MESA FilmFest ’12
Films and Schedule

Saturday
Bas ya Bahar (The Cruel Sea) 12:40pm

Once Upon a Time in Anatolia 8:05pm

Sunday
Soog (Mourning) 12:25pm

Five Broken Cameras 8:45pm

Monday
When the Voices Fade 2:30pm

Wonderland: A True Story 2:55pm

Sabeel 5:10pm

29th Annual FilmFest
November 17-20, 2012
Denver, Colorado
Film Schedule

Saturday November 17

10:00am  Mad, Mad, P\*W World (the MESA FilmFest Logo) (4)
10:05am  ♦ Charents: In Search of My Armenian Poet (99)
11:45am  Syria: Assad’s Twilight (52)
12:40pm  BAS YA BAHAR (108)
2:30pm  ♦ Hilltops (43)
3:15pm  We Are Egypt (85)
4:15pm  Nations and Tribes (9)
4:55pm  Salaam Dunk (82)
6:25pm  Minarets of Temecula (28)
7:00pm  Al Halqa: In the Storyteller’s Circle (52)
8:20pm  ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA (157)

Sunday November 18

9:00am  The Boy Mir: Ten Years in Afghanistan (98)
10:45am  Fragments of a Revolution (57)
11:45am  Defusing Human Bombs (58)
12:45pm  SOOG (Mourning) (92)
2:25pm  ♦ Tagut: Harvesting the Clouds (19)
2:50pm  Suffering Grasses (52)
3:40pm  Going Up the Stairs (52)
4:25pm  Terror in the Promised Land (60)

Jack G. Shaheen
Introduction to film
Post Screening Q&A
with Jack G. Shaheen, Zachary Lockman
and Helga Tawil-Souri

7:00-8:30pm PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS & AWARDS CEREMONY

Monday November 19

8:15am  My Neighborhood (52)
9:10am  Light in Her Eyes (85)
10:35am  Revolution Hijacked: Post Mubarak Egypt (27)
11:05am  Quest for Honor (63)
12:10pm  Rabbit Hole (22)
12:35pm  The Winds are Fair Same as are Our Intentions (22)

1:00-2:30pm MESA MEMBERS MEETING

2:30pm  WHEN THE VOICES FADE (21)
2:55pm  WONDERLAND: A TRUE STORY (38)
3:35pm  Not Quite White: Arabs, Slavs, and the Contours of Contested Whiteness (24)
4:00pm  ♦ Karama Has No Walls (20)
4:20pm  * Manuscripts of Timbuktu (52)
5:10pm  SABEEEL (20)

5:30pm  ♦ Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football (92)
Introductory remarks by Jack G. Shaheen

7:30pm-9:00pm FilmFest Reception in honor of the “A is for Arab” Exhibit

Tuesday November 20

8:00am  Tunisia Year Zero (52)
8:55am  One Hand: The Heroic Struggle for Muslim-Christian Unity in the New Egypt (47)
9:45am  Battle for the Arab Viewer (48)
10:35am  Hamour (11)
10:50am  Power of Generations (3)
10:55 am-2:00pm Viewer’s Choice

KEY

ALL CAPS= Feature film
♦ Filmmaker/Director in attendance/Q & A/Event
★ North American Premiere
© Association for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies (AGAPS) Focus Film
*Screening is sponsored by the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS)
¤ Events are hosted by the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, the Asian/Pacific/American Institute and the Bobst Library at New York University.
Number in parentheses after film title indicates film length in minutes.

As a courtesy to others, please keep your cellphones on “vibrate” or “off” inside the FilmFest screening room.

Thank You!

to the MESA 2012 Sponsors
Film Descriptions

**Al-Halqa in the Storyteller's Circle (Morocco)** 2010 52 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. Director/Producer: Thomas Ladenburger. **Print Source: The Cinema Guild.**

On Djemaa el Fna Square in Marrakech, Abderahim El Maqori, the storyteller, teaches his son Zohier the tricks of a dying trade. In the Halqa, the storyteller's circle, the boy practices his skills and his father provides critique. The ultimate test for Zohier will be to tell stories in Fez. The camera follows the pair on their journey, which is interspersed with stories. Zohier not only has to carry on the tradition, but also find his own style for a new generation of listeners.

