

Press Release

Doha Film Institute Celebrates Record Year with 13 Supported Films Selected at Cannes 2023 Including Three In Competition

- Latest co-financed projects by Qumra Master's Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Jessica Hausner selected to the festival's prestigious Official Selection, In Competition
- Record 13 projects from across the world selected to screen in key sections of the Festival including first ever Grant's project selected for In Competition
- Selection celebrates diverse projects by Arab and global talent, auteurs and emerging important voices supported by the Institute

Doha, Qatar; May 14, 2023: The Doha Film Institute (DFI) has set a first in the Arab region for a film organisation, with its latest co-financed projects, *"About Dry Grasses"* by Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Jessica Hausner's *"Club Zero"* selected to the Official Selection, In Competition at the 76th Cannes Film Festival, which takes place from 16 to 27 May 2023.

Additionally, *"Banel E Adama"*, the debut feature by Senegalese filmmaker Ramata-Toulaye SY, recipient of the Spring 2023 grants, has been selected to In Competition, marking the first ever DFI grantee project selected to the prestigious section.

This nomination makes DFI the only cultural organisation in the MENA region to have eight supported projects including seven co-financed titles selected for the Official Selection, In Competition to date. Previous nominees include Asghar Farhadi's *"The Salesman"* in 2016, Nadine Labaki's *"Caphernaum"* and *"The Wild Pear Tree"* by Nuri Bilge Ceylan in 2018, *"It Must Be Heaven"* by Elia Suleiman in 2019 and Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *"Memoria"* in 2021.

Diverse projects supported by DFI through its Grants programme will screen to global audiences in key sections of the prestigious Festival including three in Official Selection, Un Certain Regard; one in Official Selection, Midnight Screening; four projects in the parallel section of Critics' Week (Semaine de la Critique), one in Director's Fortnight (Quinzaine des cinéastes), and one in ACID.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "The diversity of DFI-supported films at Cannes this year is a strong testament to the high quality of projects nurtured through the Institute's funding and mentoring initiatives. We are honoured and proud to be supporting auteurs and previous Qumra Master's on their prestigious new projects as well as the journey of emerging filmmakers from across the world to achieve creative excellence.

She added: "We are delighted that the works of talented filmmakers have once again made the cut at the premiere film event, competing with some of the most anticipated films in international cinema. The selection highlights our role as a vital link for bold and important voices from all over the world in realising their cinematic ambitions, and also underlines the focus of DFI and Qatar to support compelling stories that have the potential to shape world cinema."

Co-financed by DFI, *"About Dry Grasses"* by acclaimed Turkish director, screenwriter and photographer Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Austrian director and screenwriter Jessica Hausner's *"Club Zero"* will premiere in

competition along with grantee “*Banel E Adama*” by Ramata-Toulaye SY competing with 18 other global entries. Nuri’s film ‘Winter Sleep’ won the Palme d’Or at the 67th Cannes Film Festival, and he has also been awarded the Best Director Award in 2008 for ‘Three Monkeys’ and the Grand Jury Prize (Grand Prix) in 2002 for ‘Once Upon a Time in Anatolia’. Jessica Hausner returns to Cannes after having three previous films, “Lovely Rita”, “Hotel” and “Amour Fou” selected to the Un Certain Regard section of the festival and ‘Little Joe’ selected to compete for the Palme d’Or at the 2019 edition of the Festival.

Official Selection, In Competition:

- Co-financed by DFI, ***About Dry Grasses*** (Turkey, France, Qatar/2023) by Qumra Master Nuri Bilge Ceylan, follows Samet, a young teacher, who is finishing his fourth year of compulsory service in a remote village in Anatolia. When some events happen to him that he finds difficult to make sense of, he loses his hopes of escaping the grim life he seems to be stuck in. But his meeting with Nuray, herself a teacher, may help him overcome his angst.
- ***Club Zero*** (Austria, UK, Germany, France, Denmark, Qatar/2023) by Qumra Master Jessica Hausner, narrates the story of Miss Novak, who joins the staff of an international boarding school to teach a conscious eating class. She instructs that eating less is healthy. The other teachers are slow to notice what is happening and by the time the distracted parents begin to realise, Club Zero has become a reality.
- ***Banel E Adama*** (Senegal, France, Mali, Qatar/2023) by Ramata-Toulaye SY is set in a remote village of Northern Senegal and follows the lives of Banel and Adama who long for a home of their own. When Adama refuses his blood duty as future chief and informs the village council of his intentions, the whole community is disrupted and chaos ensues.

Official Selection, Un Certain Regard:

- ***The Mother of All Lies*** (Morocco, France, Qatar/2023) by Asmae El Moudir, is a feature documentary in which the filmmaker investigates the secrets of a Casablanca family using different personal stories of each family member to ground historical events.
- ***If Only I Could Hibernate*** (Mongolia, France, Switzerland, Qatar / 2023), by Zoljargal Purevdash, is about a poor but prideful teenager, who lives with his mother and siblings. The physics teacher who recently transferred to his school notices Ulzii’s talent in physics and encourages him to participate in competitions.
- ***Hounds*** (Morocco, France, Belgium, Qatar/2023) by Kamal Lazraq, set in the working-class suburbs of Casablanca, narrates the story of a father and son, who are trying to make ends meet by doing odd jobs. One night, a man they were meant to kidnap accidentally dies in the trunk of their car, marking the start of a long night roaming the seedier parts of the city with a corpse.

Official Selection, Midnight Screenings:

- One of only three films selected to the Midnight Screenings segment of Official Selection is ***Omar La Fraise*** (Algeria, France, Qatar/2023), by Elia Belkeddar. The film is about an old school gangster, who is forced to flee from France to Algiers, and must clean up his act to stay away from French prisons.

Critics’ Week (Semaine de la Critique):

- ***InshAllah Wallad*** (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France, Qatar/2023), by Amjad Al Rasheed, is about a grieving mother shaken up by the sudden death of her husband, who is now at the risk of losing her home to her brother-in-law.

- ***Tiger Stripes*** (Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Indonesia, Qatar/2023), Amanda Nell Eu is about a girl who discovers a terrifying secret about her physical self.
- ***I Promise You Paradise*** (Egypt, France, Qatar/2023) by Morad Mostafa is a short film about Eissa, a young illegal African migrant in Egypt in a quest against time to save his loved ones.
- ***Lost Country*** (Serbia, France, Croatia, Luxembourg, Qatar/2023) by Vladimir Perisic explores the sensorial, emotional and political formation of a boy born at the beginning of the 80-is in Yugoslavia as the political system around him radically unfolds.

Director's Fortnight (Quinzaine des cinéastes):

- ***Deserts*** (Morocco, France, Germany, Belgium, Qatar/2023) by Faouzi Bensaïdi is about two longtime friends Mehdi and Hamid who work for a collection agency, and their meeting with an evader that marks the beginning of an unforeseen and mystical journey.

ACID:

- ***Machtat*** (Tunisia, Lebanon, France, Qatar/2023) by Sonia Ben Slama follows the lives of wedding musicians Fatma and her two daughters Najeh and Waffeh and their struggles to go about their daily live shopping for a better future.

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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.

Doha Film Institute

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