



**Cinema-Going  
in the Arab World:  
Exhibition,  
Distribution,  
And Audiences**

14-15 September 2018  
at NVIC

Cairo, Egypt

[Type here]

# Programme

## 14 September – Day 1

- 8:30-9:00 Registration and coffee/tea
- 9:00-9:30 Welcome to the conference  
Rudolf de Jong – Director, NVIC  
Ifdal Elsaket – Assistant-Director (Arabic and Islamic studies)
- 9:30-10:30 Keynote  
Daniel Biltereyst (University of Ghent, DICIS) and Philippe Meers (University of Antwerp, DICIS) - *On New Cinema History*
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee/tea break
- 11:00-1:00 Panel 1: Early Cinema Going  
Arthur Asseraf (University of Cambridge) - *Seeing the World as it is? Newsreels, Censorship, and Cinema Riots in Colonial North Africa*  
  
Morgan Corriou (University of Paris 8) - *Egyptian Cinema in Colonial Maghreb: Distribution, Exhibition and Audiences*  
  
Hend Al-Awadhi (University of Kuwait) - *Transcultural Encounters: Excavating Early Histories of Cinema-Going in Kuwait*  
  
Asmaa Ghareeb (Contemporary Image Collective) - *The History of the Cinemas in Ismailia and its Intersection with the Audience (Social Class and Gender) from 1950-1985*
- 1:00-2:00 Lunch
- 2:00-3:30 Panel 2: Politics of Production  
Rahma Bavelaar (University of Amsterdam) - *Interfaith Love and Competing Visions of "Moral Cinema" in 1952 Cairo*  
  
Carolina Bracco (University of Buenos Aires) - *The Politics of Production the Social Construction of Image and Imagination of Dancers in Egyptian Film*

Hanan Sharaf Al-Dine (Misr International University) -  
*Multimodal Construction of the Image of Women in Egyptian  
Film Posters of the Golden Years and the Present.*

3:30-4:00 Coffee/tea break

4:00-5:30 Panel 3: Dealers, Businesses, and Cooperation  
Isra Al-Qudah (Queen's University Belfast) - *The Effect of Film  
Dealers' Role on Film Importation and Censorship in Jordan*

Irit Neidhardt (MEC Film) - *Without Mention of the Contracted  
Partner: On Cooperation in Film and TV between the PLO and  
the GDR*

Arpi Sarkis Khatcherian (American University Cairo) - *Alcohol  
and 'Hollywood on the Nile': A Review of Literature and Expert  
Interviews*

## 15 September – Day 2

9:00-10:30 Panel 4: Festivals  
Stefanie Van de Peer (University of Exeter) - *Arab  
Documentary Landscapes – Transnational Flows of Solidarity at  
Festivals*

Sabine Salhab (Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne University) -  
*European Co-productions in Tunisian Contemporary Cinema:  
Three Case Studies*

Anais Farine (University of Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle) -  
*"Mediterranean Cinema:" Festivals: Circulation of Films,  
Network of Programmers and the (Re)invention of a Regional  
Category*

10:30-12:00 Panel 5: Nostalgia, Memory, and Archive  
Ali Atef (University of Chicago) - *What Moves us in Moving-  
image Archives? Ethnography about the Film-experience in  
Moving-image Archives*

Iskandar Ahmad Abdalla (Free University of Berlin) - *The  
Visual Nation: Re-claiming Egyptianness in front of the Screen*

Nezar Andary (Zayed University) *New Intimate Paths to Representations*

- 12:00-12:45 Lunch – general wrap-up of papers and steps forward
- 12:45-3:00 Excursion: Cinemas in Downtown Cairo  
A bus will be arranged. Bring water and please wear walking shoes (for invited guests only).
- 3:00-4:30 Visit to Cinematheque Alternative Film Center with Yasmin Desouki (Artistic director, Cinematheque) with special screening of select short films from the archives (For invited guests only)
- 4:30-6:00 Public forum on cinema audiences with special guests:  
  
Nour El-Safoury (Project manager/researcher of Mapping Cinema Audiences, NAAS) at Cinematheque in downtown Cairo  
Alia Ayman (Curator at Zawya, NYU-Anthropology)  
Waguih Al-Laqaany (Cinema Everywhere, Alexandria)

## 14 September – Day 1

### Panel 1: Early Cinema Going

*Seeing the World as it is? Newsreels, Censorship, and Cinema Riots in Colonial North Africa* - Arthur Asseraf



