

The red sun of Middle East

From February, 14th to February 20th

This cycle of film presents directors and artists from Middle east and from Caucasus, connected between them, by common elements. Movies tell of contemporary artists and directors, they are about women and men belonging to different social status, they are protagonists that try to survive their tragic destiny, that love their land, which is not always treated in a proper way. Artists, photographers and painters who use a brush, a camera to talk about things, that believe in the nonexistence of the past, in death, in the infinite possibilities of the present. With this cycle of films I would like to present the red sun, which absorbs love, revolution, religion, war, the border, the betrayal, the death that emerges is not so complicated, what is difficult is to imagine death. They are films that tell of a sun that speaks of God, men and women such as iron shafts, that do not know what the sun is...



Iran

Friday, February, 14th at 5.30pm

Film by Shirin Neshat "**Women Without Men**"

Year: 2010

Genre: dramatic

Length: 95 minutes

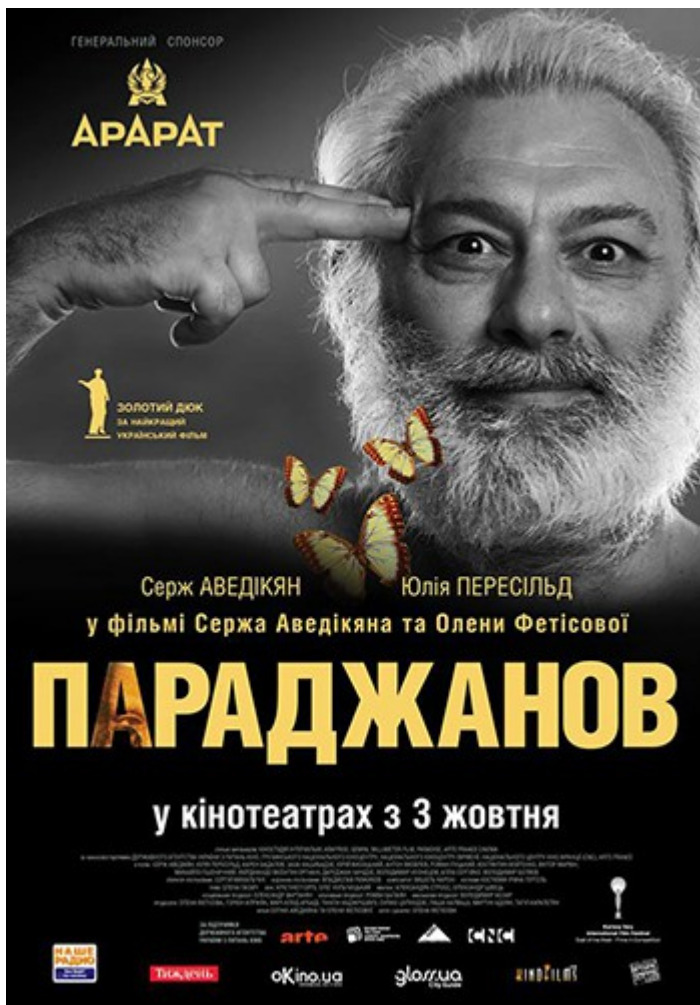
Language: Farsi, Italian

WOMEN WITHOUT MEN is Shirin Neshat's independent film adaptation of Shahnush Parsipur's magic realist novel. The story chronicles the intertwining lives of four Women in Iran during the summer of 1953; a thriller that addresses themes such as human rights and women, women voting rights, and the women's rights movement, a cataclysmic moment in Iranian history and Muslim women's rights when an American led, British backed coup d'état brought down the democratically elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, and reinstated the Shah to power. In the Women Without Men film, renowned visual artist Shirin Neshat offers an exquisitely crafted

view of women rights today in Iran as compared to Iran in 1953, when a British- and American-backed coup removed the democratically elected government. The *Women Without Men* movie was Adapted from the novel by Iranian author Shahrnush Parsipur, the film weaves together the stories of four individual women during those traumatic days, whose experiences are shaped by their faith and the social structures in place. Viewing the *Women without men* trailer allows audiences to explorer the lives of four women and the beautiful countryside of Iran, where Neshat explores the social, political, and psychological dimensions of her characters as they meet in a metaphorical garden, where they can exist and reflect while the complex intellectual and religious forces shaping their world linger in the air around them. According to the *Women Without Men* wiki, looking at Iran from Neshat's point of view allows us to see the larger picture and realize that the women and human rights community resembles different organs of one body, created from a commonessence.

