

Δυστυχώς, ήταν παράδεισος

كانت جنة، للأسف

Unfortunately, it was paradise



Film program Curated by Delphine Leccas
and online publications Curated by Delphine Leccas and locus athens

(*Unfortunately, it was paradise: Selected Poems by Mahmoud Darwish)

Launched in September 2020, the project in seven sessions was planned to be a monthly film program. After a few months break, “Unfortunately, it was paradise” is back in Athens with its program of Greek, Middle Eastern and North African films which mirror each other as they approach similar topics responding to both the history of Tavros as well as its inhabitants. The thematics cover issues related to newcomers that formed – in Tavros as everywhere – an available workforce, but also the struggle of women workers, citizens’ protests to protect the environment against predatory practices, industries and factories as well as labor movements which unite to organize for better living conditions and social justice.

In politically and socially hectic times, from the militant cinema of the 60s till today in Greece and in the Arab world, filmmakers have aimed to reveal subaltern histories, workers and strikes which were purposefully not covered by the media. Diverse in form and format, showcasing movies ranging from fiction to documentary or experimental films, and a cine-concert, the films selected are of contemporary filmmakers but also pioneers whose films are part of our cinema heritage. Indeed, the artistic field of cinema is historically connected to the world of labor. Whether through fiction or documentary films, work, workers and their class have given rhythm to the history of cinema.

AIN in collaboration with locus athens invited filmmakers, artists, curators, activists, to respond and reflect on each screening either through texts, visual essays or online conversations. The resulting material is published online and shared through social media channels and newsletters. These *Correspondences* create a framework for the screenings and allow for multiple readings interspersed in time.

Program

Session 4

31 May 2021 at 21:00, Greek Film Archive

Until the Ship Sails by Alexis Damianos (1966, 93 min, Greece)

2 June 2021 at 21:00, Flery Cinema

Poisonous Roses by Ahmed Fawzi Saleh (2018, 70 min, Egypt/France/Qatar/United Arab Emirates)

Online Correspondences: text by playwright and screenwriter Efthimis Filippou and essay by writer and critic Ismail Fayed.

Session 5

16 June 2021 at 21:00, Flery Cinema

Ceuta's Gate by Randa Maroufi (2019, 19 min, France/Morocco)

Pre-Image (Blind as the Mother Tongue) by Hiwa K (2017, 18 min, Germany/Greece)

The Longest Run by Marianna Economou (2015, 74 min, Greece).

Online Correspondences: Essays by scholar and filmmaker Argyro Nicolaou and art and film critic Nicolas Feodoroff.

Session 6

June 2021 (date to be confirmed), basketball court, Tavros

Plato's Academy by Filippos Tsitos (2009, 103 min, Greece/Germany)

My English Cousin by Karim Sayad (2019, 122 min, Switzerland/Qatar)

Online Correspondences: podcast by curator, writer, researcher and performance artist Yasmina Reggad and video by artist and architect Sofia Dona.

Session 7

June 2021 (date to be confirmed), basketball court, Tavros

Roundabout in my Head by Hassen Ferhani (2015, 101 min, Algeria/France/Lebanon/Qatar)

The Shepherds of Disorder by Nikos Papatakis (1967, 121 min, Greece)

Online Correspondences: Essays by cultural journalist and essayist Ammar Almamoun and researcher and philosophy professor Sophia Efstathiou.



Poisonous Roses by Ahmed Fawzi Saleh, 2018



Until the Ship Sails by Alexis Damianos, 1966

Session 4

31 May 2021 at 21:00, Greek Film Archive, Iera odos 48 & Megalou Alexandrou 134-136, 104 35 Kerameikos
Until the Ship Sails by Alexis Damianos (1966, 93 min, Greece)

2 June 2021 at 21:00, Flery Cinema, Skippi 5-7, 17675, Kallithea
Poisonous Roses by Ahmed Fawzi Saleh (2018, 70 min, Egypt/France/Qatar/United Arab Emirates)

Online Correspondences: text by playwright and screenwriter Efthimis Filippou and essay by writer and critic Ismail Fayed.