Incidents involving newsreels in cinemas were commonplace in the Maghrib under French rule. In Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, movie theatres were one of the few spaces that brought together varied groups across colonial society. While primarily built for European settler customers, movie theatres in cities drew crowds of ‘natives’ who enjoyed the images even if they were unable to read the French title cards or, later, understand the dialogue. In the anonymous darkness of the theatre, colonisers and colonised, generations and genders mingled uneasily. Cinemas became a microcosm in which the wider tensions of a deeply divided colonial society were played out. Different groups used events on the screen as an excuse to taunt, harass or attack other groups. French police rapidly recognised the importance of this new semi-public space and used the reaction of cinema crowds to measure public opinion. Undercover police agents systematically filed reports on the mood of cinema audiences, measuring the level of clapping (*l'applaudimètre*) in the dark.

This paper particularly focuses on the role of newsreels, drawing on the surveillance archives of the French colonial government. Histories of cinema, by focusing on feature fiction films, have paid less attention to the history of newsreels, which were an important aspect of cinema-going in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For Maghribis, they were a form of information accessible even to the illiterate and the non-Francophone. Similarly, cultural histories of the Arab world, and especially of cinema, tend to marginalize the Maghrib at the expense of Egypt and the Levant. Yet because French companies like Pathé and Gaumont were pioneers in the development of newsreels from 1908, Maghribis under French rule were exposed early on to the *bandes d'actualités*. Usually screened before the main feature as an informative visual newspaper, *actualités* promised to show the world as it really was, as a contrast to the escapist nature of the features. Because of their supposedly objective, factual content, newsreels were not censored by French authorities, unlike feature films which were carefully scanned for any potential subversive nationalist or anti-colonial content. Yet it was precisely because they portrayed the world as it really was that newsreels could precipitate riots in North Africa. By showing colonial violence, Arab nationalist activity, or conflict between religious communities, newsreels could have far more explosive effects than other kinds of film.

*Egyptian Cinema in Colonial Maghreb: Distribution, Exhibition and Audiences* -  
Morgan Corriou

For long, Egyptian films were the only Arabic-speaking films proposed to Arab populations under the colonial yoke. While they made their first appearances on Maghrebi screens as soon as the early 1930s, their general scarcity turned the screenings into actual events, drawing a new spectatorship (notably, families) into cinemas. Whereas the cosmopolitan birth of Egyptian cinema is now well known, its international expansion has drawn less attention. Yet, for a few years, scholars have begun to investigate the political aspects of these screenings in the French Empire, highlighting the fear close to paranoia that these films raised in the colonial administration, and the heavy censorship that ensued.

My aim is to present a comprehensive study of the circulation of Egyptian cinema in colonial Maghreb, by considering not only the political, but also the social and economic dimensions of these screenings. My research relies on administrative archives, press, interviews and memoirs, but I also make use of new sources such as advertisements, printed song lyrics, as well as the private archives of the distributor Films Régence.<sup>1</sup> My focus will be the passion for films commonly scorned by French and Maghrebi elites and the actual expertise developed by audiences, distributors and cinema owners, in a troubled context. Whether on a political, economic or cultural level, Egyptian cinema presented an opportunity for cinematographic independence in French North Africa.

The trade of Egyptian films developed in an already precarious environment, which characterized the whole film industry in colonial North Africa. Alongside a few ambitious firms like Films Régence, regularly on the verge of bankruptcy, many distributors only ran a small-scale business. I will deal with the various obstacles erected by French authorities to impede the distribution of Egyptian films and demonstrate that the colonial administration's main concern was to obstruct direct commercial relations between Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt.

Precarity also characterized the business of film exhibition. I will give an overview of cinema owners in North Africa and examine the part that Maghrebi Jews, and more and more Muslims, played in the success of Egyptian films. The major issue here lied within the specialization of a few cinemas in Egyptian films, regarded as an act of political dissidence by French authorities. I will focus on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Born in Tunisia, then established in Paris, the firm extended its trade to Sub-Saharan Africa and did not hesitate to invest in production in Egypt.

example of Tunis to analyse the socio-geography of Egyptian films' exhibition in colonial urban landscape.

