

## Presse release

### Presentation of the AFFZ Awards 2022

On Sunday, November 27, 2022, the Arab Film Festival Zurich Awards for the "Best Film" and the "Best Director" were presented at the Filmpodium cinema as part of the 6th Arab Film Festival Zurich. These awards are intended to further strengthen Arab filmmaking and to facilitate the access to distribution in Switzerland for Arab films. 13 recent feature films and documentaries from different Arab countries had been entered in the competition.

### The winners

Preliminary remark of the jury

The Jury paid great attention to the rich selection marked by an interesting heterogeneity. We were keen to pay tribute to singular and simple acts of cinematographic creation that take risks, cross the boundaries and dive between fiction and reality in political and poetic ways to confront directly contemporary issues and struggles. The Jury noticed with interest that the films and Arab filmmakers are tackling urgent issues rooted in specific situations and opening onto universal concerns.

We are awarding films distinguished by bravery, singularity, and authenticity. They are all films that have something to say and use different means to share their visions with the audience.

### **Best Film (CHF 3'000): "FADMA" by Jawad Rhalib (Belgium/Morocco 2020)**

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Jawad Rhalib, born in 1965 to Belgian Moroccan parents, was a journalist before he began making films in 1997. "When Arabs Danced" (2018) won the audience award at Nyon.

*In a small Berber village in the Atlas mountains, the division of labour between the sexes is clear: The women work hard all day while the men mind their fields but mostly loaf about. Fadma, who lives in Casablanca in an equal marriage, comes home to visit. She refuses to tolerate this archaic inequality and foments rebellion...*

Jury statement:

In this small remote village, petrified in its patriarchal values, the director gives us a privileged access with a surprising and moving simplicity. It is a matter of women's emancipation in the manner of a hardly negotiable obviousness against the background of a class society structure practicing the subjection of women to the dictates of men.

The filming, the shots and the editing give the film the appearance of a fairy tale, allowing us to grasp the nuances of the main characters' journeys. The movie is as sincere as it is universal because it is anchored in a local reality that speaks to the world.

On **Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> December at 18:30**, there will be an additional screening of "FADMA" at Filmpodium.

**Best Director** (CHF 2'000): James Chehab for "THE ADVENTURES OF A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTERS ON THEIR QUEST FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE AND OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS" (Lebanon 2021)

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A Lebanese artist born in Beirut in 1995, Chehab received his BA and MA in Audio-Visual Arts and Cinema from the Saint-Joseph University of Beirut.

*A young mother with three cute little daughters films their life as a family of four. The outward appearance of happiness and harmony masks a profound loss that will have existential consequences.*

Jury statement:

It is a hymn to love by a mother who never stops telling her three daughters how much she cares for them. She also dedicates her love to God. Yet, gradually, the story instils a kind of unease concerning the motivations of this mother within a family whose harmony does not seem to be disturbed by the absence of the father.

The film is directed in two ways: one is made up of perfectly framed shots in which the protagonists evolve in a stylized way - a model of a life regulated in a rigid harmony; the other way is that of light video shots of the family. Stable images contrast with fragile images, worried images with consensual images. Two states of contemporary realism.

The dramatic outcome, on a theatrical stage, inspired by real facts, challenges the spectator in a radical way. Love in its deadly excesses...

On **Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December at 18:30**, there will be an additional screening of "THE ADVENTURES OF A MOTHER..." at Filmpodium.

**Special Mention** "TU ME RESSEMBLES" (USA/France/Egypt 2021) by Dina Amer

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Dina Amer is an award-winning filmmaker and journalist who grew up between the U.S. and Egypt. "Tu me ressembles" is her directorial debut.

*Hasna and her little sister Mariam are inseparable and run away from their abusive mother, trying to get by in the streets of Paris. But when Hasna grows into a young woman, all of her values are called into question. Hasna, trying to cope in a world that rejects her, makes a decision with grave consequences.*

Jury statement:

In the style of "cinéma de banlieue", the characters, the two inseparable sisters who are nevertheless torn from each other, are filmed with a handheld camera in documentary mode.

The story explains, with a sustained rhythm and veristic acting, a hopeless path caused by poverty, abandonment, family disunity and the powerlessness and the failure of social institutions and the system. The extension of the story to the concrete and documented references regarding the Paris attacks sheds light on the reasons and motivations that can lead young people to become radicalized and, in this case, to join fundamentalist organizations out of naivety and desperate longing for recognition and love.

## Jury

The jury was made up of the following experts:

**Jihane Bougrine**, born in Rabat (Morocco), grew up in the banlieues of Paris. She has made a name for herself as a singer/songwriter and as a cultural critic.

**Jean Perret**, born in Paris, is a Geneva-based film critic and former director of the documentary film festival Visions du Réel in Nyon.

**Ahmed Ghossein**, is a filmmaker and artist, born in Beirut. «All This Victory», his first feature film, won several awards at the Venice Film Festival. In 2020, Ghossein received the AFFZ Award for Best Director for this film.

## **Festival AFFZ**

In 2012, the private, denominationally and politically neutral association International Arab Film Festival Zurich (IAFFZ) joined with the Filmpodium of the City of Zurich to found the Arab Film Festival Zurich, which has since taken place every two years. The 6th edition of the Arab Film Festival Zurich took place at Filmpodium on eleven days, from November 17 to 27. More information: [www.iaffz.com](http://www.iaffz.com)

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