The two films selected follow the desperate path of the young protagonists in their attempt to escape their toxic environment at any price. Inspired by literature, the winding narratives draw the lead characters towards unavoidable departures: Australia, for the Greek Antonis and Italy, for the Egyptian Saqr.

Until the Ship Sails

by Alexis Damianos (1966, 93 min, Greece) / VO Greek with English subtitles
With Christos Tsangas, Alexis Damianos, Eleni Bourbouhaki

The film narrates the journey of a rough mountain man (played by Alexis Damianos himself) as he moves towards foreign greener pastures. Damianos documents the inner drama of outcasts who are incapable of putting roots down anywhere. Through three episodes, the storytelling reflects on three stages of a man's evolving sexuality: attraction, eroticism and sexual repression.

Based on the short stories *The Ring* by Spelios Pasagiannes, *Nanota* by Gregorios Xenopoulos, and a modern popular Greek song, Alexis Damianos' debut is a stunningly poetic and intimate story.

Actor, writer and filmmaker, Alexis Diamanos (1921-2006, Athens) studied at the National Theatre of Greece and the philosophy department of the University of Athens. With only three films (including the acclaimed *Evdokia*, 1971), he is considered one of the most emblematic figures of New Greek Cinema and his work to be among the most important films in Greek history.

Poisonous Roses

by Ahmed Fawzi Saleh (2018, 70 min, Egypt/France/Qatar/United Arab Emirates) / VO Arabic with English and Greek subtitles
With Mohamed Berakaa, Safaa El Toukhy, Ibrahim El-Nagari

Saqr wants to flee to Italy from Cairo's old tannery district where he lives and works. His sister, Taheya tries to prevent his migration at all costs

Set in the same milieu as his striking documentary debut, Saleh's sophomore effort centers on the obsessive relationship between the sister and her apathetic brother. Based on Ahmed Zaghloul Al-Shiti's 1990 cult novel *Poisonous Roses for Saqr*, Saleh's bold adaptation transforms the novelist's lucid text into an elliptical narrative. This is a stark and humane, brutal and beautiful portrait of Cairo's working-class. With stunning shots of the towering scaffolding in the tannery, juxtaposed with touching scenes in which the everlasting love between brothers and sisters prevails.

Ahmed Fawzi Saleh (born in 1981, Egypt) took part in several documentaries as a scriptwriter and a researcher. His short documentary *Living Skin* (2011) was screened in many international film festivals while his first feature *Poisonous Roses* was premiere at IFFR 2018.

Session 5

16 June 2021 at 21:00, Flery Cinema, Skippi 5-7, 176 75 Kallithea

Ceuta's Gate by Randa Maroufi (2019, 19 min, France/Morocco),
Pre-Image (Blind as the Mother Tongue) by Hiwa K (2017, 18 min, Germany/Greece),
The Longest Run by Marianna Economou (2015, 74 min, Greece).

Online Correspondences: Essays by scholar and filmmaker Argyro Nicolaou and art and film critic Nicolas Feodoroff.

In three different visual and poetic approaches, based on personal experiences, the program proposes films that concern the notion of borders, the fragile movement of bodies and the instability of transitory situations. Each film takes us on a physical and mental journey into the complexities and limitations of movement and belonging, of coming from and arrival.



Ceuta's Gate by Randa Maroufi, 2019



Pre-Image (Blind as the Mother Tongue) by Hiwa K, 2017, Video Still © the artist and KOW Berlin

Ceuta's Gate

by Randa Maroufi (2019, 19 min, France/Morocco) / VO Arabic and Spanish with English and Greek subtitles.

Ceuta's Gate consists of a series of reconstructed situations based on observations made on the border of Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in the North of Morocco. The border is the locus of intense traffic of manufactured goods, sold at discounted prices. Every day, thousands of people work there. The film shows this choreography of individuals around the border, witnesses the dynamics of movement, the morphological and visual appearance of their passage, the state of limbo when waiting.

Randa Maroufi (born in 1987 in Casablanca, Morocco, she lives in Paris, France).

Fine Arts graduate at Tetouan (Morocco), Angers (France) and Le Fresnoy (France), she belongs to this generation that grew up in an era dominated by images. She collects them with as much eagerness as suspicion, and ceaselessly questions their veracity. She prefers to put her ambiguous fictions in the service of reality, and the field of her experimentation encompasses the occupation of public space and gender issues, of which she highlights the founding mechanisms.