**BAS YA BAHAR (Kuwait)** 1972 108 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. Director: Khalid Al Siddiq. **Print source: University of North Carolina Media Resources Center.**

The first feature film to be made by the state of Kuwait. It is a period piece about Kuwait before the discovery of oil when fishing was the predominant occupation. *Bay Ya Bahr* is the story of a crippled pearl diver who forbids his son Mussaid to go to sea to dive for pearls. It is a classic tragic tale.

**The Battle for the Arab Viewer (Egypt)** 2011 48 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. Director: Nordin Lasfar. **Print source: Icarus Films.**

What is the relationship between al-Arabiyya and al-Jazeera? How do their origins and policies reflect the wealthy states that created them? What are they competing for? This film addresses these important questions, giving viewers a sense of how the networks' back stories influence how they cover events. The film uses the uprising in Egypt as the exemplar of the stations' difference.

**The Boy Mir: Ten Years in Afghanistan (Afghanistan)** 2011 98 min. In Dari w/English subtitles. Director: Phil Grabsky. **Print source: Seventh Art Productions.**

If you remember the film, “The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan,” you won't want to miss this. Filmmaker Phil Grabsky followed Mir from age 8 to 18. The film covers the highs and lows of events personally and nationally.

**Charents: In Search of My Armenian Poet (Armenia)** 2009 99 min. Director: Shareen Anderson; Producers: Shareen Anderson, Tigran Nazaryan. In Armenian w/English subtitles. **Print source: Shareen Anderson.**

Charents: *In Search of My Armenian Poet* explores the life and work of Armenian poet, Eghishe Charents, who was tragically killed in a Stalinist prison in 1937 under mysterious circumstances. This literary travelogue takes viewers on a journey from Armenia to the poet's birthplace in Kar, Turkey, and includes interviews with experts of his work and stylized poetry readings by ordinary Armenians.

Contact information for filmmakers and distributors is listed on the back page of the FilmFest program (page 16).

**Defusing Human Bombs (Pakistan)** 2011 58 min. Director: Asad Qureshi for First Take Ltd. In Pashtun with English narration. **Print source: Landmark Media.**

The film is the incredible story of the Sabaoon School in Pakistan. Through psychology, religious study, vocational training and education, and most importantly through trust, it aims to undo years of Taliban indoctrination in the hearts and minds of young boys. Filmed over a period of 18 months, the film exposes the incredible hardship and violence the boys experience during their time with the Taliban, including abductions, brainwashing, and aborted suicide missions. Run by Hum Pakistinai, a local NGO with security provided by the Army, the Sabaoon School has been a ray of light for families living in the Swat area of Pakistan.

**FIVE BROKEN CAMERAS (West Bank)** 2011 90 min. Directors: Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi. In Arabic, and English w/English subtitles. **Print source: Kino Lorber Films.**

When his fourth son, Gibreel, is born, Emad, a Palestinian villager, gets his first camera. In his village, Bil'in, a separation barrier is being built and the villagers start to resist this decision. For more than five years, Emad films the struggle, simultaneously filming how Gibreel grows. One camera after another is shot at or smashed; each camera tells a part of his story.

**Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football (USA)** 2011 92 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. Director/Filmmaker: Rashid Ghazi; Producers: Basma Babar-Quraishi & Ash-har Quraishi. **Print Source: Rashid Ghazi.**

Generally a football story isn’t that revealing. This is a little different because the focus is on Arab kids from the poorer side of Dearborn. Fordson High School is unique in having an almost 100% Arab student body (and principal). For generations families have been loyal tied to the school. This is certainly the only Arab school in the U.S. Being an Arab even in Dearborn doesn’t make one immune to racism. This is more than a sports film; it is a nice portrayal of a community through its football obsession.