Artist photographer: **Shirin Neshat** (presentation of the works) *Turbulent*, 1998. 9 minutes.

Iranian-born visual artist Shirin Neshat is known for her hauntingly beautiful explorations of Islam and gender relations. Over the past 15 years, Neshat has created provocative expressions drawn on her personal experiences in exile, and on the widening political and ideological rift between the West and the MiddleEast. Her potent statements in still and moving images evoke the struggles that define her. According to Shirin Neshat biography she was born in Qazvin, one of the most religious cities in Iran, Shirin Neshat is perhaps the most famous contemporary artist to emerge fromthat country. Neshat left Iran just before the Islamic revolution (1979) and the fall of the Shah. Her consequent visits to Iran after the revolution led to the creation of a body of work which launched Neshat's artistic career, however, since 1996 she has not been able to return to hercountry due to the controversial nature of her art. After receiving her degree in art from the University of California at Berkeley, Neshat moved to New York, where she continues to live and feel the pull and push of her roots. She examines her homeland from a distance, as well as in closer perspective on her travels across the Middle East. On today's complicated global stage, Neshat's voice is unmistakably relevant. Shirin Neshat *Women of Allah* (1993-97), first gained prominence with a series of photographs depicting women in veils carrying guns with their skin covered in Islamic poetry. Shirin Neshat photography reflected a sense of Islamic women rights how the revolution had changed the Iran that she knew, especially the lives of women seeking freedom, rebelling inmartyrdom and militancy. By 1998, when Neshat began experimenting with film and video installations, she met Iranian artist/filmmaker, Shoja Azari. They began a collaboration which has led to numerous important video pieces such as the trilogy—*Turbulent* (1998), *Rapture* (1999), and *Fervor* (2000)—about gender roles in the restrictive Islamic society. In the first two cinematic statements, she immersed the viewer literally in the middle of the works, which were projected on two screens, each occupied byactors of one sex. The men and women are physically separated here in art, as in real life. In Shirin Neshat *Turbulent*, Azari performed the role of male singer while Sussan Deyhim, was the female singer. Here Neshat explored singing as a metaphor for freedom, inspired by an Iranian ban on women singing. In Shirin Neshat *Rapture*, she continued her theme with a story about women moving across the desert, and how a few eventually break free to leave on a small boat. *Fervor* expressed the passionate yearning of a couple who can only make contact with their eyes, closing the trilogy with an emphasis on the common ground shared between the sexes. On a more personal note, Shirin Neshat *Rebellious Silence and Soliloquy* (1999) explores her own displacement in. Againusing duo projections, she places an image of herself in the Middle East on one screen, and an image of herself in the West on another, visually revealing the split between the two very different cultures that are both a part of her life.



Armenia

"Paraganov" by Serj Avedikian and Elena Fetisova

Year: 2013

Lenght: 95 minutes

Languages: Russian, Georgian, and Armenian.

Subtitles: English

Jean-Luc Godard's: "In the temple of cinema, there are images, light and reality. Sergei Parajanov was the master of that temple. "

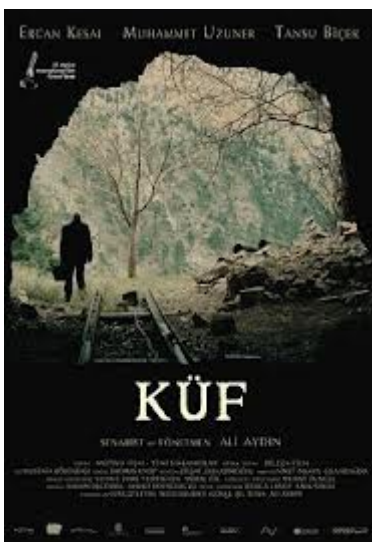
Federico Fellini "Paraganov is a genius, a teacher and a magician."

