

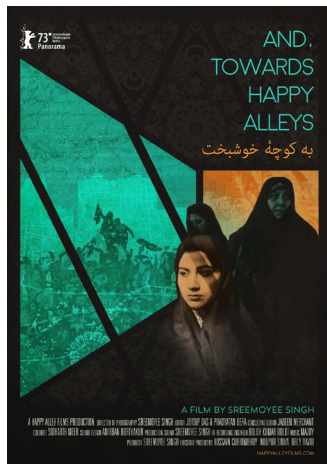
42ND ANNUAL MESA FILMFEST PREVIEW

MESA's Virtual FilmFest has dozens of new and innovative shorts and features, including both documentaries and narrative films. The virtual format allows meeting registrants to stream films on demand during the conference, as well as the week prior and the week after the in-person conference. Only 2025 Annual Meeting registrations will have access to the view the films during this three-week window.

Here are some of the films we expect to screen.

And, Towards Happy Alleys

Fascinated by Iran's film culture and the poetic works of the feminist poet Forough Farrokhzad, Indian filmmaker Sreemoyee Singh sets out in search of the protagonists of Iranian cinema. The numerous interviews she conducts over a period of six years with filmmakers Jafar Panahi, Mohammad Shirvani and human rights activist Nasrin Sotudeh, among others, show the precarious situation in which critics of the regime find themselves, including the constant threat of imprisonment and being banned from practising their profession. With a keen eye for unusual situations, she documents the effect of the Islamic Republic's strict and omnipresent censorship on the daily lives of Iranian women whose uncompromising struggle has put them at the forefront of the protests that are currently rocking the country. *And, Towards Happy Alleys* is a passionate declaration of love for the cinema and poetry of Iran which also provides a frank view of daily life, and bears witness to a fearless generation raising its voice and implacably demanding its civil liberties.



East Wind

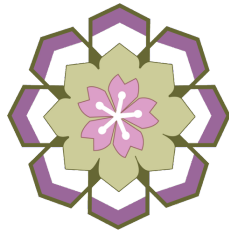
A glass, a sweater and a fishing trophy are the objects Maia inherited from her father. With fragmented spaces and times, the film crosses Patagonian landscapes with the banks of the Río de la Plata, where the wind brings messages from Palestine. Maia travels to the West Bank and among the ruins of the houses demolished by the Israeli occupation and the waters of the Jordan River, she finds a sign of destiny in the name of her family.



Intentions

Gathering of three Turkish couples (one settled in the U.S.) at a dinner table discussing the notion of «claustrophobic» hospitality and racism within the framework of the current Syrian refugee crisis and Afro-Turks in Turkey.

MESA 2025



November 22-25, 2025
Westin Washington, DC Downtown

En Route to Europe, We Burn or Die

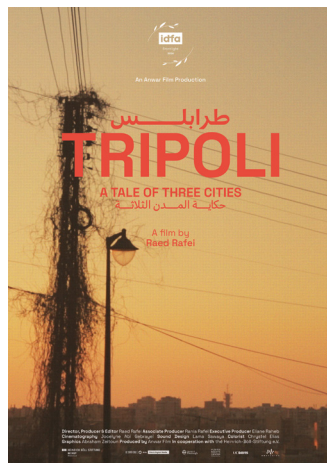
In the port city of Zarzis in southern Tunisia, the sea has always been a space of mobility. However, Fortress Europe continues to entrench its sea walls and extend proxy borders into North and West Africa, sponsoring local coercive apparatuses. Such measures have turned journeys of hope into deadly crossings, forcing illegalized and irregularized travelers seeking to overcome political, economic and social marginalization in search of better opportunities into increasing violence and risk.



BURN OR DIE weaves together the stories of individuals who are navigating precarity amid deadly border control mechanisms across Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. Through interviews in and around Zarzis, the film explores the journeys, motivations and opinions of African migrants - Tunisian and nationals of other countries - while exposing the neoliberal dispossessive structures that make their travels so dangerous. The film challenges the viewer to meet migrants as peers and to challenge the impacts of European policy on their lives.

Tripoli / A Tale of Three Cities

While living abroad, a filmmaker returns to Tripoli, Lebanon to confront a hometown that once rejected him as a queer child. With a microphone in hand, he walks around coffee shops, public squares and a park to ask the city's inhabitants about their cultural and social beliefs and their embrace of new ideas.



Gradually, he meets a group of marginalized individuals whose eccentric life choices contradict the general lifestyle in this religiously and socially conservative city. Through intimate conversations with a communist activist, a queer music producer and other unconventional characters, he explores the complicated relations one forms with a hometown in crisis. This contemplative urban symphony paints a picture of a city trapped in a self-spun web, paralyzed by a deep economic crisis, a faltering revolution, and a looming doomsday.

The Water that Asked for a Fish



The Water that Asked for a Fish, examines and contextualises the Gulf region's historical and contemporary relationships

with water bodies, bringing to focus the precarious nature of their continuing role in sustaining human and ecological life. For this piece, Alnoaimi involved a diverse group of participants— including fishermen, biologists, ecologists, writers and community members—who engaged with Bahrain's water bodies. The ensuing conversations yielded moving insights into local rituals, animistic practices and stories, proposing a conception of water bodies as living, breathing entities. The work offers insights into regional customs such as putting eyeliner on fish, the practice of wrapping its body in a white shroud before returning it to the sea and why palm leaves are set aflame by women with pearl-diver ancestry.