Finally, I will focus on the relationships between these distributors and cinema owners and their passionate audiences. It is important to note that the colonial discourse on "native" audiences, and their so-called specific features, emerged at the same time as Egyptian talking films. Thus, the success of an Egyptian film industry prompted the French administration to define cinema as a western art. I will study the composition of these audiences, both disregarded and feared, and the expertise that they actually developed on Egyptian cinema. Indeed, these Egyptian films' enthusiasts proved wrong the false barriers erected by colonial authorities between "quality" and lowbrow films, modernist and conservative audiences, educated and uneducated filmgoers.

*Transcultural Encounters: Excavating Early Histories of Cinema-Going in Kuwait* -  
Hend Al-Awadhi

In 1958, shortly before Kuwait's independence, two theatres were built in its downtown area: Cinema Al-Hamra and Cinema Al-Firdaws. The former screened Arab and Hollywood films, while the latter was dedicated to Bollywood films only. Both theatres were frequently visited, and were the first theatres to open in the Gulf region, one decade before Deira Cinema was established in Dubai. Sadly, both Cinema Al-Hamra and Cinema Al-Firdaws were demolished in 2004. A luxury mall now stands in their former place.

In this paper, I examine these two theatres and the practices of cinema-going. They afforded as sites of transcultural encounter that crucially shaped the cultural formation of the modern state of Kuwait. Focusing particularly on the dissemination and consumption of Bollywood films, I propose that by turning to transcultural cinema infrastructures and encounters, we can rearticulate ethnic and racial discourses in the Gulf. Despite the prolific contributions of diasporic South Asian communities to cinema and popular culture in the region, to date there has been little scholarship regarding modes of media production, dissemination, and consumption vis-à-vis "minorities" in the Gulf. A careful consideration of South Asian media practices as part of Kuwaiti cultural production will enable me to locate and document thriving cross-cultural modes of productions, building towards a more complex understanding of the subjectivity of South Asians that points beyond the oft-portrayed figure of the exploited laborer, focusing instead on their role as producers, consumers, and distributors of media in the region. This will also provide a more critical and multilayered historical approach to Gulf area studies, which has often been anchored in discourses relating to conflict, dictators, and unhindered access to wealth. In this paper, I rely on media archeology—sustained by local Arabic archives, oral accounts of former cultural directors, such as exiled critic Walid Abu Baker, now based in Ramallah, and historians of Kuwait, such as Khalifa Alwagayan, author of *Tarikh al-Kuwait al-thaqafi* (Cultural history of Kuwait)—to excavate histories of belonging, marginalized narratives, and diasporic trajectories.

*The History of the Cinemas in Ismailia and its Intersection with the Audience (Social Class and Gender) from 1950-1985- Asmaa Ghareeb*

In 1935 a cinema was founded in Isma'ilia called Cinema Al-Ta'awun at a cost of approximately 6195 EGP. The establishment of the cinema occurred after some Egyptians were expelled from one of the existing foreign theatres in the city. Thus, Cinema Al-Ta'awun was the first cinema founded for Egyptians in Isma'ilia.

The first cinema in the city was founded in 1913 by French labours working for the Suez Canal Authority for entertainment for themselves and their families. It was called Gumière open-air cinema and it was restricted to the French community. The treaty of 1936 included a clause stipulating the withdrawal of the British forces from Egypt, except in cities and locales around the Suez Canal. After the treaty, several cinemas were founded to entertain the British forces who were positioned in the cities of the canal, including in Isma'ilia. In the mid fifties, an estimated 14 cinemas existed in the city. Movies were distributed among different neighbourhoods and even the poorest neighbourhoods had at least one cinema. In 2018, according to The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics there are only three cinemas present in Isma'ilia. All of them are in the al-Afrang district, which is predominately inhabited by the upper class. Between 1935 and 2018 the cinema-goers varied and changed and included foreigners and Egyptians and the upper class and working class and women and men.

The paper presents the following two research questions: How have cinema audiences in Ismailia changed between 1950 until 1985 from a gender and class-based perspective? How did the idea of cinema-going change during these years? I chose this period specifically because of various reasons. Firstly, the period underwent colonial influence on a large scale in the city. Secondly, it witnessed the departure of foreigners, specifically after the nationalization of the Suez Canal, until they fully disappeared at the end of the sixties. In addition, I chose this period because of the major changes that happened to the city. This includes the involvement of the city in two wars with six years in between, the forced displacement of its inhabitants for seven years, their return, and the renovation of the city. Adding to that, I chose this period because of the major changes that happened to the cinema industry in Egypt. This includes the nationalization of cinema, the emergence of videos at the end of the seventies, mass labour migration to the Gulf States, and the Infitah (open-door policy) that certainly had an impact on the type of audience that went to the cinema.