A self-portrait of the master of Caucasian cinema , between Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia,

Sergei Parajanov (January 9, 1924 - July 20, 1990) was Soviet Armenian film director and artist who made significant contributions to Ukrainian, Armenian and Georgian cinema. He invented his own cinematic style, which was totally out of step with the guiding principles of socialist realism (the only sanctioned art style in the USSR). This, combined with his controversial lifestyle and behaviour, led Soviet authorities to repeatedly persecute and imprison him, and suppress his films. Although he started professional film-making in 1954, Parajanov later disowned all the films he made before 1964 as "garbage". After directing Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (renamed Wild Horses of Fire for most foreign distributions) Parajanov became something of an international

celebrity and simultaneously a target of attacks from the system. Nearly all of his film projects and plans from 1965 to 1973 were banned, scrapped or closed by the Soviet film administrations, both local (in Kyiv and Yerevan) and federal (Goskino), almost without discussion, until he was finally arrested in late 1973 on charges of rape, homosexuality and bribery. He was imprisoned until 1977, despite a plethora of pleas for pardon from various artists. Even after his release (he was arrested for the third and last time in 1982) he was a person non grata in Soviet cinema. It was not until the mid-1980s, when the political climate started to relax, that he could resume directing. Still, it required the help of influential Georgian actor Dodo Abashidze and other friends to have his last feature films greenlighted. His health seriously weakened by four years in labor camps and nine months in prison in Tbilisi, Parajanov died of lung cancer in 1990, at a time when, after almost 20 years of suppression, his films were being featured at foreign film festivals. "Everyone knows that I have three Motherlands. I was born in Georgia, worked in Ukraine and I'm going to die in Armenia." - Sergei Parajanov, 1988.

Paraganov, director, artist, painter (presentation of the works and collage)



Turkey

"Mold" by Ercan Kesal

Year: 2012

Length: 94

Languages: Turkish and Italian

Basri Aydin is a 55-year-old widower nearing retirement from a job checking the condition of rural railroad tracks. Shadowed by death since birth and even beyond, Basri has evidently never recovered from the disappearance of his student son Seyfi in Istanbul some 18 years before. While Ercan is apathetically apolitical, never even having once voted, Seyfi was deeply involved in anti-government protests, it seems likely that his fate was tied up with wider social upheavals of the 1990s. Basri regularly writes letters about Seyfi's case to the authorities, these missives eventually bringing him into contact with Murat, a world-weary police-inspector played by Anatolia's spellbinding lead Muhammet Uzuner. But Aydin isn't interested in exploring this intriguing relationship. Instead, what passes for 'drama' here chiefly concerns Basri's frictions with younger co-worker Cemil (Tansu Biçer), a drunken, lecherous, troublemaking sad-sack whose beef with his

senior colleague is never explained. Slim in its narrative and opaquely elusive in its all-too-evident philosophical ambitions, *Mold* holds a modicum of interest if taken primarily as a character-study of the taciturn, withdrawn Basri and as a showcase for some committedly dour performances. "Just what kind of a man are you?" asks Murat during an interview near the start that drags on and on for nearly a quarter of an hour, most of that time filled with pregnant pauses and meaningful stares as Murat Tuncel's tripod-mounted camera looks on unmoving, unblinking. Despite his ambulatory profession and dogged letter-writing, Basri is the "kind of man" defined by his stoic passivity, which in the picture's most tense and effective scene yields dire consequences for a secondary character. In this sequence Aydin shows flashes of promising talent, and in conjunction with Tuncel he crafts some elegantly-framed compositions elsewhere, often featuring spectacular and untenanted corners of the Anatolian hinterland. On balance there's enough here to suggest that Aydin might perhaps go on to more distinctive and individually expressive work next time. Here, however, he's content to dutifully plod along in what's become the default mode of cinematic expression for serious-minded film-makers worldwide, right down to his enigmatically oblique choice of title. Then again, if said moniker was actually intended to evoke the proverbially dull activity of watching cheese decay, the cap fits all too well.

