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AFAC and Abu Dhabi Film Festival Partner to Support Arab Documentaries Through the SANAD FilmLab

The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) partnered with the Sundance Institute to host a three-day workshop for the 2009 winners of the Arab Documentary Film Program, within the framework of Abu Dhabi Film Festival's SANAD FilmLab. Bringing together young, talented filmmakers from across the region, AFAC joined efforts with the SANAD FilmLab to provide the space and opportunity for its grantees to network, consult with experts and exchange information about their respective projects.

AFAC's workshop was facilitated by leading figures in the documentary film industry, including the current director of the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, Cara Mertes, and award-winning documentarians Laura Poitras, Kirsten Johnson and Khalil Benkirane. Parallel to the activities of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, grantees received coaching and advice, including presentations, one-on-one meetings, pitching sessions, and the opportunity to discuss their projects with other participants. Over the coming months, workshop facilitators will continue to advise the grantees throughout the production and post-production period.

About AFAC

The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) is an independent Arab initiative dedicated to supporting a vibrant local arts and culture sector through strategic cultural philanthropy. Responding to the need for direct funding of independent artistic initiatives, AFAC was established by local cultural lobbyists and a group of international donors in 2007. Through an open call for proposals, AFAC funded 47 projects in film, 27 in literature, 25 in performing arts, 24 in visual arts, 16 in music and 26 in the field of research and regional events across 15 Arab countries.

The 47 cinema grants have helped with the production of documentaries, short- and feature films, from the script development through the post-production phase.

About the Arab Documentary Film Program

Responding to the vast number of excellent cinema proposals received during the open call, AFAC decided to establish an additional program for filmmaking. Documentaries are a very popular and accessible medium in the Arab world, allowing filmmakers to broach current issues as well as investigate the recent past. Partnering with a prestigious and experienced institution like the Sundance Documentary Institute provides both the expertise as well as an avenue to connect filmmakers with experienced producers and distributors.

In 2009, AFAC and the Sundance Documentary Institute designed a specific program that provides funding and consultation, networking and training opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Over 150 applicants from the region responded to the first call for proposals. A jury made up of leading regional and international figures selected the top fifteen applicants—

both well-known and up-and-coming filmmakers from across the region—for their pertinent and original proposals.

During the next cycle, AFAC is hoping to see the program expand to become a launching pad for filmmakers, providing them with the financial and professional resources to create influential work that is globally recognized.

About SANAD

SANAD is the Abu Dhabi Film Festival's newly launched development and post-production fund. It provides talented filmmakers from the Arab world with meaningful support from within the region towards the development or completion of their feature-length narrative and documentary films.

The fund seeks out bold and outstanding projects from both new and established filmmakers. Its aim is to encourage intercultural dialogue and artistic innovation, while building stronger networks within the region's film industry. SANAD also offers year-round support and publicity for selected projects to help connect filmmakers to potential partners and audiences, as well as opportunities for future funding.

SANAD has US\$500,000 at its disposal annually and makes grants in two categories:

- Development: up to US\$20,000 per project
- Post-production: up to US\$60,000 per project

The director or producer must be a national of one of the countries listed below, and a production company from at least one of these countries must be attached to the project. The eligible countries are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Central to the mission of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival is strengthening independent, auteur and original filmmaking talent in the Arab world. The SANAD FilmLab provides support for new talent by organizing screenwriting and pitch workshops, panel discussions and one-to-one meetings with industry experts and mentors during the Festival. The SANAD FilmLab is open to all SANAD development and post-production grantees.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

As the only Festival in the region where works by Arab filmmakers are represented equally in competition with those by major talents of world cinema, the Festival offers Abu Dhabi's diverse and enthusiastic audiences a means of engaging with their own and others' cultures through the art of cinema. At the same time, a strong focus on the bold new voices of Arab cinema connects with Abu Dhabi's role as a burgeoning cultural capital in the region and marks the Festival as a place for the world to discover and gauge the pulse of recent Arab film.

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Dhabi Media Company (Contributing Sponsors); Robert WAN and CineStar (Official Suppliers); Zee Network, Zee Television, MUBI, Radio 1 and Radio 2 (Media Partners).

The Abu Dhabi Film Festival Press Office is at your disposal for any questions and further information. Email press@adff.ae or call +971 2 690 8339 / +971 2 690 8340 to find out more.

General press materials including pictures, biographies and press kits are available on:

<http://www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae/en/press/press-center/>

Password: pressadff2010

The latest pictures taken at the 2010 edition of the Abu Film Festival can be downloaded from our FTP server.

Site: <ftp.abudhabifilmfestival.ae>

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