The paper collects information gathered from interviews with cinema-goers during this period and also with some inheritors of the cinemas in the city. Besides that, it makes use of the archive of the official private newspapers in the region (the Canal newspaper) and those that have been published almost

continually on a week-to-week basis from 1960 until now. In addition, it makes use of the personal archives (pictures) that have been preserved by people who were concerned with the documentation of the city.



## Panel 2: Politics of Production

*Interfaith Love and Competing Visions of "Moral Cinema" in 1952 Cairo* - Rahma Bavelaar

In 1952, just months before the Free Officers' coup, actor and producer Hussein Sedky released the film *Laylat al-Qadr*, a musical melodrama that centers on a love story and marriage between a pious Azhar student and a Greek-Egyptian Christian woman. Sedky's project for a "moral cinema" that could strengthen the emerging independent nation state resonated in many ways with the call for "morally uplifting cinema" advocated by the then newly established Catholic Film Center. Despite the overlap in their visions of the role of religion in the modern Egyptian state, Sedky, state censors and the Catholic Center clashed over the interfaith love theme in *Laylat al-Qadr*. After the Catholic Film Center mobilized an ecumenical Christian alliance to exert pressure on the state censor, the film was banned, only to be re-released and banned again, first under Naguib and then under Abdel Nasser who each sought to mobilize the film to support their own political projects.

In this paper I will draw on scholarship on gender and nationalism as well as the anthropology of film production to explore why and how the interfaith love theme generated such a protracted struggle. What was new about Sedky's film and what kind of Islamic cultural-nationalist project did it support? What were the roles of the state censor and the Catholic Film Center in these debates and how did their cultural-ideological projects construct the meaning of the film? How did the historical context influence the arguments that various actors made and how they were received? And what can these competing perspectives on the significance of the interfaith marriage plot reveal about the tensions around gender and religion at the heart of the competing decolonial projects of the early 1950's?

*The Politics of Production the Social Construction of Image and Imagination of Dancers in Egyptian Film* - Carolina Bracco

Present in the movie industry since its beginning up until our days, female dancers occupy a significant place on the Egyptian screens and in the memory of the Arab audience. Their bodies' presence –including more or less nudity depending on the period and censorship regulations – has had a variety of meanings throughout time, in relation to the country's socio-political changes. In a first stage, between the early 1940s and mid-1950s, the dancer is presented as a girl from humble origins for whom dancing is a way out of poverty. This image presented them as legitimate *banat al-balad*, simple and beautiful girls, who were accompanied by comedians such as Nagib al Rahani or Ali al-Kassar to complete the "typical Egyptian" framework of the passionate nationalism of the time. During the mid-1950s, with Gamal Abdel Nasser in power, dancers were identified with the flaws of the *ancient régime*. At this time the image of a local *femme fatal* was built; this included the portrayal of the dancer as a wicked woman, as opposed to the submissive female characters, in a classic virgin/slut opposition. This second period, which covers the early 1950s until the mid-1960s, is one of sultry bodies and voyeurism enabled by the low morale of the female characters, many times punished by death. As the Nasserist reign continued, the censorship developed regulations, which ordered dancers to cover parts of the body such as the abdomen and the legs. Furthermore, dance became "folklorized" and started to be presented in groups. Farida Fahmy was one of the main figures of the legitimate *bint al-balad* at that moment, the modern, modest and bourgeois girl who in the movies of the *troupe Reda* is presented as a group member and no longer as an individual. After the important inflection point of the defeat of '67, the image of dancers in movies was openly crass and vulgar, hereby inaugurating the period of the representation of marginal women. In this period adaptations of Naguib Mahfouz' *Cairo Trilogy* and "biographical" movies of famous dancers are filmed, presenting them as lost women, who openly dedicate themselves to prostitution, alcohol and drugs. Today, these images are, without a doubt, installed in the popular imagination as real images. But, in fact they were constructed by the movies during this period of social frustration and they set the immanent representation of dancers in Egyptian movies until today.

The proposal is then to analyze the social changes of the 20th century in Egypt that gave shape to these three images: worker, wicked and marginal, and in turn how these impacted the social imagination built around the dancers and the way that the Egyptian audience see and remember them through the movies.

