main points discussed by the audience and filmmakers after the screening of *Payback*. "I was very impressed by this movie, however, it really is a harsh portrayal of a society", says Marcel Schwierin, artistic director of Arab Shorts. Were plot and characters exaggerated for dramatic purposes? Can this be a realistic reflection of reality? "From my point of view, this film expresses what is happening as part of Egyptian daily life," says Ayman Hussein, although the film was made in 2010, a year before the political upheaval that ousted former president Hosni Mubarak. "Egypt still suffers from a vicious circle of violence, especially among the economically weaker classes. And this violence continues", Ayman Hussein says.

This is highlighted by the sad fact that the film's screening coincided with news of the death of 23-year old Egyptian Essam Atta after being tortured by police in prison. The political upheaval in the Arab world has deeply affected every strata of society. It was not only visible in the highly political programmes of this year's festival, but also felt reality throughout the five-day festival.

On Friday, the day after the opening, many filmmakers and curators chose to join the protests in Tahrir Square, just a few metres away from the Goethe-Institut, to show their solidarity with the pro-democracy movement. Essam Atta's body was brought to the square and the filmmakers from all around the Arab world were deeply moved by this experience.

"I got carried away by what I saw there", says Ali Benkirane from Morocco, who joined the screening of his film *Amal* late, because he had joined the protests in Tahrir.

In the afternoon of that day, the curators of the Arab Shorts 2011 meet at the "White Box" in the gardens of the Institute, in order to discuss organisational issues. But many who sit around the table seem absent-minded. The noise from the square, rallying cries echoing through megaphones from Tahrir-Square, make it difficult to concentrate. Yazan Khalili, curator from Palestine, joins the meeting late. He has come directly from the square, on the back of his hand glow the Egyptian colours – black, red and white. "I did not want to, but before I knew it I had a flag painted on my hand," he says while looking down at his hand. Others don't make it at all to the meeting, because they are protesting in front of the prison where Essam Atta was tortured to death.

The Arab world has seen dramatic changes in the past year and the Arab Shorts Festival thus faced a new challenge in its third year in existence. With its largest programme so far, the Arab Shorts presented eight programmes, curated by eleven curators from Egypt, Algeria, France, Tunisia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Palestine. All in all, forty eight films from twelve Arab countries were screened. "There is a huge variety of short films in the Arab world and we wanted to reflect this variety by choosing eleven curators." Marcel Schwierin explains the idea behind the format of the Arab Shorts 2011: In the past, curators received specific instructions on how to choose their films; – in 2009, curators represented their home country, in 2010 they were asked to work with a particular theme. This time around curators were completely free to make their own choices. The only criteria they had to adhere to were that first, films had to have an Arab component, second, the whole programme is not to exceed a maximum of 70 minutes overall with each film no longer than 30 minutes, and third and finally, at least one of the films per programme should have been produced within the last three years. The core question of what constitutes an "Arab" film remained open for interpretation.

"To put a programme together is maybe as intimate as making a film," says Marcel Schwierin. It was important for him that curators from the Arab world would choose the films for the different programmes. "To curate myself would have had implied something post-colonial for me." A trained photographer and filmmaker Marcel Schwierin has worked exclusively as a film curator since 2004 – "a job description that I basically created in 2004", he says. Ever since, he has co-founded the Werkleitz Festival in Halle (Saale) and the Internet database cinovid. He is also curator for the Transmediale Berlin and the International Short

Film Festival Oberhausen. He is the brain behind the Arab Shorts, launched the festival in 2009, and has been its artistic director ever since. What makes Arab Shorts special for him is its strong socio-political orientation. "You get a very rich view on the Arab world and its societies." Through the media one is always confronted with the same images, the same old clichés: angry young men, Orientalism and Internet savvy men and Arabs who are seen as revolutionaries, explains Marcel Schwierin. In contrast, many films at the Arab Shorts present the political side within very private settings, and show, for example, how the dynamics of family networks work and how this in turn affects society and politics.