**Fragments of a Revolution (Iran)** 2011 57 min. In Farsi w/English subtitles. Director: Anonymous; Producer: Mille et Une Films, Virginie Guibbaud & Gilles Padovani. **Print source: Icarus Films.**

The film takes us to the summer of 2009 and the events leading up to the Green Movement and the months that followed that summer’s tragic outcomes for so many in Iran. The events unfold through the eyes and words of a few exiled and local Iranians as they trade YouTube videos, Skype calls, and emails. Viewers become part of this very secret and intimate process.

**Going Up the Stairs (Iran)** 2011 52 min. In Farsi w/English subtitles. Director/Producer: Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami. **Print source: Women Make Movies.**

Akram shows us that true talent will always refuse to be stifled, and that you don’t need an education to understand, to feel, and to paint. Married off at the age of nine to the then 28-year-old Heydar, she secretly expresses her creativity in paint. Her
“hobby” is discovered and an exhibition of her work is organized in Paris. This is not only the story of a painter, but also a tragicomic portrait of a traditional Iranian marriage.


One morning in Qatar, when their bad-tempered boss is not around, a family of Indian boat repairmen take a boat out to sea without permission. This is a simple story of poor fishermen and what to do about their catch involves the many different ethnic groups that populate Qatar.


This film is about radical settlers taking over West Bank hilltops and building outposts that are forerunners to settlements. The reality of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict unravels in front of the lens as the viewer gets a rare look at this process.

Karama Has No Walls (Yemen) 2012 20 min. In Arabic w/ English subtitles. Director: Sara Ishaq; Producer: Sara Ishaq & Hot Spot Films Distributor/Print source: Sara Ishaq.

The massacre in Yemen’s Change Square on the Friday of Dignity is the focus of this film shot by two Yemeni cameramen. Sara Ishaq put the film together with some interviews with the cameramen and some victims. The film focuses on one small incident (technically well done, especially the action footage); it is a real look at Yemen and the events there.

Events with Jack G. Shaheen

Sunday 11/18 at 4:25pm
Terror in the Promised Land (60 min.) film screening Introductory remarks by Jack Shaheen
Post screening Q & A with Jack G. Shaheen (Distinguished Visiting Scholar, New York University) and Zachary Lockman (Professor of History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University)

Monday 11/19 at 5:30pm
Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football (92 min.) film screening Introductory remarks by Jack Shaheen

Monday 11/19 at 7:30-9pm
Reception for “A is for Arab” Exhibit

Events are hosted by the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, the Asian/Pacific/American Institute and the Bobst Library at New York University.

The Light in Her Eyes (Syria) 2012 85 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. Directors/Producers: Julia Meltzer and Laura Nix. Print source: Outlook Films.

Houda al-Habash, a conservative Muslim preacher, founded a Qur’an school for girls in Damascus 30 years ago. Every summer, her female students immerse themselves in a rigorous study of Islam. Shot right before the uprising in Syria erupted, The Light in Her Eyes offers an extraordinary portrait of a leader who challenges the women of her community to live according to Islam, without giving up their dreams.

Mad, Mad, P#W World (Iran) 1975 4 min. Print Source: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Media Resources Center.

The MESA FilmFest logo. This is a black and white animated cartoon from Iran about “global relations.” The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Manuscripts of Timbuktu (Mali/Morocco/South Africa) 2009 52 min. Director: Zola Maseko; Producer: David Max Brown. Print source: California Newsreel. This film screening is sponsored by The American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS).

Featuring commentary by African scholars, rich reenactments and an original musical score, this documentary critiques the limited view of Timbuktu as “any distant or remote place.” The film also highlights the plight of tens of thousands of manuscripts that need care and housing. The discussion is even more poignant now given the events of this summer.

Minarets of Temecula (USA) 2011 28 min. In English. Producer: John Odam; Alternate Focus. Print source: Choices Video.