*Multimodal Construction of the Image of Women in Egyptian Film Posters of the Golden Years and the Present.* - Hanan Sharaf Al-Dine

Film posters are powerful tools that perform a range of functions. While they help promote films; they establish a manifestation of the attitudes, trends and ideology of the society and time within which they are produced. Film posters are paratexts that surround a film, assume the presence of an audience and propose ways of engaging with the film. As a means of visual communication, a film poster provides information about film industry, the cultural context of the production period, and remains as strong evidence of its time. It may also reveal significant ideological changes in society along a period of time. This study attempts to analyze film posters of the Golden Years of the Egyptian Cinema as compared to the present, in order to see the way women were framed and represented and how far this reflects the changing ideologies and trends in the Egyptian society. Since the discourse of movie posters incorporates various semiotic resources such as image, color and language, it is necessary to decode a complex combination of a variety of modalities in order to analyze a movie poster. Therefore, this study will adopt a Multimodal Discourse Analyses approach as outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). This framework provides a powerful toolkit for analyzing and understanding visual images, and the interaction between verbal and visual components in media discourses. The researcher aims to provide a more comprehensive perspective of appreciating movie posters and enhancing the audience's overall comprehension and identification of the ideologies presented through these posters.

### Panel 3: Dealers, Businesses, and Cooperation



*The Effect of Film Dealers' Role on Film Importation and Censorship in Jordan* - Isra Al-Qudah

My presentation will address key questions and issues related to the dealers' authority/ power and role; these questions are: what is the role of dealers, what is this role's effect on film censorship in Jordan, and the responsibility and significance of educating the dealers on the diversified political, religious, and societal shifts that have direct impact on film censorship in each target Arab country.

Film dealers in the Arab world play a vital role not only in shaping the content/ topics displayed in Arabic cinemas, but also in the process of film censorship. This presentation focuses on the censorial practices implemented in the context of film in Jordan and the role that the film dealers play in this implementation. To examine these censorial practices and the role of the dealers, field work was conducted at the Classifications Department (CD) at the Media Commission in Jordan. This research has uncovered some of the significant issues underlying the processes of importing and distributing films in Jordan through the dealers who are based in countries other than Jordan. Such significant issues are related to the tasks that film dealers in the Arab world perform in addition to their main job which is importing and distributing films throughout the Arab world. I will argue that film dealers in the Arab world play a key role in enforcing an indirect type of censorship through their own decisions and practices, based on their personal decisions and assumptions regarding the culture and audiences of each target country and its context of censorship, disregarding any political, religious, and societal distinctions that affect the context of film censorship in each of the target Arab countries. Although the classifiers in Jordan have admitted part of the dealers' responsibility on enforcing censorship in the Arab world, they have also stated that negotiations with the dealers have, to a certain extent, succeeded in mitigating the censorial practices enforced by the dealers and by that mitigating censorship in each target Arab country.

*Without Mention of the Contracted Partner: On Cooperation in Film and TV between the PLO and the GDR* - Irit Neidhardt

Filmmaking, be it cinema or TV, is regulated on the basis of nation states. Not all states produce films or possess the means of production for the big screen. Several National Liberation Movements of the 1960s to 1990s used film as a weapon. To be able to do so they depended on befriended states that granted access to the means of production. One such example is the Palestinian Liberation Organization PLO. A state the liberation movement worked with very closely when it comes to film and TV was the German Democratic Republic GDR (1949-1990). When the PLO and the GDR started to cooperate in film-making in 1974 both were just diplomatically recognized by the majority of the UN member states and received their respective seats at the United Nations. The PLO was an affluent liberation movement operating from exile and the GDR was a sovereign state with a weak economy. The PLO had dollars which allowed it to part-take in international trade, while the GDR currency was the Mark which was not convertible at the international market and isolated the country economically. The GDR owned the pre-division German film archive with newsreel footage on Palestine that covered several decades and which neither the PLO nor other Palestinian bodies had ever owned. In other words, both sides had something which the other desperately needed. Thus in addition to their sincere anti-imperialist convictions, there was a big portion of pragmatism beneath the almost twenty years long cooperation in film and television between the two partners.

This paper gives an insight to the first coproduction agreement between the GDR's DEFA and the PLO's Department for Culture and Information as well as the films made on its basis. This paper will look at the role the cooperation played, each partner's political and diplomatic strategies after diplomatic recognition, in mutual dependency, support and at times manipulation.