Pre-Image (Blind as the Mother Tongue)

by Hiwa K (2017, 18 min, Germany/Greece) / VO English with Greek and Arabic subtitles.

As a member of a generation of immigrants that illegally journeyed from Iraqi Kurdistan to Europe on foot, Hiwa K's 'Mirror' simulates the experience of walking through foreign territory. Using an "object-sculpture" made of a stick and motorbike mirrors which he balances on his nose, Hiwa K finds his way. We can see glimpses of Hiwa K's surroundings, what he calls "pre-images", fragments of a puzzled future, which leave us with no choice but to continue looking up.

Hiwa K (born in 1975 in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan-Northern Iraq, he lives in Berlin, Germany).

His works escapes normative aesthetics but gives us the possibility of another perspective of vernacular forms, oral histories, modes of encounter and political situations. His references consist of stories told by family members and friends, found situations as well as everyday forms that are the results of everyday life. Many of his works have a strong collective and participatory dimension, and express the belief that obtaining knowledge from everyday experience is equally valuable as from theory

The Longest Run

by Marianna Economou (2015, 74 min, Greece) / VO Arabic, Kurdish and Greek with English and Greek subtitles.

Filmed in a Greek juvenile prison and a court room, *The Longest Run* follows the stories of Alsaleh from Syria and Jasim from Iraq who are accused of smuggling illegal immigrants. Through their telephone conversations with their parents in the Middle East, the tragic events of war enter the prison walls and accentuate the boys' anxiety as the date of their court case approaches. Their fear escalates as they realize that it is impossible to convince the Greek court of their innocence and that they can easily be condemned to 25 years of imprisonment. By focusing on their friendship and the human face of confinement and war, the film reveals an unknown aspect of the refugee issue and the dead end situation that many underage refugees find themselves in.

Marianna Economou studied anthropology, photojournalism and film production in London and currently lives in Athens, Greece. Since 2000, she has directed and produced documentaries and independent films of Greek production and co-productions with European broadcasters such as the BBC, ARTE and YLE with a focus on social issues and human stories. Her films, including the internationally awarded *When Tomatoes met Wagner*, have participated in many international festivals. She is a member of the European Film Academy and president of the Greek Documentary Association.



The Longest Run by Marianna Economou, 2015

Session 6

June 2021 (date to be confirmed), basketball court, Anaxagora 41, 177 78 Tavros

Plato's Academy by Filippou Tsitos (2009, 103 min, Greece/Germany)

My English Cousin by Karim Sayad (2019, 122 min, Switzerland/Qatar)

Online Correspondences: podcast by curator, writer, researcher and performance artist Yasmina Reggad and a video by artist and architect Sofia Dona.

With an interval of ten years and a distance of a few thousand kilometers, the two films selected take place in countries that, like their two main characters, are at a moment of crucial transition. Brexit in England, Hirak Movement in Algeria, economic crisis in Greece.

Disoriented, under the pressure of the economic system and the increase of social tensions, Fahed and Stavros want to show to their respective societies that they will act as "men".

Using tenderness and humor, the filmmakers examine masculinity in a contemporary context.



My English Cousin by Karim Sayad, 2019



Plato's Academy by Filippou Tsitos, 2009

Plato's Academy

by Filippos Tsitos (2009, 103 min, Greece/Germany) / VO Greek with English and Arabic subtitles

With Antonis Kafetzopoulos, Anastas Kozdine, Titika Saringouli, Giorgos Souxes, Konstantinos Koronaios, Panayiotis Stamatakis, Maria Zorba

Stavros lives alone with his old mother in a small, quiet neighborhood in Plato's Academy district in Athens. Every day, he opens the metal shutters of his cigarette store, puts out the newspapers in front and then sets out the chairs where he and his friends sit all day, drinking coffee and criticizing workers who, in contrast, are always on the move. Until one day his mother embraces an Albanian worker right in the middle of the streets and under the eyes of his stunned friends Stavros discovers something new about his family's past.