America was founded on the concept of religious freedom, but the desire of the Muslim residents in Temecula, a city north of San Diego, to build a new place of worship is met with resistance from elements in the local community. This documentary examines how this conflict plays out against a backdrop of national and global politics and explore the roots of the opposition, and the diverse nature of the support for the project.


By way of a journey, through some aspects of the daily lives of people of different ethnicities and backgrounds living in the UAE, Nations and Tribes presents the similarities of cultures and rituals, and also invites us to celebrate the differences.


In Not Quite White, Jamil Khoury (Artistic Director of Chicago’s Silk Road Rising) draws upon his own Arab (Syrian) and Slavic (Polish and Slovak) heritage as the lens through which to investigate the broader issue of immigrants achieving whiteness and hence
qualifying as “fully American.” The film advances society’s on-going conversations about the meaning of whiteness and efforts at redefining whiteness.

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA (Turkey)** 2010 157 min. Director: Nuri Bilge Ceylan; Producer: Zeynep Ozbatur Atakan. In Turkish w/English subtitles. **Print source:** The Cinema Guild.

Once Upon a Time in Anatolia is the new film from the celebrated director of **Distant** (MESA FilmFest 2004), and winner of the Grand Prize at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. In the dead of night, a group of men—among them, a police commissioner, a prosecutor, a doctor and a murder suspect—drive through the Anatolian countryside, searching for a corpse, the victim of a brutal murder. The suspect, who claims he was drunk, can’t remember where he buried the body. As night wears on, details about the murder emerge and the investigators’ own hidden secrets come to light. In the Anatolian steppes, nothing is what it seems; and when the body is found, the real questions begin.

**One Hand: The Heroic Struggle for Muslim-Christianity Unity in the New Egypt (Egypt/USA)** 2012 47 min. In Arabic and English w/English subtitles. Directors/Producers: Johnny and Rebecca Weixler. **Distributor/Print Source:** Weixler Media.

This film presents a very different view of Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt before and since the “Spring”. Most often US viewers get the impression of tensions between the groups and there are reports of heavy Christian emigration. The video Tahrir and this one present a much more communal image with the two communities getting along and cooperating. True radical Muslims do seem to play a role but this is secondary in the film. It is a challenge to the images commonly associated with Egypt.

**Power of Generations (Bahrain)** 2011 3 min. No dialogue. Filmmaker: Mohammed Jassim. **Print source:** Mohammed Jassim.

This powerful short film shows a different take on the rise and fall of empires and civilizations.

**Quest for Honor (Iraqi Kurdistan)** 2011 63 min. In Kurdish w/English subtitles. Director: Mary Ann Smothers Bruni. **Print source:** Women Make Movies.

This film is a different take on honor killings but focusing on an example and then looking at some of the cultural factors surrounding it. It is less about the killing than what men think is important about honor and how they learn this.

**Rabbit Hole (UAE)** 2011 22 min. In Arabic and English w/English subtitles. Director: Fatima Musharbek Ibrahim; Producer: Shahin Yazdani. **Print source:** Shahin Yazdani.

This is short and creative look at how western culture influences the youth in the Emirates. When you live in a place as non-Arab as the Emirates, how does an Arab develop her/his identity? The answer is through mass media from around the world—videos, music, advertisements. Does this create a new identity or feed an identity crisis?

**Revolution Hijacked: Post Mubarak Egypt (Australia/Egypt)** 2011 27 min. In English. Produced by ABC Australia. **Print source:** Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

Even with the passage of time, this is a valuable and concise look at events in the aftermath of Mubarak’s departure. What is clear is how difficult a revolution is and how unprepared the revolutionaries were—in reality they probably always are.

**SABEEL (UAE)** 2010 20 min. No dialogue. Director: Khalid Al Mahmoud; Producer: Faradees Artistic Production. **Print source:** Khalid Al Mahmoud.

Two young boys live with their elderly grandmother in the mountains of the UAE. Spending their days tending their vegetables and then selling the produce on the road, they have to earn enough money to buy medicine for their sick grandmother. This short film is tender and loving.