*Alcohol and 'Hollywood on the Nile': A Review of Literature and Expert Interviews*  
- Arpi Sarkis Khatcherian

The birth of Egypt's cinema almost coincided with that of the alcohol industry. Images of alcohol consumption, drunkenness, inebriation, and abstinence have since permeated Egyptian films. Unfortunately, literature analyzing the crossroads between Egyptian film and alcohol consumption is scarce and barely existent. To address this gap the present study aims to provide an initial understanding of the nature of alcoholic content in Egyptian cinema and the possible health implications of such depictions. A primary concern of health communication has been the study of the propagation of risky behaviors – such as the harmful use of alcohol– through mass media. Two theoretical perspectives that scholars use to predict health-related implications of mass media depictions include social cognitive theory and the perceptions of social reality perspective – both used in the present study. A series of eight in-depth interviews were conducted with industry experts to contextualize findings of the literature review along historical and sociopolitical changes in Egypt. A standard set of questions was prepared for a nonrandom sample of media and film theorists and practitioners. The interviewees included media and film scholars, filmmakers and two executives from the alcohol industry. The questions revolved around the impact of Egyptian cinema on society, prevalent depictions of alcohol in Egyptian films and factors associated with alcohol depiction in films. Experts agree that alcohol is a constant and consistent feature of Egyptian cinema despite the changing attitudes towards drinking within society. The prevalent portrayals of alcohol in Egyptian films differ from Western modes of depiction. Egyptian cinema is a critical platform through which Egyptians are educated about drinking and habits related to alcohol consumption. This raises concerns about observational mediated modeling as postulated by social cognitive theory. It also suggests that the positive psychological effects of drinking that are commonly shown in films could potentially affect popular beliefs and expectations about alcohol as postulated by media-influenced perceptions of social reality perspective.

## 15 September – Day 2



### Panel 4: Festivals

*Arab Documentary Landscapes – Transnational Flows of Solidarity at Festivals* -  
Stefanie Van de Peer

In response to the global commodification of culture and neoliberal, capitalist tendencies, political filmmaking and specifically documentary have taken on an increasing urgency with creative as well as political ideas and idealism central to the form. Documentary and political cinema is also increasingly present in the world on television, cinema and smaller screens. In the Arab world, the audiences' growing attachment to the non-fiction form is reflected in the establishment of new documentary TV channels, the introduction of extra documentary slots on existing channels and in the increasing amount of specialized documentary film festivals.

For a long time documentary was the overlooked relative of fiction film, often seen as a training ground for the 'real' work in fiction feature filmmaking. But documentary's long dip in popularity was remedied with the Digital Revolution and its increased democratization of the medium of film, and now, in the age of fake news and reporters under pressure (physically and morally), creative documentaries gain traction. Likewise, the Arab Revolutions have borne witness to a fundamental change in attitude towards Arab documentary both in and beyond the Arab world. This urgency and change are reflected in film festivals' programs and their missions. Festivals are first and foremost celebrations of an art form, but documentary festivals dedicate themselves entirely to a form, as an act of resistance to the underrepresentation of the form, with ideas and ideals serving as inspirations for a gender, generation or ethnic group.

Looking at and comparing six festivals in the MENA dedicated entirely or mainly to the documentary form, this paper reveals a lively circuit that runs counter to the glamour of the Arab world's most established international film festivals. International festivals such as those in Marrakech, Carthage, Cairo, Doha and Dubai are perhaps more widely known for their star-studded atmosphere and the big-budget markets, red carpets and production networking events, but the documentary festivals in the region, like DoxBox in Damascus (Syria), Doc à Tunis (Tunisia), Fidadoc in Agadir (Morocco), Docudays in Beirut (Lebanon),

Ismailia Documentary Festival (Egypt) and the Al Jazeera International Documentary Festival in Doha (Qatar), show how a strongly congenial and collaborative nature can stand up against these larger festivals that are gobbling up budgets and markets. Fostering transnational co-productions, collaboration and solidarity movements in film, networked (not networking) events shape documentary audience communities that are concrete, creative and often nomadic hubs on the global festival circuit.

