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Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin

The Berlin Film Festival Forum 2017: Special Screenings

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson



The *Forum* now completes its program with a series of Special Screenings which unearth cinematic gems and engage with film history.



Ahmed Bouanani on the shoot of Tarfaya

Moroccan director Ahmed Bouanani (1938-2011)

faced difficulties of all kinds in trying to get his vision across. Although he himself was only able to complete one feature, he paved the way for the first generation of artistically ambitious filmmakers in his country, whether as a pioneer in working with archive material, as a trailblazer for an independent film aesthetic, or as a literary figure and the author of a history of Moroccan cinema yet to be published to this day.

Ali Essafi, guest of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin program in 2016, creates memorial to his compatriot in the documentary *Obour al bab assabea* (*Crossing the Seventh Gate*). In lengthy conversations recorded in the last years of Bouananiâ??s life, who was by then living a secluded life in the mountains, the film reveals an influential chapter in Moroccan film history and draws on the astounding archive that Bouanani left behind.

The *Forum* has put together the â??Autour de Bouanani â?? Another Moroccan Cinemaâ?• program with Ali Essafiâ??s support. It includes the documentary shorts which Ahmed Bouanani, Mohamed Afifi and others created in the 1960s as newsreels for the Centre CinÃ©matographique Marocain (CCM), a format they bent to their own artistic will, as well as the short films that the CCM began producing for the newly founded state television in the 1970s.

Bouanani founded the â??Sigma 3â?• collective together with Mohamed Sekkat and Mohamed Abderrahman Tazi, with whom heâ??d studied at the Paris film school IDHEC. In 1970, the collective produced the feature *Wechma* (*Traces*) by Hamid Benani, which is regarded as Moroccoâ??s first arthouse film (and was shown at the very first *International Forum of New Cinema* in 1971). Bouananiâ??s artistic influence on the film is significant, as was also the case with the 1978 *Alyam, Alyam* (*Oh the Days!*), in which Ahmed El Maanouni created a portrait of a society which the younger generations are turning their back on.

In 1980, Bouanani finally made his only feature as a director. *Al-Sarab* (*The Mirage*) is set during the French colonial era and tells the story of a farmer living in poverty who finds a bundle of banknotes in a

sack of flour. Yet this unexpected wealth turns out to be more a curse than a blessing. The narrative of this influential film doesnâ??t bow to any convention, but rather follows the grammar of dreams.

Lead actor Mohamed Habachi, who died in 2013, can also be seen in *Hallaq Darb al-Fuqaraâ??* (*The Barber of the Poor District*) from 1982. This classic of Maghreb Neorealist cinema is the only feature by Mohamed Reggab, another filmmaker from Bouananiâ??s circle, which denounced the hypocritical alliance between capitalist interests and religion at an early stage.

Nearly all the films will be screened in subtitled 35-mm archive prints, which have been made available by the Centre CinÃ©matographique Marocain. *Alyam, Alyam* will be showing in a version digitally restored by the Cineteca di Bologna in collaboration with the Film Foundationâ??s World Cinema Project. Touda Bouanani, daughter of the filmmaker, will be a guest of the *Forum*.

South Korea is a country equally rich in cinematic treasures that are both hardly screened abroad and largely forgotten at home. This year, the *Forum* is showing two classics digitally restored by the Korean Film Archive (KOFA), both of which were made at moments of political upheaval.

1960â??s *Obaltan* (*Aimless Bullet*) is Yu Hyun-mokâ??s seventh film and is regarded as his masterpiece. In a Seoul neighbourhood where mostly refugees from the north of the divided country have settled, office worker Cheol-ho lives with his family in hardship. Plagued by toothache, he wanders despondently through the film; itâ??s others who take the initiative â?? with tragic consequences. Made between the overthrow of the dictator Rhee Syng-man and the military coup of General Park Chung-hee, the film paints a picture of a society unable to free itself from the clutches of poverty despite all efforts to the contrary.