**Salaam Dunk (Iraq/Kurdistan/USA)** 2011 82 min. In Arabic, English, Kurdish w/English subtitles. Director: David Fine; Producer: Beau Lewis. **Print source:** Arab Film Distribution/Typecast Films.

Who knew there was an American University of Iraq in Sulaymania? This is the setting of this unlikely girl’s basketball film. Of course it is more than about the team being terrible. It is about growth, etc. While basketball is the focus, there is a lot about what is going on in contemporary Iraq, information which is rarely in the news.

**A tremendous tool to teach students about Arab-Americans and Islam**

Educational DVD Copies Now Available! Order at www.fordsonthemovie.com
**SOOG (MOURNING) (Iran)** 2011 85 min. In Persian w/ English subtitles. **Director:** Morteza Farshbaf. **Print source:** Global Film Initiative.

From a black screen, a man and a woman are heard arguing and hurrying away from a house. Afterward, the screen radiates brilliant green countryside, traversed by a small black car. Subtitles relay a conversation by another man and woman, but now we hear no voices. Kamran and Sharareh, a deaf couple, are driving Sharareh’s young nephew, Arshia, back home to Tehran. Something terrible has happened. But the couple keep the news from Arshia, debating his future in a language not as private as they believe, and turning a car trip into a subtly humorous and deeply compassionate meditation on communication and emotional disability.

**The Suffering Grasses (Syria)** 2012 52 min. In Arabic w/ English subtitles. Ex. **Director:** Iara Lee; Ex. **Producer:** Al-Omariya Kuwait. **Print source:** Cultures of Resistance/Caipirinha Productions, Inc.

“When elephants go to war, it is the grass that suffers.” Over a year later, with thousands dead and counting, the ongoing conflict in Syria has become a microcosm for the complicated politics of the region, and an unsavoury reflection of the world at large. Against the backdrop of the Arab Spring and the complicated politics of the region, this film seeks to explore the Syrian conflict through the humanity of the civilians who have been killed, abused, and displaced to the squalor of refugee camps.

**Syria: Assad’s Twilight (Syria)** 2011 52 min. In Arabic and French w/English subtitles. **Director:** Christophe Ayad & Vincent de Cointet. **Print source:** Icarus Films.

How did a man who claimed to have gone into medicine because it’s a “humanitarian job” come to be responsible for the deaths of so many thousands of Syrian people? Once written off as goofy and incapable, Bashar al-Assad vowed to fight corruption and embrace globalisation when he came to office in 2000. Instead, he walked in the steps of his father, Hafez, who 30 years ago unleashed authoritarian regime determined to stay in power.

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**Terror in the Promised Land** 1978 60 min. Original air date on ABC News: 10/30/78 **Director:** Malcolm Clarke. **Print source:** ABC News/The Jack G. Shaheen Archive at NYU.

Witness a historical gem rediscovered in the research archive of Jack G. Shaheen, author of *Reel Bad Arabs* and renowned scholar/ critic of the representations of Arabs and Muslims in American media. In this rarely shown 1978 documentary, filmmaker Malcolm Clarke gives a rare sympathetic view of Palestinian guerrillas and attempts to explain what motivates them to sacrifice their lives for a land from which their friends and families were driven. *Terror in the Promised Land* was Clarke’s first US film, produced and directed for the ABC network. The film, despite accolades as a fine example of investigative reporting, was heavily boycotted when it was first shown on network TV in the US.

**Tunisia, Year Zero (Tunisia)** 2011 52 min. In Arabic and French w/English subtitles. **Director:** Feriel Ben Mahmoud; **Producer:** Drôle de Trame. **Print source:** Icarus Films.

Giving birth to a state after decades of authoritarian rule is not easy. So what has happened in the first “Arab Spring” country? The first year has been fairly chaotic. The events leading up to the first election suggest reasons why the Islamists were the big winners. This is a forerunner of what happened elsewhere.