The Stadium

It is a cold night. He has his coat collar pulled up, the smoke from his cigarette is visible against the dark street lights. The cigarette. He has one constantly between his lips, sucking on it as if it were to keep him warm, as if it is the only thing left for him to hold on to. A cigarette. He is walking through the dark city, his feet slurping on the floor, his back hunched as if he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. He looks as if he is being pushed to the ground by an invisible force. His face is that of a man who has no expectations anymore; sad, hopeless, exhausted. Deep lines are cut into his face, a face that has seen a lot and does not want to see anymore. He walks with his cigarette in his mouth, followed by a dog, through the deserted city. He walks into a bar, where he downs some drinks. Nobody speaks a word but the radio presenter who is talking about a football match. There are some other clients, but everybody seems to be on their own sad and lonely planet; nobody speaks to each other. Only the youth on the street talk, about football and the match, just like the presenter on the radio. The man continues his walk, passing a construction site and empty streets until he buys a sandwich, which he devours. He is exhausted. He looks up, takes out a cigarette and looks through his black-rimmed glasses at a group of youngsters standing at a distance. He puffs heavier and heavier at the cigarette, as if he was pumping himself up with courage. Then he stands up, slurps over to the young men, as fast as his hunched body allows him, looks provokingly into the round and receives what he silently has been asking and hoping for: a straight hit in the face.

The Stadium by Ala Eddine Slim, Tunisia, is an oppressive drama that creates a sensation of suffocation through its slow moving narrative and the dexterous use of light. Over the course of 24 minutes the viewer moves with the old man through a dark city, where the hero vanishes from view most of the time. The director depicts the city as a big prison where citizens live dehumanised, with no soul, without hope. The film traces a gloomy picture of the psychological state of Tunisia and its citizens before the January 2011 events. "Free expression, critical creativity and alternative art were not possible and associative, cultural and civil work, independent of the ruling party and the regime was a form of resistance that the regime tried to suppress", writes Walid Tayaa, curator of the programme: Metaphor and Resistance in Tunisian Short Films in his introduction to the films. With its underlying message it is surprising that The Stadium was produced in 2010 under the auspices of the Tunisian Ministry of Culture.

A reason might be the basic nature of short films. "Short films are often produced below the radar of censorship", explains Marcel Schwierin. Because they are short and unlikely to be screened in front of a big audience, the censors do not take much notice of short films, an advantage which provides them with more freedom of expression and criticism. Nevertheless, they do get a social relevance once a critical mass is formed. An example is the Arab Shorts that drew in crowds of people to the Goethe-Institut in Cairo. Films such as The Stadium and Payback are a mirror for the audience, reflecting the appalling realities of their societies.

Amal

But is their hope? Amal – which means "hope" in Arabic – certainly believes so. The twelve-year-old is a paragon of energy, happiness and lust for life. She aspires to becoming a doctor, a wish so strong making it her only priority. She owns a little treasure tin box that contains a stethoscope, with which she listens to her heartbeat with indulgence. Every beat a promise for life, a different life than the one Amal leads with her mother, father, brother and elder sister in the Moroccan countryside. "I have one single wish – to become a doctor and take care of all the ones I love", she says in a whispering, excited tone. Every morning she wakes up with a smile on her lips and her first direction is towards her box. She takes out the stethoscope, walks over to her sleeping brother and presses it against his chest. At school, a long walk through the countryside away, she listens to her girlfriend's heartbeats during the break and after school her teacher

gives her a book about the human heart. "If you want to really thank me come back through this door in 15 years with your diploma in your hand," the old man says. But he also knows that it is a long road for her, especially as a girl. Neither the teacher nor Amal know yet that it will be her last day at school. At night her mother tells Amal that from the next day on she will have to stay at home. Her sister will move to the city and her mother needs help in the house. A world falls apart for Amal, whose eyes fill with tears, but no word of resistance leaves her mouth. She knows that she has to obey. Her brother pleads for her with his father but to no avail. "Amal is grown up now and the road is too dangerous for her." But he also thinks that there is no reason for her to continue her education, as there will be no work waiting for her once she graduates. Why spend all this money?

At night Amal lies on her mattress, a candle flickering in front of her eyes. She gets up and puts the stethoscope next to her brother's pillow. They don't speak a word until Amal blows out the candle and says into the dark: "Good night". Her dream has just died.