Film festivals and film festival studies have outgrown their European cradle and are now a world phenomenon. Some of the largest and most respected film festivals are no longer located in the so-called 'West' but in previously marginalized places such as Eastern Europe (Karlovy Vary), East Asia (Busan), Africa (FESPACO) and the Arab world (Carthage). Similarly, the significance of the international festival circuit in being an outlet for Arab documentary and independent cinema is growing exponentially, as some of the largest documentary festivals in the world like IDFA in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, CPH:DOC in Copenhagen in Denmark and the Sheffield Documentary Festival in the UK are embracing more and more Arab films for their expanding audiences. The study of festivals must be central to understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of global cinema audiences and international cultural exchanges at large, especially in a study of Arab documentary. No longer a marginal region or a marginal film form, Arab documentary needs to be inscribed in its region and history, as festivals that are sustained moments where time and space are condensed and intensified and where audiences expand.

*European Co-productions in Tunisian Contemporary Cinema: Three Case Studies* - Sabine Salhab

State-owned organizations established in Tunisia have always struggled to resist competition from multinationals whose films dominate the Tunisian domestic market. The country, however, has a strong cinematographic culture with an active cineclub since 1950. The Association of Young Tunisian Filmmakers was created in 1961, the International Amateur Film Festival of Kelibia took place in 1964 and the Carthage Film Days were created in Tunis in 1966. In the mid-1980s, international co-productions and independent producers played an increasingly important role in Tunisian production. Tarak Ben Ammar created the Carthago Films studios in Sousse and Ahmed Attia affirmed himself as the producer of the films of the Tunisian Golden Age which began at the end of this decade and continued in the 1990's. Tunisian film production, however, remains today very low compared to other cinemas in the Maghreb. Tunisia's lack of infrastructure is today the major issue. The country is very poor in cinemas, a dozen against over a hundred in the 1970s. Private initiatives such as the reopening of Majestic Bizerte or Cinevog Kram are unfortunately not enough to overcome the state's disengagement. However, despite this distribution problem, the funding system based on European coproductions - which is a worldwide phenomenon that allows a lot of countries to have a somewhat viable film industry - became since the late 1990s and till nowadays a major support to the Tunisian film production. This raises the question of a possible political agenda behind the films' discourse about identity and also about all their other constituents: the narrative structure, the aesthetics, etc. I would like to discuss during the workshop several questions regarding contemporary Tunisian cinema: what proportion of contemporary Tunisian movies are financed by international institutions? Are these "transnationally" funded movies and the nationally funded ones equally selected by International Film Festivals? To what extent do the funding system influence the Tunisian national film production? The discussion will be based on three case studies, three contemporary Tunisian movies: *A peine j'ouvre les yeux (Hardly I open my eyes)*, Leyla Bouzid (2015), Winner of the Audience Award and Best European Film at the Venice Film Festival of the same year. Bronze Tanit in Carthage. *Hedi, un vent de liberté (Hedi a wind of freedom)* Mohamed Ben Attia (2016), Silver Bear of Best Actor in Berlin, Gold Tanit of Best Male Performance in Carthage. *Vent du Nord (Northern Wind)* Walid Mattar (2018), Winner of the Golden Tanit Taher Cheriaa of the first work of the 28th edition of the Carthage Film Days but also the Best Screenplay and TV5 World Jury Prize.

*"Mediterranean Cinema:" Festivals: Circulation of Films, Network of Programmers and the (Re)invention of a Regional Category – Anais Farine*

Which movies are recognized as Mediterranean? Which strategies of diffusion, networks and theoretical approaches to cinema contribute to create this category? How do Film Festivals give consistency to the (re)invention of a category whose scientific invention date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

In this talk I'll try to answer those questions through the analysis of four film festivals: the International Festival of Mediterranean Cinema in Montpellier (Cinémed, created in 1979), the International Festival International of Mediterranean Cinema in Tetouan (FICMT, created in 1985), the Mediterranean Cinema Festival in Brussels (Cinemamed, created in 1989) and the Mediterranean Film Days in Algiers (MediterraCiné, 2012-2013).

Based on interviews, analyses of the films programs of those festivals or observations I made while attending different editions of those events, I will examine several issues by looking at their common points as well as their specificities. I will firstly explain the strategic reasons why the organizers choose to create Mediterranean film festivals, and what it allows in terms of diffusion of some recent movies that basically are not shown in film theatres apart from those events. I'll also explain how some screenings become tools to interrogate the colonial history. During its twelfth edition, for example, the FICMT organized an event called « The colonial cinema. Morocco in the look of Spanish cinema ». The Festival proposed to prove the existence of a Spanish cinema besides a French colonial cinema through the screening of three films realized between 1939 and 1941 where the audience could discover the origin of some stereotypes still present in the production of a certain kind of films nowadays.