Artist: Sukran Moral, (photograph and performance)



Kazakhstan

Tuesday, February, 18th at 5.30 pm

Film by Sergei Dvortsevov

Year: 2006

Length: 100

Genre: drama

Languages: Russian, Italian

What's the maximum number of extreme sheep-birthings you'd like to see in a major motion picture? Zero? One? "Tulpan," an austere drama from Kazakhstan, which was the winner of the Un Certain Regard prize at last year's Cannes Film Festival, offers two, both of which climax with -- spoiler alert!-- mouth-to-mouth resuscitation between a Kazakh herdsman and a newly born lamb. Based on that description alone, you've probably already decided whether you'd like to see writer-director Sergei Dvortsevov's film, set on the steppes of Central Asia. Sure, for many viewers, accidentally walking into a showing of "Tulpan" would be a 10-minute nightmare of tractors and bad haircuts, followed by a 90-minute nap. To certain serious world-cinema aficionados, though, "Tulpan's" combination of understated comedy and documentary-level depiction of rural Kazakh life will be catnip. "Look around," young shepherd Asa (Askhat Kuchencherekov), just out of the Kazakh Navy, declares to his friend Boni, "What beauty! " Dvortsevov's camera then moves from the two young men to the windblown, featureless plain and holds that shot for upward of a minute. Asa dreams of finding a wife and building a farm, but when he's turned down for marriage by his neighbor Tulpan-- despite his family's offer of 10 sheep and a hideous chandelier to the girl's parents -- he's stuck working for his resentful brother-in-law, a surly herdsman with three children of his own. Where can he find a wife, Asa moans to Boni, if Tulpan has turned him down? "There are only three yurts on the whole steppe!" "Tulpan's" picture of daily herding life in Kazakhstan is as unfiltered as it comes: Its actors tackle ewes, make cheese, disassemble yurts, pop zits and, yes, birth lambs right before your eyes. At times you may feel that "Tulpan" works better as a document of a vanishing way of life than as a narrative. But the migration of young Kazakhstan to the cities (where, Boni claims, there are fabulous babes just waiting for a guy like Asa) ends up playing an important part in the movie's quiet plot. And though the drama can be as arid as the dust-blown landscape, "Tulpan" also offers the occasional bravura visual -- as in those awe-inspiring birth scenes, or in the gentler, sillier vision of a traveling veterinarian's ancient motorbike, its sidecar glumly occupied by a heavily bandaged camel.

Artist: **Said Atabekov**, presentation of the works

Said Atabekov (Uzbekistan) was born in the village of Bes Terek in Uzbekistan in 1965. He graduated from Shymkent Art College in Kazakhstan where he currently lives and works. He was a founding member of Kyzyl Traktor (Red Tractor), the first avant-garde artistic group founded in southern Kazakhstan after Perestroika. Atabekov's first solo exhibition in 1993, entitled *I is not We*, was a clear affirmation of a new individual voice in contrast to the traditional Soviet aesthetic of "collectivism." This exhibition proposed an important alternative to a post-Soviet environment. He continues to focus his attention on Central Asia: its customs, daily life, legends, and the history of the area. The artist's work has been exhibited widely throughout the world: Moscow, Russia, Vilnius, Berlin, Geneva, Prague, Mexico City, and Italy.