**Syria: Assad’s Twilight (Syria)** 2011 52 min. In Arabic and French w/English subtitles. **Director:** Christophe Ayad & Vincent de Cointet. **Print source:** Icarus Films.

**Tagut: Harvesting the Clouds (2011)** 19 min. In Arabic, Berber, English and Spanish w/English subtitles. **Director:** Melanie Reynard for Dar Si-Hmad. **Print source:** Jamila Bargach for Dar Si-Hmad.

This film shows the development of a fog harvesting project to bring water to Berber communities in the Anti-Atlas Mountains of Morocco. The local women spend on average 3.5 hours per day getting water from faraway wells. The impact on the communities with this new-found time will be profound.

**WHEN THE VOICES FADE (Lebanon)** 2010 21 min. In Arabic, English and Hebrew w/English subtitles. **Director:** Erika Cohn. **Print source:** AFD/Typecast Films.

This film is a short drama about a Lebanese belly dancer and an Israeli Air Force pilot who meet in New York. Their potential relationship becomes entangled in the Israeli war with Lebanon in 2006.

**GLOBAL LENS 2012** is proud to present the screening of

**SOOG (MOURNING)**
**Monday, November 19**
**12:45 pm**

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The Winds are Fair, Same as are Our Intentions (Kuwait)
2011 22 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. Director: Shakir Abal; Producer: Shakir Abal & The Culture Project. Print source: AGAPS Film Focus.

A maritime history of Kuwait through old photos and films.

Wonderland: A True Story (Kuwait)
2011 38 min.
In Arabic w/English subtitles. Director: Dana al Mojil. Distributor/print source: Dana al Mojil.

Wonderland is an adaptation of Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass as set in Kuwait. It highlights the similarities between the social and political situation in modern Kuwait and wonderland. The film starts when Alice does not understand why the Ace “in playing cards” equals eleven when it says one. Finding the answer to this riddle becomes her mission and drives her through all the hierarchy of change in Kuwait.

This year, the Association for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies (AGAPS) has reached out to Gulf filmmakers in an effort to encourage their participation in the MESA FilmFest. The generous assistance of organizers of the Dubai International Film Festival and the Gulf Film Festival—two of the most internationally recognized film events in the region—along with the recommendations of numerous individuals working in or knowledgeable about the burgeoning field of Gulf films made it possible to establish contact with up-and-coming directors. This year’s selection provides a glimpse of the dynamic and inventive work emerging out a region not often considered for its films. If these efforts along with the explosion of film programs, film festivals, and young directors in the region are anything to go by, then the future of film in the Gulf looks bright.

Gulf Focus Films Contacts

Hamour
Suzannah Mirghani (sm623@georgetown.edu)
Nations and Tribes
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Power of Generations
Mohammed Jassim (mohd-vfx@hotmail.com)
Rabbit Hole
Fatima Ibrahim Musharbek (phoenix.digi.film@gmail.com)
Sabeel
Khalid Al-Mahmood (khalidalmahmood@gmail.com)
The Winds are Fair, Same as are Our Intentions
Shakir Abal (shakirabal@me.com)
Wonderland: A True Story
Dana al Mojil (danaalmojil@hotmail.com)
Thank You!

to all the filmmakers and distributors for making the MESA FilmFest a continuing success.

MESA sends best wishes to all the filmmakers and distributors adversely affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Thank You!

MESA FilmFest 2013
Call for Entries

The 2013 MESA FilmFest Committee seeks submissions in video/dvd format for the FilmFest 2013 to be screened during the Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, October 10-13, 2013. All entries will be reviewed by members of the FilmFest Committee and coordinated by Thomas B. Stevenson. Films should be in VHS (NTSC) format or DVD (must be region-free), also playable as NTSC in English or with English subtitles. Send 2 copies of film for preview with entry form which will be available online, to: Thomas B. Stevenson, MESA Secretariat, 1219 N. Santa Rita Ave., The University of Arizona, Tucson AZ 85721 (520 621-5850; stevenson@ohio.edu).

Submission deadline: June 15, 2013.