



Emerging filmmakers at 6th Ajyal Film Festival say creative storytelling helps put the spotlight on global issues

Doha, Qatar; December 3, 2018: Emerging filmmakers from across the world, who present stories from the Middle East, say creative storytelling helps put the spotlight on the concerns here and gain a deeper global understanding. Several new voices in cinema from the emerging talents are being screened at the sixth Ajyal Film Festival, the annual cinema event hosted by the Doha Film Institute at Katara Cultural Village.

Marco Proserpio, who directed *The Man Who Stole Banksy* (UK, Italy, Qatar/2018), based on the politically divisive works painted by anonymous street artists and activist Banksy in Palestine, said that Banksy only served as an excuse to gain attention and to talk about the bigger issues in the region.

"I came across the idea while travelling between Jerusalem and Bethlehem," said Marco, adding that for him, the theme looked like a "good way to talk about Palestine from a different angle and to picture Palestinians as human beings and not victims. I admire Banksy for his actions more than his artworks, for example, his actions in Palestine over 10 years."

Marco said they sent a copy of the film to Banksy when they finished it "but did not try to reach out during the process of making the film as I was not interested in his identity." Made over a period of six years, with support from the Doha Film Institute, the film won a Best Screenplay Award at the Cannes Film Festival 2018. "Making this film was difficult because the story was not controlled by me or by my team. In many ways, we were part of the real life, and we had to wait to see what the next step would be." He said the support of the Doha Film Institute to the film was valuable, especially during the phase of lending narrative voice to it. The film will be screened again on Monday, 8:30 PM at Novo Cinemas, The Pearl.

Director Muslim Habib, whose film *As My Father Was* (Iraq/2018), screening in the 'Courage' programme of Ajyal said, cinema makes it possible for him to shed light on a very important issue in Iraq relating to children without citizenship. The film is a take on a 12-year-old boy who struggles to find a school due to his ethnic background and disability.

"The events in Iraq have negatively affected more than 536,000 children and I think the main achievement of the film is in successfully highlighting the issue, and in promoting awareness on the need for enrolling children in school after being deprived of their fundamental right to education," he said. The short film was shot over two years with the total footage exceeding more than 30 hours. Habib said screening the film at Ajyal offered an ideal platform as "it speaks directly to children with the film depicting the suffering of their peers in other countries, and highlighting the need for global solidarity and empathy."

Youssef Al Bagshi, the director of the short film *Transformation* (Kuwait/2017), which screened in the 'Resilience' programme at Ajyal, said movies play a key role in revealing and reflecting the marginalised aspects of specific issues. The film is about a young disabled man who lives with his mother and how he struggles to overcome his limitations. "Cinema offers depth and incredible space to get into the heart of an issue and deal with various aspects. Through my film, I wanted to highlight the important points that need to be discussed."



2018 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: Katara Cultural Village – Cultural Partner; Ooredoo – Principal Partner; Novo Cinemas – Strategic Partner and St. Regis Doha – Signature Sponsor.

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Note to Editors:

About Doha Film Institute:

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the local film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Film Festival; and Qumra. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute

About Ajyal Film Festival:

Ajyal Film Festival is an annual celebration of film designed to nurture young minds and support the development of mindful global citizens and thoughtful future leaders in a creative and educational environment. 'Ajyal', Arabic for 'generations', brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue. Through its' jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 21 are given an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss global cinema and culture, developing self-confidence, independent critical thinking skills, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema. 6th Ajyal Film Festival takes place from the 28th of November to the 3rd of December.

Twitter: @AjyalFilm; Instagram: @ajyalFilm, #ajyal18