"Amal means hope and her parents are killing the hope inside of Amal. I wanted to show that she will wake up as a different person," says Ali Benkirane. The director produced this fiction film in 2004 in Morocco. It was his first film. "This really is a movie that tackles the whole MENA region," Ali Benkirane says. "It is about human potential and what we do with it, since it is the wealth of every society." Besides Amal, Nadira Ardjoun, curator of the programme titled Childhood: Innocence showed four further films about the lives of children in the Middle East. How does the life of a child in Palestine, Morocco, Lebanon or Tunisia look like? What are the children's every day realities? How are they affected by the decisions of adults through political manoeuvres and social traditions? "Children bear the consequences of others", says Nadira Ardjoun. "For me it was important to let you know what children are suffering from, because far too often we forget that children are suffering too, that they bear the consequences of decisions taken by adults." In the introduction to her programme she writes: "A child has no choice; it must, all by itself, grasp reality as it is and often without explanation from adults: more remains unsaid than answers their questions. No words to channel the suffering that is originally not theirs."

Nadira Ardjoun, who has been the co-organiser of the International Short Film Festival in Clermont-Ferrand, France, since 1985, chose the topic of childhood because it is universal. But there is a decisive difference between Europe and the Arab world, that Marcel Schwierin points out in the discussion following the programme: "I was surprised by the obedience of these children. In Europe there would be much more conflict. Here it seems that the kids – in all films – accept their fate without any rebellion." Maybe because rebellion, which requires an opinion or a position was nothing that was ever encouraged by elders, be it fathers, teachers or rulers. Obedience is a deeply rooted concept in all Arab societies. It was also a tool to keep the masses silent and to direct them as needed by rulers.

Without intention by the curators the topic of childhood became a strong theme throughout the Arab Shorts 2011. "I was really surprised by that", says artistic director Marcel Schwierin, "since the curators were totally free to choose their topics and films." Nearly all programmes featured films that evolved around children and their relationships with their parents and how political and social circumstances affect their lives.

Children play the lead in Children of Fire by Mohammed Al Hawajri, a colourful and powerful documentary about children in Gaza who burn their fears and paint the dark with fire at night. In Paper Dress by Kasem Kharsa, a young Iranian woman recounts childhood memories of her sister's illness that are illustrated with Persian miniature cut-outs reminiscent of a fairy tale or a children's book. Both documentaries are part of Ala Younis' programme Everything Is Alright, Officer.

Additionally, Land of the Heroes by Sahim Omar Kalifa, was shown in the programme Path To Solitude curated by Masoud Amralla. It is the story of ten-year-old Dileer and his sister Zienee who live in the border region between Iraq and Iran. It is 1988, the conflict between the two countries is reaching its final stage. Dileer and his sister want to watch cartoons, but there are two obstacles to that modest wish: the national broadcaster, that cancels the cartoons in order to show images of the last victory on the battlefield, as well as cousin Malo, a bully that tantalises Dileer especially, who wants to be a superhero.

In this fiction something else strikes the viewer: the absence of the father. Where he is – fighting against the Iranians or possibly deceased - is never explained. Many films at the Arab Shorts 2011 evolved around the topic of the absent father. "Maybe Arab societies want to get rid of their father figures", Marcel Schwierin suggests as an explanation for this unexpected phenomenon.



My Father is Still a Communist: Intimate Secrets to be Published

“My life will be reduced to dust, as the saying goes, while you remain young and healthy, just like your father. And then you will go and marry another woman.” It is 1978 and the female voice on the tape sounds sad, longing and playful at the same time. She is talking to her husband Rachid, “my love, my soul, you are the pulp of my heart,” the one that has left her behind in the mountains of south Lebanon to find his luck and work abroad. Their only tool of communication, the only way to hear the voice of the beloved, to talk about longing, love and every day life, is by sending tapes. “Everything fades away, everything disappears in the end, so let it go,” she urges her husband. It is 1982 and he is still far away from the homeland and family. Her urges for his return home and her playful yet serious threats to destroy his passport next time he comes home, so he would stay with her and keep her warm at night have been in vain. Her voice sounds tired, somewhat disillusioned, facing life and the responsibilities of child rearing on her own. “There is only little space left on the tape, let me find you a song on the radio”, she says and then the soft, warm, yet always longing and sad voice of the Egyptian singer Abdel Halim Hafez fills the air.