Twenty years later, at the end of Park Chung-heeâ??s subsequent dictatorship, Lee Doo-yong created the epic crime thriller *Choehuui jeung-in* (*The Last Witness*), in which a reckless police detective stumbles across machinations from the time of the Korean War while investigating a mysterious murder case. Itâ??s a tough-minded odyssey through provincial South Korea, through rain and cold, filth and mud and bitter poverty; through the collective bad conscience of a society. The censors lopped nearly an hour off the running time of Leeâ??s most daring film, with only the restoration returning this classic its full length of 155 minutes.

Fernando Birriâ??s *ORG* is a monstrous, nearly three-hour long film which has only been screened extremely rarely since its 1979 premiere. For the now 91-year-old Birri, this loose adaptation of Thomas Mannâ??s story â??The Transposed Headsâ?• was the result of his experience of exile in Italy. But above all, ORG is an experiment in perception that features over 26,000 cuts and some 700 audio tracks. This mammoth work was partially financed by leading actor Mario Girotti, better known under his stage name Terence Hill. The director bequeathed Arsenal a 35mm print in 1991, which has been digitized as part of the â??Living Archiveâ?• project.

The film essay *Verfluchte Liebe deutscher Film* (*Doomed Love â?? A Journey Through German Genre Films*) already showed how wild, unpredictable, sensual, daring and taut even German cinema can be. Now Dominik Graf and Johannes F. Sievert continue their archaeological adventure journey to the margins, to the depths and also to the very centre of German film and television production and throw up justified questions along the way: why hasnâ??t this cinema developed any real audacity with respect to genre? Why arenâ??t there any young directors following in the footsteps of the rebellious Klaus Lemke, who simply shoots from the hip? Offene Wunde Deutscher Film (*Open Wounds â?? A*

Journey Through German Genre Films) leaves you wanting more.

Forum Special Screenings 2017

Choehuui jeung-in (*The Last Witness*) by Lee Doo-yong, Republic of Korea (South Korea) 1980

Obaltan (*Aimless Bullet*) by Yu Hyun-mok, Republic of Korea (South Korea) 1961

Offene Wunde deutscher Film (*Open Wounds â?? A Journey through German Genre Films*) by Dominik Graf, Johannes F. Sievert, Germany â?? WP

ORG by Fernando Birri, Italy 1979

Autour de Bouanani â?? Another Moroccan Cinema

Al-Sarab (*The Mirage*) by Ahmed Bouanani, Morocco 1980

Alyam, Alyam (*Oh the Days!*) by Ahmed El Maanouni, Morocco 1978

Hallaq Darb al-Fuqaraâ?? (T*he Barber of the Poor District*) by Mohamed Reggab, Morocco 1982

Obour al bab assabea (*Crossing the Seventh Gate*) by Ali Essafi, Morocco 2017 â?? WP

Wechma (*Traces*) by Hamid Benani, Morocco 1970

Short Film Programme I
Men Lahm wa Salb (*De chair et dâ??acier*) by Mohamed Afifi, Morocco 1959
Tarfaya Aw Masseerat Shaâ??er (*Tarfaya ou La marche dâ??un poÃ¨te*) by Ahmed Bouanani, Morocco 1966
Al-â??Awdah li Agadir (*Retour Ã Agadir*) by Mohamed Afifi, Morocco 1967
Sitta wa Thaniat â??Ashar (*Six et douze*) by Ahmed Bouanani, Abdelmajid Râ??chich, Mohamed Abderrahman Tazi, Morocco 1968

Short Film Programme II
Thakirah Arbaâ??at â??Ashar (*MÃ©moire 14*) by Ahmed Bouanani, Morocco 1971
Al-Boraq (*Shining*) by Abdelmajid Râ??chich, Morocco 1972
Al-Manabeâ?? al-Arbaâ??a (*Les quatre sources*) by Ahmed Bouanani, Morocco 1977

(Source: Berlinale Press Office)

Category

1. #BIFF
2. Berlin Film Festival

Tags

1. Ahmed Bouanani
2. Ali Essafi
3. â??Sigma 3â?• collective
4. Centre CinÃ©matographique Marocain (CCM)
5. Choehuui jeung-in (The Last Witness)
6. Korean Film Archive (KOFA)
7. Lee Doo-yong
8. Moroccan director
9. Moroccan film history
10. Obaltan (Aimless Bullet)
11. Yu Hyun-mok

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