

Venice Film Festival 2005



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2005

SILKROAD PRODUCTION PRESENTS



A film by Rashid Masharawi

WAITING

ATTENTE

For additional information and photos: www.silkroadproduction.com/waiting

RASHID MASHARAWI

Born in Gaza (Shati refugee camp) in 1962.

Founder of the Mobile Cinema for refugee camps, and in 1996 he established the Cinema Production & Distribution Center in Ramallah.



SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2005	WAITING (ATTENTE)
2005	ARAFAT, MY BROTHER (documentary)
2003	TICKET TO JERUSALEM
2001	LIVE FROM PALESTINE (documentary)
2000	OUT OF FOCUS (documentary)
1998	STRESS (documentary)
1997	RABAB (documentary)
1995	HAIFA
1993	CURFEW
1991	LONG DAYS IN GAZA (documentary)

COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

WAITING

We Palestinians have the feeling of not being in control of our destiny. The hope of a possible solution comes around regularly, but has fallen apart and then we just start waiting again. Waiting has become an integral part of our lives. It's at the root of our entire being.

HUMAN MAP OF PALESTINE

Today there are around 4 million Palestinian refugees descended from the original 800,000 people who fled or were deported between 1948-1950. This is the first time I explore Palestinian life in refugee camps in other countries. I filmed WAITING inside several of the 60-something refugee camps in the region – in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan. I wanted to show a kind of human map of Palestine. Since we travel to various Mid East countries in WAITING, it gives the film a road-movie quality. But I focus less on the foreign locations. I go straight to the refugee camps. My main concern was to show this human map of Palestine.



A STONE IN HIS LUGGAGE

Ahmad, the director in WAITING, is the kind of person who constantly talks about leaving Palestine, but never ends up actually doing it. You can't take his cynical attitude and complaints too seriously. At airport security, we see he carries a stone in his luggage. This is a sign that he can never fully leave Palestine, no matter what he says. He's also reluctant at first to help with the national theater project, but he ends up giving in. No matter how much he complains, he ends up being the strongest protector of the project. I guess the character has a lot in common with me. Even when I'm not in Palestine, part of me always is.

THE "RETURNER"

The TV journalist in WAITING is a "returner". That's what we call Palestinians from abroad who have come back after the 1993 Oslo Accords. They tend to be very authoritative and full of ideas about Palestinians taking things into their own hands. For those of us who have always lived there, their attitude seems a little naive to us. This character ends up discovering the sad reality of many divided families. Her father was no longer able to wait and has started a new family and life abroad.

LUMIÈRE

Lumière, the cameraman, makes his first trip outside of Palestine in WAITING. He discovers the outside world for the first time. Until now, he has only known daily life in a refugee camp. He has been through all the intifadas. He has lost family members in battle and even has a brother in prison. As a cameraman, most of his showreel consists of filmed explosions.

BUILDING THEIR OWN STAGE

The national theater project doesn't exist as I present it in the film. In WAITING, this project is symbolic of contemporary Palestinian existence. It's more than the physical construction of a theater. It's about Palestinians building their own "stage" to exist alongside other countries in the world. If the Palestinians show they can construct their state themselves, then it can't be taken away from them. Up until now, it has been about someone else giving us our state. By giving us something, there is the constraint that we must behave according to the giver's rules.



SOUND CHECK

Palestinians have experienced many disappointments by listening to decades of various peace negotiators and politicians. We have heard thousands of times their explanations and their ideas. That's why the TV journalist in *WAITING* uses those same standard introductions for the sound check. It might be a little cynical, but I wanted to show how hard it is to keep hoping when you've heard the same things over and over for decades. It all starts to sound so cliché. The names of the players have changed, but they keep repeating the same things.



AUDITIONS

The auditions in *WAITING* are restagings of improvisations I witnessed during the casting. All of the actors in the film are Palestinian refugees. It was important for me to bring together these Palestinian actors living in various countries into one film. Most are unable to return to Palestine. In a way, their participation in *WAITING* is their way of travelling back ... Mahmoud Massad, who plays the director, is actually a filmmaker himself, living in Holland. He and Youssef Baroud, who plays Lumière the cameraman, had never acted professionally before. Areen Omary, who plays Bissan, the TV journalist, acted in my features *TICKET TO JERUSALEM*, *HAIFA* and *CURFEW*. She was also in the Locarno Golden Leopard-winner *PRIVATE* (dir. Saverio Costanzo).



ANOTHER PALESTINE

In *WAITING*, filmmaker Ahmad complains that he would love to make a movie without any political content. But for a Palestinian filmmaker, dealing with the issues is the unavoidable reality. If I make a love story, the characters will have to pass checkpoints. The issues are all around us. But like Ahmad, I think we all dream of filming other images, another Palestine. We would all like to see another Palestine.



REMEMBERING PALESTINE

For most refugees living in other countries, Palestine is remembered as a paradise of sun and olive trees. Those who were forced to leave 50 years ago can't imagine today's settlements, checkpoints, curfews. But for younger generations, what we miss is not even really ours — it's what the UN gave us. In the refugee camp, we chose nothing. We wore the clothes they gave us, ate the food they gave us. The camps produce a culture which is not our culture by nature. So how we are seen today in the media is not really us. What is seen is a culture that politics made for us.



BEING PALESTINIAN IS POLITICAL

I don't consider myself a political filmmaker. But people have always focused on the issues presented in my films and they have told me I make films of a political nature. I kept saying no, then I finally gave in. I adapted to their perception of me. But for me I make films about everyday life. I have come to realize that simply being Palestinian is political to the rest of the world.

WAITING SINCE 1948

I'm in my element filming in the camps because I myself am a refugee. I'm the son of refugees and I was born and raised in a refugee camp on the West Bank. For the past 20 years I have devoted my filmmaking to the Palestinian situation. I hope my films will help people understand, help open up discussions on the refugee crisis. I hope that decision-makers will be moved to do something. But I'm not unrealistic. I don't have a fantasy of bringing back all refugees and fixing the problem in one day. But the problem is real and it should be dealt with. A visit to any refugee camp is proof enough. These people didn't choose their situation. I think those who were forced out have the right to be recognized. They have been waiting since 1948.

WAITING

[ATTENTE]

SYNOPSIS

Before leaving Palestine to settle abroad, director Ahmad accepts one last job. He must audition actors for the new National Palestinian Theatre. On the road with interviewer Bissan and her cameraman, "Lumière", Ahmad goes in search of talent in the numerous refugee camps of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Ahmad guides the auditioning actors into dramatizing what best embodies their destiny: waiting. He comes to realize the destiny of all refugees is much the same as his own. Although Ahmad is sick and tired of the insurmountable difficulties of life in Palestine, he may end up letting the opportunity for his long-awaited exile slip away...

CAST

Areen Omari
Mahmoud Massad
Youssef Baroud

Bissan (TV Journalist)
Ahmad (The Director)
Lumière (The Cameraman)

CREW

Screenplay
Art Director
Music
Sound Engineer
Sound Design
Mix
Editor
Director of Photography
Producers

Rashid Masharawi, Oscar Kronop
Houssein Baydoun
RegMusic Factory-Ralph El Khoury & Elie Barbar
Bruno Auzet
Selim Azzazi
Bruno Tarrrière
Jacques Witt
Jacques Besse
Setareh Farsi, Rashid Masharawi

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2005 — 88 minutes — Color - 35mm - 1:85 - Dolby SRD

For additional information and photos: www.silkroadproduction.com/waiting

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