It is sound, voice and words that are the storytellers of Ahmad Ghossein's fiction film *My Father is Still a Communist*, which was shown in the programme *In the Name of the Father*, curated by Lara Khaldi and Yazan Khalili. The images of the film seem to function only as a backdrop while the story unfolds through the voice of Maream on the radio cassettes sent as love letters to Rachid during the time of the civil war in Lebanon. It seems throughout the film that these tapes are the only thing that is left from their relationship. We see images of a wedding, when both were young, smiling, holding hands and dancing together with family and friends in addition to all these pictures from the family album. Maream in her wedding dress, Maream holding a baby in her arms, Maream jumping into a pool and Maream with the kids in a park. It is always the father that is missing, who is now walking through the images as if to make up for lost times. Old and out of place, he tries to get into the family picture, putting his arm around Maream. But it is too late, only an illusion, times are lost forever. Never throughout the 32 minutes of the film do we see Maraem and Rachid together, even now in old age they seem to be separated. She in the house they build for the family, him going through old family pictures. They do not find each other anymore. She looks sad, exhausted and disillusioned while we watch her going about the chores of her days. Alone, without her kids not her husband.

My Father is Still a Communist was the starting point for the curatorial team of *In the Name of my Father*. They build their programme around this film, because the issue of the father was something Lara Khaldi and Yazan Khalili had been talking about for a while, the latter explains. “We did not try to connect this programme to the revolutions but we tried to connect it to the role of the patriarchy”, says Yazan Kkalili. They were driven by their own relationships with their fathers, both politically involved in different Palestinian organisations. “Somehow we always wished we could have lived their lives. The Arab Spring really changed this.” The conflict of the disappearance and the existence of the fathers, that seemed to play a vital role in many films at the Arab Shorts 2011, was possibly such a dominant feature because the revolutions also questioned the role of father figures in the Arab world in general. In this respect, without showing the raw documentary images of the currently fresh revolutions, the festival was highly topical and initiated debates concerning current political and social issues.

In 2009 Arab Shorts started as a project in support of independent Arab filmmakers. Apart from the festival, that was intended to be a one-time show but was so successful that it was continued for three years, the Goethe-Institut has organised film-screenings, presentations and discussions as well as visits of Arab film experts to German film festivals and institutions. The Arab Shorts project also includes an online platform that features about 100 films shown at the Arab Shorts in the past years. This web resource was meant to work as a means of making the rich and diverse scene of Arab short films internationally known. Until now Arab Shorts already has proven to be an important research source for tens of thousands of anonymous users who visit the site and watch the movies. “Some of them we know: curators, festival organisers, distributors and TV emission purchasers and they even use Arab Shorts when looking out for talents,” explains Marcel Schwierin.

Over the past three years the festival has developed and changed. “In 2009 it was quite an experiment”, Marcel Schwierin says. “And I say experiment because we only had nine months to organise the event.” Usually such an event takes more than a year in preparation time. Marcel Schwierin came to Cairo for three months to launch the Arab Shorts. There was yet no ‘Viewing Lounge’, as in 2011 and Marcel Schwierin

ended up as a projectionist, because there was nobody else who could do the job. "It was crazy and chaotic but also amazing and very creative,, he says of this first Arab Shorts festival. In 2010 the festival turned out much smaller. Marcel Schwierin and the Goethe-Institut had not intended for the festival to continue, but due to its big success it was decided later in the year to make it a three-year project. This time around the curators from the Arab world did not have to represent their home country as in the Arab Shorts 2009 but were alternately given a theme to work with. In 2011 all these guidelines were dropped and the curators were free to choose the theme and any films that had an Arab component. With eleven curators and eight programmes it turned out to be the biggest Arab Shorts festival, and also the most successful. For five consecutive days the projection room at the Goethe-Institut was packed with people. "It means, that the people really appreciate this festival", says Ala Younis. "It is a small victory for securing these alternative places to host cultural events." For Marcel Schwierin, it was the best Arab Shorts, "also because the discussions after the screenings with the audience were so refreshing". He realised a change in the way people commented and reflected on the films compared with the last two years. "There seems to be a new culture of discourse." The debates were open, friendly and minted with the wish to understand and learn. "You can feel that the audience and the filmmakers really want to benefit from this festival; they are eager to exchange and learn from one another", Marcel Schwierin recaps his impressions.