At the same time, I will examine the production of knowledge linked to those festivals through the reading of texts written by organizers of those events which claim to find common characteristics among different national cinemas. I'll finally consider the way those festivals programs are linked to a network, to the circulation of film curators, who tend to homogenise the representation of the Mediterranean region and explain how the issue of subtitles contribute to this tendency.



## Panel 5: Nostalgia Memory, Archive

*What Moves us in Moving-image Archives? Ethnography about the Film-experience in Moving-image Archives – Ali Atef*

What makes a moving-image archives a generative space and practice? How can one understand historical aesthetic experience, specifically cinema-going, all the while aware that we understand such history from our contemporary moment?

This paper proposes to provide an answer to this question by investigating the manner in which the history of Egyptian moving-images today are archived, imagined, produced, curated. To conduct this investigation, I begin by situating myself within vastly rich historical resource of independent moving-images archives. By joining archivists as they sift through the attendant objects and material culture that makes up Egyptian film history, one can observe what constitutes a language of moving-images as it is housed within institutionalized archives.

How could such moving-image archives play a crucial role in spelling out the material culture of film beyond the film-reel or the screen? What is the role of reviews, memoirs, and interviews from newspapers and programs broadcast on television in providing source material through which to reflect on the experience of movie-going?

Because archives provide source material for academic researchers like myself alongside artists and film-makers, it is also a privileged space where theory and practice overlap bringing together critical, scholarly, and aesthetic practices. Contemporary independent Egyptian film makes use of such moving-image archives as well and this paper will provide several examples to illustrate their value in helping us think collaboratively about the experience of film in Egypt.

In short, this paper will turn to the growing independent moving-image archiving scene in contemporary Egypt to ask what, from the point of view of its producers, is its value. I will focus on the experience of being in archives and the senses it generates in rethinking our notions of film-history and history-making more generally across academic and aesthetic practices today. How might it help

us understand the changes in practices of watching and movie-going until today?

*The Visual Nation: Re-claiming Egyptianness in front of the Screen* - Iskandar Ahmad Abdalla

Since its early years, Egyptian cinema has always been a site for moulding a national culture and identity. Filmic representations in Egypt very often entail figures and stories that serve as allegoric vehicles for maintaining civic belonging, demarcating the borders of the national community and visually mythologizing its composite nature. Yet, a century after its emergence, Egyptian cinema itself had become a myth in its own terms. It created its own historical universe that intrinsically perpetuates its conditions of possibility separate from any references but itself. The history of the Egyptian film, its authors, directors and stars became an object of national pride and nostalgia, a manifestation of *al-zaman al-gamil*, literally the „beautiful age“ that despite its temporal variability, stands for times of cultural hegemony and regional political influence.

Public discourses in Egypt usually regard the film industry as an essential part of what is called Egypt's „soft power“ and film stars are often rendered as “national symbols.” Egyptian films continue to live in discursive forms that are not necessarily dependent on the original themes they dealt with or the aesthetics they conveyed. Recalling them publicly serves often to conjure up a visual account of the nation, to maintain a sense of national belonging based on the viewership's common experience of admiration and entertainment. In a metaphorical sense, it is as if the nation nostalgically views itself in the mirror of its film history, and concurrently reflects this mirror image to its subjects as an identifiable common visual reference. This paper is part of a larger project that aims to investigate the discursive spaces in which the legacy of Egyptian cinema is currently being debated. It aims, more precisely, to examine how this legacy functions as a recurring trope for re-narrating the Egyptian nation. My references here will be few episodes of recent talk shows dealing with Egyptian cinema or commemorating some of its stars. Based on Svetlana Boym's conceptualisation of nostalgia as an analytical category and Sara Ahmed's work on emotions, I will analyse how this visual account of the nation is being discursively articulated to re-allocate bodies as national subjects in front of the screen.

Nezar Andary (Zayed University) *New Intimate Paths to Representations*

## Public forum on cinema audiences

*4:30-6:00 at Cinatheque Alternative Film Center.*

Nour El-Safoury

Project manager/head researcher of Mapping Cinema Audiences, NAAS  
(Network of Alternative Arab Screens).

Alia Ayman

Curator at Zawya, NYU-Anthropology

Waguih Al-Laqany

Founder of Cinema Everywhere in Alexandria



Source: Hossam Elouan