The film approaches the sensitive topic of xenophobia through the tragicomic story of an ultranationalist who suddenly discovers the true origins of his family.

Filippos Tsitos (born in 1966, Athens) studied Business Administration, and worked as a photographer, assistant director, music supervisor and radio producer, before being selected to attend the film academy in Berlin (Deutschen Film und Fernsehakademie). He made his first short film *Parlez-moi d'amour* in 1994. *My Sweet Home* is his first feature and the only German participant at the Berlinale competition in 2001. *Plato's Academy* was screened at several international film festivals and awarded at Locarno International Film Festival (Leopard for Best Actor, Ecumenical Jury First Prize, and Youth Jury Prize) and Tirana International Film Festival (Best Movie Award).

My English Cousin

by Karim Sayad (2019, 122 min, Switzerland/Qatar) / VO English and Arabic with English and Greek subtitles

A chronicle of exile, the film follows the daily life of Fahed, the director and cousin, who decided two decades ago to quit everything and try his luck far away from Algeria. Now that his legal status is normalized after years working as an illegal alien in England, he lives in a small town, the victim of deindustrialization and affected by multiple social issues. Fahed now dreams of returning home and getting married but, as so many exiles, he feels like a stranger in his own country.

Shot with a keen eye that observes the smallest of details, Karim Sayad captures the loneliness that affects his real-life cousin no matter where he goes.

Karim Sayad (born in 1984, Lausanne, Switzerland) completed a MA in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies of Geneva before he decided to become a documentary filmmaker. His first short, *Babor Casanova*, premiered in Locarno in 2016 and was screened at more than twenty festivals worldwide, winning awards at DocLisboa, Festival Dei Popoli and the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival among others. *Of Sheep and Men*, his first feature documentary, premiered at TIFF in 2017, was screened at numerous festivals. *My English Cousin* is his second feature documentary.

Session 7

June 2021 (date to be confirmed), basketball court, Anaxagora 41, 177 78 Tavros

Roundabout in my Head by Hassen Ferhani (2015, 101 min, Algeria/France/Lebanon/Qatar)

The Shepherds of Disorder by Nikos Papatakis (1967, 121 min, Greece)

Online Correspondences : Essays by cultural journalist and essayist Ammar Almamoun and researcher and philosophy professor Sophia Efstathiou.

Two visual and disturbing cinematographic masterpieces. Both films whilst seemingly just observing everyday life gradually develop towards social critique, with animals in the background functioning as symbols of human bestiality.

Roundabout in my Head

by Hassen Ferhani (2015, 101 min, Algeria/France/Lebanon/Qatar) / VO Arabic with English and Greek subtitles

Roundabout in my Head is a huis-clos, a succession of observational scenes of men working at an abattoir in Algiers. In this exclusively male universe, the characters evolve in front of the camera, with their complexity, fragility and innocence whilst surrounded by carcasses of animals, reminiscent of Vanitas paintings. During their work breaks whilst smoking cigarettes in complete indifference to their environment, they discuss politics, their own expectations for the future and impossible loves.

Hassen Ferhani (born in 1986, Algiers) is a director and cinematographer. His short films *Les Baies d'Alger* (2006) and *Tarzan, Don Quixote* and *Us* (2013) and his last movie *143, rue du desert* (2019) have been presented internationally. *Roundabout in My Head* is his first feature-length film and has been awarded several major international prizes including FID and IDFA.

The Shepherds of Disorder

by Nikos Papatakis (1967, 120 min, Greece) / VO Greek with English subtitles

With Olga Karlatos, George Dialeghmenos

Katina, an impoverished Greek woman, tries to arrange the marriage of her shepherd son, Thanos, to the daughter of a wealthy landowner, Despina.

The Shepherds of Disorder juxtaposes an anthropological and materialist study of a rigid rural community with the mythologically imbued, forbidden romance between a rebel shepherd and the submissive daughter of a wealthy conservative family from the same village, climaxing in an engagement, as an erotically charged power game.

The final part of *The Shepherds of Disorder's* shoot coincided with the 1967 Greek coup d'état orchestrated by right-wing colonels who abolished the Constitution and established a dictatorship that banned his filmmaking. Because of its transgressive, provocative content and its explicit references to the coup, *The Shepherds of Disorder* was banned in Greece until the dictatorship collapsed in 1974. This interplay of fiction and reality permeates all of Papatakis's work.