Al Wadi

The valley must be cursed, there is no other explanation. The valley crosser is at a loss. "I have five donkeys, but whenever I walk them to the middle of the valley they become four. When I come back to my starting point, they become five again." Nobody seems to be able to give him a satisfying answer to this mystery. Neither the digger, who is hunting for treasures in the sandy ground of this dry and deserted valley, nor the soldier who wants to pass the valley or the Sheikh who has come to bury a person. But many things seem to be curious in the valley. Why does the Sheikh resemble the image we traditionally have of Jesus, with long hair, a beard and a shawl over his head? Why is the soldier unaware that the river that once upon a time ran through this valley, has dried out? And why is the digger collecting broken plastic plates that he finds on the ground? "It is plastic, it must be from the plastic age", says the valley crosser after some serious contemplation. Made in China. "Ah, it seems that the Chinese enslaved the English people in an attempt to find Noah's ark in this area", the digger concludes. "There is a theory, I will write a book."

Al Wadi, part of Ala Younis' programme Everything Is Alright, Officer, is a comedy set in the future but playing heavily on traditional symbols. "Normally when we see films on the future we are confronted with a lot of technology," says the director Firas Taybeh. "I wanted to work differently. After many wars, in the future we could go back to an old age – maybe even a golden age." His fiction film was inspired by folk stories from the Middle East. Every child in the Arab world knows about Goha and his strange adventures. Hundreds of stories exist of Goha, and his donkey is an integral part of every one of them. Goha embodies the Arabic humour like no other figure, but very often the listener will gag on his own laughter since his stories live not only from its humour but also from its shrewdness and its often deserved malicious joy. "We all look for the truth, and usually it is very close to us, closer than you think", Firas Taybeh explains his decision to use a story from Goha in his film.

Ala Younis writes in her introduction that her programme "examines the acquisition of news gained by means of constructed space: Events and people appearing in the news are assimilated from bits and pieces of description given by others. The Arab revolutions that broke out at the onset of 2011 have affirmed that the media pick and choose only what matches their policies for broadcasting. (...) It remains to be the case that our knowledge of truth relies on a narrator's story, just as we imagine stories of pure fiction." Her title Everything Is Alright, Officer is a quotation from a film by Syrian director Mohamed Malas, which he made with the Egyptian writer Sonallah Ibrahim. The film is about a group of prisoners who read old newspapers smuggled into prison. But the news is always belated news. "Living this effect of belated news linked the film to the programme," explains Ala Younis, who is the only curator who took part in all three Arab Shorts festivals. It is the theme on the state of destruction and instability that guided her through the process of choosing her films for the programme. "And as a matter of fact, NOT everything is alright at all this year," says Ala Younis. The state of revolution and the uncertainty of what will happen were the themes that she was looking for in her selection. "It has been a challenge to find films that present this vagueness."

The heavy use of symbols in Al Wadi became a topic of discussion after the screening. Why were the donkeys disappearing, why did the Sheikh look like Jesus and which problems did the director encounter

during his shoot? These were only a few questions tackled during the debate. “Well, my biggest fight was with the donkeys”, Firas Taybeh says and laughs.

The debate was one example of many of how engaged the public was at the screenings and how interested to exchange with the filmmakers and curators. “You can feel that there is a lot of meaning in the discussions here, a kind of urgency that you don’t find anymore in the West,” says Marcel Schwierin. Also compared with the two previous years the discourse gained in strength. “Since the revolution there seems to be a whole new culture of debate”, Marcel Schwierin notes, an observation that was affirmed by many participants. “The kind of debate I encountered here I have not experienced in a long time,” says Stefanie Schulte-Strathaus from Arsenal – Institute for Film and Media Art, Berlin, who presented a guest programme from Berlinale Forum at the Arab Shorts. “It is extremely refreshing and amazing to witness how eager for knowledge and exchange people here are.” A reason for this difference might be the fundamental issues that are at stake in the Arab world, the profound changes that are affecting the political, social and economic spheres. “It is definitely true that the artists in the Arab world work more intensively, with more passion and much with regard to content,” describes Marcel Schwierin the differences in artistic relevance between Germany and the Arab world as he sees it.

