



SHE Is Film

Women Filmmakers Discuss Politics, Religion, Censorship and the Treatment of Women Filmmakers in the Industry

Doha, October 26, 2011 – Female filmmakers Nadine Labaki (Director, *Where Do We Go Now?*), Yasemin Şamdereli (Director, *Almanya – Welcome to Germany*), Jasmila Žbanić (Director, *On the Path*) and Nansun Shi (Producer) took centre stage at the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) Thursday in a wide ranging panel discussion as part of the ‘Doha Talks’ series.

Moderated by Neshan Der Haroutiounia, a TV Presenter for MBC Lebanon, Nadine Labaki talked about her decision to become a filmmaker and explained that growing up in Lebanon during the war she watched a lot of TV and as a result wanted to create worlds that had nothing to do with her real life.

Going on to discuss her motivations as a filmmaker, Labaki explained that it is a way of dealing with frustrations she encounters in life. “Most of the time for me filmmaking is about expressing myself,” she said.

In her latest film, Labaki went on to say that unlike in *Caramel* where she spoke about women and women’s problems, she felt the need to reflect the war and conflict in Lebanon in *Where Do We Go Now?*. “After I finished *Caramel* war broke out again and I felt a little bit superficial talking about women when we were at war. Two years later in May 2008 we were at war again and people were killing each other, Beirut became a war zone over a matter of hours and people who used to live together in peace became enemies.

She added: “I like to be naïve and in my own way try to change something. I wanted to make people think about the absurdity of these conflicts. These conflicts are not something unique to Lebanon. There is a fear that exists between people now - we are scared of each other. I wanted to ask why it is like this. I wanted to dream of a better world, explore a different way of thinking.”

Veteran Hong Kong producer Nansun Shi (*Infernal Affairs*, *All The Wrong Spies*) discussed the climate for filmmaking in China and the growth in the industry there due to China’s growing economic development. “In China box office is growing at double digits and from 2009 to 2010 the increase in box office has been 62% which is unprecedented anywhere in the world.

But there's a double edged sword to this wonderful scenario. The government still has old regulations in place and is very hesitant to change so there is not a lot of room for edgy filmmaking. If you accept the privilege of making films in China you have to be accepting of censorship at the moment and have to be even more creative in the types of films you make as many subject matters are taboo, including religion, politics and racial issues so at the same time as we are very privileged, also our hands are very tied."

Panellists also addressed the question of whether they felt they were treated differently than men within the film business and if discrimination existed in the industry.

"I've never felt inferior," explained Nansun Shi. "It's not about inferiority or superiority – it's about how good you are at what you do. In film production it's about team work and each person is just as important as the other, we treat each other as equals."

The panellists also discussed the treatment of religion in their respective films. DTFF juror Jasmila Žbanić whose film *On the Path* deals with religion is really a story about love, about hope or escape and that one of the main characters Amar fundamentally alters his religious views after the death of his parents during the Bosnian war. "Because the society of Bosnia doesn't offer alternative ways to cope with the trauma Amar comes out of the war and becomes a believer because it's a way of healing for him, a way of finding peace."

The panel also discussed their filmmaking inspirations. The four women mentioned the work of directors David Lean, Claire Denis and Jane Campion amongst others and praised their work saying inspiration came from their work because they created films that often touched a part of their soul not often touched. "I really like the work of Charlie Chaplin," added Turkish-German director Yasemin Şamdereli of *Almanya – Welcome to Germany*. "I like the way he can combine tragedy and comedy. If you look at the movie Gold Rush it's a story about starving, about hunger and yet it makes you laugh and cry at the same time."

For additional information relating to Festival screenings, tickets, venues or transportation please visit: <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival>.

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Notes to Editor

About Doha Film Institute (DFI):

The Doha Film Institute (DFI) is an independent cultural organisation established in 2010 to incorporate Qatar's film initiatives under one banner.

Located at Qatar's new cultural hub, Katara, DFI's many initiatives include film and television funding for MENA and international films, year-round education programs, film screenings, and the annual Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF).

In addition, DFI has established a number of strategic cultural partnerships with leading local and international organisations including Katara Cultural Village Foundation, Tribeca Enterprises, World Cinema Foundation, Maisha Film Labs and Giffoni Film Festival.

DFI was founded by H.E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Along with Her Excellency, DFI leadership comprises DFI Board Vice-Chair and Festival Board Chair, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Fahad Al-Thani; DFI Board Member and Festival Board Vice-Chair, H.E. Dr. Hassan Al-Nimah; DFI Board Member, Mr. Mansoor Ibrahim Al-Mahmoud; Festival Board Member, H.E. Sheikh Jabor Bin Yousuf Al Thani; and DFI Executive Director, Amanda Palmer.

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