Nikos Papatakis (1918, Addis Ababa-2010, Paris) of Greek-Abyssinian descent, was exposed from an early age to violent conflicts from communitarianism and racial ostracism. The insurrectional essence of his works stems from a youth deeply marked by exclusion and political upheavals. He joined Haile Selassie's army to fight against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, went into exile in Lebanon and Greece, before arriving in Paris in 1939. Founder of the famous *Rose Rouge* literary cabaret in St. Germain where artists such as Juliette Gréco, Boris Vian, Léo Ferré, and Raymond Queneau began their career, Papatakis was a producer (*Chant d'amour*, the only film of his close friend Jean Genet, and *Shadow* by John Cassavetes) and a filmmaker. He has directed five subversive and provocative movies.



Roundabout in my Head by Hassen Ferhani, 2015



The Shepherds of Disorder by Nikos Papatakis, 1967 © Gaumont. Coll. Archives Manuela Papatakis

Free entrance and with limited seating.

You can find further information on the program at www.tavros.space

All health and safety guidelines of the Ministry of Culture and Sports for live performances and spectacles will be adhered to. Please read the following instructions carefully:

- Wearing a mask is mandatory when entering and exiting the space and during the screening.
- Gradual arrival of the public is required. Please arrive at least 30 minutes before start time.
- Please keep distances of 1.5 meters while waiting at the entrance as well as during your departure.
- The seat of each reservation is predetermined. Please follow the directions of the organisers.
- Standing spectators are not permitted.

AIN

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Association IN (AIN), co-funded by Delphine Leccas in 2008, was initially created with the aim to support Syrian artists, to develop regional network and create a cultural platform in Damascus. Since more than 10 years, AIN has been promoting artists from the Middle East and the North Africa in curated events such as Visual Arts Festival (Damascus, 2010; International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2012; Depo, Istanbul, 2013; ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2014), the XVth Biennale de la Méditerranée (Thessaloniki, 2011), the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (Macedonian Museum, 2011), *Syrian Anonymous Exhibition* (New Art Exchange, Nottingham; La Fabbrica del Vapore, Milano; Museo du Palazzo Poggi, Bologna, 2012-2013), *Et Pourtant ils créent* (Institute of Islamic Art, Paris, 2014); *L'Art en Marche* (Le Rocher de Palmer and Utopia Cinema, Bordeaux, 2015); *Paysage interne* (Centre des arts actuels-Skol, Montreal, 2017).

AIN initiated the festival *In the Heart of the heart of another country* a collaborative project between contemporary art and socio-political issues organized in 2016 between Greece (Greek film archive, Athens and Museum of Photography, Thessaloniki) and Lebanon (Mansion and Dawawine, Beirut), in collaboration with TWIXTlab.

locus athens

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locus athens was founded in 2004 and is a non-profit arts organization whose mission was to bring contemporary art to public spaces in and around Athens. Over the last 15 years locus athens has commissioned projects by leading artists in various locations around Athens creating a dialogue between Athens' public spaces and contemporary art. locus athens, after curating a constellation of projects in and around Athens, is exploring a new format: a home in the area of Tavros. Its new permanent space, TAVROS, is the springboard for a continued response to the social and political circumstances around them, by exploring notions of democracy, equality and ecology whilst looking to address these issues head on through dialogue, listening and learning.

By using a variety of tools such as exhibitions, open-ended research, talks, commissions, educational programs, screenings, film grants, crafts and community work TAVROS aims to be a welcoming, open and democratic space dedicated to embracing and enriching relationships between locals, artists and similarly-minded institutions, creating a space for unheard, threatened or marginalized voices.

TAVROS aims to work closely with its local community creating a network of people and places. Inspired by the locality which takes its name from a mountainous region in Turkey from which a wave of migrants arrived and settled in the 1920's, their program will reflect their belief in the transformative potential of shifting perspectives and moving minds and bodies through their relationship with art.

locus athens and TAVROS are run by Maria-Thalia Carras.

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