Into Thin Air

The images that are running over the screen are blurry and it is difficult to make out the faces. No matter how often they are rewind, one cannot see any faces. But they are not needed to feel the fear that must be written in all of them. The fear, the panic in their eyes is tangible in every second. Hundreds of people are running down a street in fear of their lives. Some fall to the ground, put their hands to the ground, get up and continue. Others run, turn around with their hands over their heads and start screaming something that cannot be heard, into the direction from which the people are running. There, in the distance, stands the army and shoots at peaceful protesters. “Some of the people in the footage returned home. Some didn’t,” says a voice from the off.

The audience watches spellbound, no sound can be heard in the room. It feels as if everybody here must know these images, either lived through them or saw them on TV. The only difference is, that these images are not images from Tahrir-Square in January 2011. Mohammadreza Farzad’s documentary *Into Thin Air* is a film about the “Bloody Friday” massacre, which took place on September 8, 1979. The footage documents the shooting of innocent people by soldiers in Jaleh Square in Tehran.

Into Thin Air was shown as part of the guest programme presented by Stefanie Schulte-Strathaus from Arsenal, *Re-Moving Images*, “a short film programme about political changes as they are seen in (and empowered by) the world of images, and about the productive process of decay”, as Schulte-Strathaus writes in her introduction.

Tahrir Square in Cairo 2011 or Jaleh Square in Tehran 1979 – the images resemble one another so much, that it takes one’s breath. And then suddenly, while the film is still running, loud screams from a fight break into the silence of the screening. Many heads in the audience turn nervously. It is an unreal moment, where through the images on the screen and the sudden noises from the street outside, the people are transported back to the days in late January, when just around the corner from the Goethe-Institut the Egyptian police was attacking peaceful protesters and hundreds died. Egypt is still in a state of alert and everybody here knows it. The images on the screen, the massacre in Jaleh Square, serves as a reminder that history always repeats itself.

“For me the amazing thing about Arab Shorts is that it shows reality in many different facets,” says Marcel Schwierin. From fiction to documentary to video art to animation – the artists and filmmakers don’t deal with merely academic, but existential questions. “What impressed me the most in the past three years is, that art is done with so much earnestness in this part of the world”, says Marcel Schwierin.

And the current political upheavals will only add to the creative output in the Arab world. Therefore, even though Arab Shorts was meant to be a three-year-project, all people involved are sure that in one way or the other Arab Shorts will carry on.

Amira Sayed El Ahl is a German-Egyptian journalist and foreign correspondent Near and Middle East based in Cairo.





FROM THE PRESS

AMEINFO 8 Nov 2011

Goethe-Institut announces opening of 2011 Arab Shorts Short Film Festival

The Goethe-Institut Kairo announced the opening of the third consecutive Arab Shorts Festival Event. The five-day festival will be opened on 27th October at 7:30pm and will last until 31 th October. The Festival will screen selected short films and video works from around the Arab world in order to promote the independent Arab cinema.

Although independent Arab cinema and media art has come a long way in a short period of time, it remains unfamiliar to many, including distributors, festival organizers and the mainstream media.

The project Arab Shorts aims to support professional exchange and provide opportunities of watching Arab short films for broad audiences. Over three years, from 2009 to 2011, 'Arab Shorts' festival events have offered film-screenings, presentations and discussions.

In this year's festival, 11 curators chosen from around the MENA region will present eight programmes comprising a total of 48 films at the Goethe-Institut in Downtown Cairo.

The event will host filmmakers and experts from the MENA region and Europe as special guests, as well as 'Re-Moving Images' a German guest programme of the Arsenal-Institute for Film and Media Art Berlin/ Berlinale Forum.

The opening ceremony will be attended by the Egyptian Minister of Culture Dr. Emad Abo Ghazi.

The event will also present opportunities for the public, film experts and journalists to discuss the films and the progress of the independent Arab cinema with industry professionals. A presentation by Alain Bieber of Strasbourg will introduce 'arte Creative', a new network for contemporary culture.

In addition, 'Lunchtime Talks' will be held with four cinema professionals from Germany and the Arab region, who will speak on their work and the institutions they represent. The talks will be held in the 'White Box', set up in the courtyard, and will provide opportunities for individual discussions with the various speakers. Meanwhile, the films will be presented in the 'Black Box', the auditorium. Journalists and film professionals will also have the opportunity to view works from a selection of about 200 Arab short films by signing up individually or in a group for the 'Viewing Lounge'.

The 'Arab Shorts' Festival Event is part of the Goethe-Institut's 'Arab Shorts' project which seeks to support the independent film and media arts communities in the Arab countries. The goal of the project is to promote cultural production, dissemination and networking both within the region and with Europe.

The 'Arab Shorts' project as a whole includes commissioned, curated programmes of short film and video art, an annual festival event featuring guests from both Arab and European countries, a web resource where films from Arab Shorts programmes can be viewed from any computer anywhere, visits of Arab film experts to German film festivals and institutions and publications such as journals and catalogues.

Films presented at the 'Arab Shorts 2009/10' are accessible online (free of charge), while the films of "Arab Shorts 2011" are scheduled to be online soon.

3rd Arab Shorts Festival promises introspection and revolution

By Helen Stuhr-Rommereim

The Arab Shorts Film Festival began as a one-time event in 2009, but caught on strongly enough that this Thursday will mark the beginning of its third edition. And according to artistic director Marcel Schwierin, "This year the festival is bigger than ever. We will have more programs, and we have invited more curators."

The festival is organized in separate programs, each assembled by a curator or pair of curators from across the Arab world: Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, UAE, Jordan and Palestine. As the festival has progressed curators have been given increasingly open parameters for making their selections. In the first festival, programs were confined to the curator's country of origin, but in the second, the organizers decided to eliminate such distinctions and instead provided curators with guiding themes. This year, curators are again free to choose films from any country, and to choose the themes themselves. The very concept of what constitutes an "Arab" film is also open to interpretation. "It does not have to be produced in an Arab country, it can be that the director is Arab, or that it is about an Arab topic," says Schwierin.

This year's festival program will include a wide range of films, from straightforward documentaries to art films that typically find their home in galleries. Schwierin explained that the festival was organized intentionally to bring together films usually found in separate venues. (...)

The two Egyptian curatorial teams - Ayman Hussein and Hala Galal, and Sarah Rifky and Maha Maamoun - do indeed represent distant corners of the filmmaking spectrum. Hussein and Galal run the filmmaking center Semat, and are both grounded in traditional documentary filmmaking. Rifky, on the other hand, has gained international recognition as an innovative curator, and Maamoun is herself an artist who works primarily in video and photography. The programs reflect the curators' divergent backgrounds.

Rifky and Maamoun went about constructing their program, entitled "A State of Fluidity," by looking for films that expressed "a certain emotional or mental range, or wavelength," according to Maamoun. We did not define a subject that we were looking into. It became more like we were trying, without saying so much, to identify a psychological state," she explains. Rifky's and Maamoun's process was as fluid as the mental state they were seeking to express. "We were brainstorming, throwing videos together, seeing what connected and what did not," says Maamoun. (...) Rifky and Maamoun were influenced by 2011's political upheaval. "This title, 'State of Fluidity,' is connected to the state of things after the revolution. Those words were how we were describing that time."

Galal's and Hussein's program, however, is much more explicitly connected to current events, and is assembled in a more straightforward manner. Their program deals more exclusively with revolution than almost any other program in this year's festival. All but one of the films they chose were made in 2011, with a general focus on day-to-day life in Egypt after 25 January, as well as the conditions that led to revolution.

Hussein said it was a considered decision to draw films only from Egypt, despite having the freedom to select films from other locations. "Based on what was happening, and all of the new work we had been exposed to here, we decided that we wanted to focus on films from Egypt," says Hussein. Hussein and Galal wanted to address what they perceived as a marked increase in documentary filmmaking over the past year. "More documentaries are being made now, and the styles are different," says Hussein. "Young people no longer have this concept that there is one correct way to do things." While in comparison to the other curatorial team Hussein and Galal might be given the label of "traditional" filmmakers, they designed their program to question the concept of documentation and representing reality. In their curatorial statement, they write, "There is always truth in fiction and a lot of reality is too unacceptable to be conceived as true."

In their program, entitled "Personal Freedom, Fiction within the Truth," Hussein and Galal are interested in films that investigate specifically the ways that people express their personal freedom, and how this

has changed or not changed since January. "The idea is that personal freedom is important, but does it exist?" asks Hussein. Their program promises to examine post-25 January Egypt with a selection of very new films that have not been previously screened, and hopefully to present a more complicated perspective than the repetitive revolution dialogue screened recently at the Alexandria Film Festival.

AHRAM ONLINE 26 Oct 2011

Goethe-Institut to open 'Arab Shorts' festival

Third independent short film festival at the Goethe-Institut in Cairo will screen nine film programmes from across the Arab world and starts Thursday, 27 October

The Goethe-Institut in Cairo will host a short film festival entitled 'Arab Shorts' from 27 October to 31 October 2011, for its third consecutive year. Director of Arab Shorts Marcel Schwierin from Berlin has invited curators to contribute art and documentary films which reflect on the current state of affairs. Apart from screenings, a number of guests from Arab and European countries will give presentations. This year will see the presentation of nine film programmes, selected by eleven curators from around the Arab world.

Special attention will be given to 'Arte Creative', an innovative and ground-breaking web-based project in digital arts. Alain Bieber, of the French-German TV station Arte TV, will come to Cairo to present "an editorially animated site for inspiring contemporary audiovisual creation."

Throughout 2011 selected films from Arab Shorts have been presented in Europe and the MENA region. In July the programme received much attention from the media when it was screened during an Arab film week at the Arsenal in Berlin.

In April and May, a group of 14 Arab film curators attended the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen and the International Documentary Film Festival "DOKfest" Munich in Germany.

The Arab Shorts Film Festival 2011 will open on Thursday 27 October at 7.30 (...)

AHRAM ONLINE 28 Oct 2011

Arab Shorts film festival draws crowds

By Menna Taher

The 3rd Arab Shorts festival opened on Thursday with some interesting films in a program curated by filmmakers Hala Galal and Ayman Hussein entitled, 'Personal Freedom: Fiction within Truth.' This year's event drew many more viewers than previous festivals. A large crowd showed up for the opening and many were not allowed in due to space limitations. (...) The festival will continue until Monday, 31 October. (...) -

DAILY NEWS EGYPT 31 Oct 2011

Filmmakers explore childhood at Goethe Short Film Festival

By Maurice Chammah

In the Arab world, youth are a constant hot topic in political and economic policies and discussion. As the world population officially reaches 7 billion this week, children make up the vast majority and are widely celebrated as "the future."

But in this context, the experience of actually being a child is secondary. Not so for Nadira Ardjoun, the

French-Algerian curator of a program of short films screened at the Goethe Institute's Arab Shorts 2011 festival. "Everywhere in the world, children are born equal," she writes. "A child...must, all by itself, grasp reality as it is and often without explanations from adults."

Ardjoun selected a set of five films, which screened back to back on the second night of the yearly festival. Under the title "Childhood: Innocence," the directors of this selection attempt to put the audience in the place of a child, through the pacing and emotional triggers of the narratives. (...)

DAILY NEWS EGYPT 1 Nov 2011

The loneliness of Gulf cinema

By Maurice Chammah

Only 10 years go, the whole Gulf region lived in a total cinematic drought," writes Masoud Amralla Al-Ali, artistic director of the Dubai International Film Festival and curator of a series of Gulf-based films at Arab Shorts 2011 in his program note. "The cinematic image that others had of us was always either stupid Bedouins or rich people swimming in barrels of oil or ... terrorists."

At one of the last sessions of the Goethe Institute's Arab Shorts 2011 festival, which ended Monday, Amralla screened five films from the Gulf region under the title "Paths to Solitude." The unifying thread was a deep and sustained feeling of loneliness. (...) The loneliness in the films, for Amralla, is evidence of the loneliness of their makers. He looks at recent films from the Gulf and pronounces: "They are projected to say in plain frankness: we didn't die." --