The border: Israel and Palestine

Wednesday, February, 19th at 5.30pm

"Lemon Tree" by Eran Riklis

Lenght: 106

Genre: drama

Year: 2009

Languages: Italian, Arabic

Lemon Tree is a new and hard-hitting Israeli feature film, which tells a story of two women - one Palestinian and one Jewish. The basic plot revolves around the fact that the security establishment has decided to cut down Salma's lemon trees because they constitute a security threat. Salma is a widow, the owner of a grove of lemon trees which is located on the border, right next to a Jewish settlement. Mira, the wife of the newly elected minister of defense, has recently moved into her new home in this border community. The two women exchange a few glances, they are conscious of each other, but their lives are defined and encompassed by political and gender considerations, and by a fence which separates them. The Palestinian woman, Salma, is in a position of weakness politically and socially, but is strong in her determination and her courage. The Jewish woman, Mira, on the other hand, is in a position of strength politically, but she is weak. Although she does not want to be a party to the uprooting of her neighbor's lemon trees, she is unable to stop it. She is weak in the face of the platitudes that her husband spouts. The two women look out at each other's homes, across the divide, but are unable to bridge the issues that separate them. They are both victims of the male leadership of their societies that keeps them apart. Only once, Mira shouts "I am sorry," to Salma. Salma's lawyer brings her case to court and then makes an appeal before the Supreme Court. Salma is saluted as a symbol for the entire Palestinian people. According to Eran Riklis, she is an Erin Brokowitz character, going on a legal journey for what is right. She is also a woman linked to mother earth, a fertile woman -- as a mother and grandmother, and more symbolically, she is tied to the fruit of the land, her lemons. Yet, she is a woman trapped in a deadlocked situation, similar to the Druze woman in Eran Riklis' previous film, The Syrian Bride. The Jewish woman, Mira, seems to be no less trapped in an untenable situation. Uprooting Trees Is it possible that security considerations could justify the uprooting of the lemon trees? Except for Salma and Mira, everyone seems to agree that it is either necessary or inevitable. The film's

soundtrack includes a rendition of Peter, Paul and Mary's: "Lemon tree very pretty and the flower is so sweet, but the fruit of the poor lemon is impossible to eat." Even though during Biblical times, Jews were forbidden to cut down fruit trees, even when laying siege to the enemy (Deuteronomy 20:19), the Israeli army has actually been uprooting olive trees in the West Bank for security reasons. The gnarled olive tree is deeply rooted in this land and the olive branch is a symbol of peace. But the security establishment feels that olive trees must be cleared from along the border areas due to security considerations. In this film, Eran Riklis has chosen to use the bitter sweet lemon instead of the olive as a symbol of the dispute between Palestinians and Israelis. The lemon is both sweet and sour and much more striking in its color, perhaps therefore more cinematic! The above-mentioned reference from Deuteronomy 20:19, "When you lay siege to a city for many days, in making war against it, you shall not destroy the trees," continues by making a comparison between man and a tree: "for man is the tree of the field." Why does the Torah make this comparison between man and a tree? The film also refers to a more contemporary and popularized version of this comparison -- an Israeli song, written by Natan Zach, and sung by Shalom Chanoch: "Man is the tree of the field. "Mankind, like a tree, needs land, water, air and sunshine to flourish. In the film, the wise, old Palestinian worker refers to one more characteristic that mankind has in common with trees. When he testifies in court, he states: "Trees are like human beings with a soul." Perhaps trees have even more humanity than human beings.

Contemporary Palestinian artist, **Khaled Jarrar**, presentation of the works.



Morocco and Tunisia

Thursday, February, 20th at 5.30pm

Short film Morocco/ France

Year: 2011

Length: 43 minutes

Genre: drama

"Then road to Paradise"

It's rare that a film that's so unsettling to watch still feels like a positive experience. Uda Benyamina's tale of a mother and her two children eking out an existence in abject poverty is, at points, beyond depressing. As the trio struggle to locate their absent husband/father, they find happiness if and when they can. And when they stumble upon such respite, the family shines. The palpable joy at something so mundane as a bike ride, or even a hot meal, owes a lot to the stunning performances from Sanna Marouk and Yanis Siraj as the two kids. The world is drab and washed out, but the pair take such solace in each other, and in stolen moments with their mother, that when they laugh, the audience does too. The film was deservedly awarded first prize at DIFF.

Uda Benyamina

Uda Benyamina, film-maker, author and actress, graduated from the ERAC (National School of Actors in Cannes) and followed this with classes at the academy of Minsk, the Ontological Theater and the Actors' Studio. She has taken part in various plays and collaborated with Jean Pierre Vincent, Youri Pobjenichko and Jean Louis Martinelli. In 2008, she directed the short film MY BIG FAT GARBAGE that was selected in several film festivals. She then directed the short, THE ROAD TO PARADISE; produced by Marc-Benoît Créancier with the support of the National Center of Cinematography (CNC) in France; that went on to receive a Cesar nomination in 2013. Uda is a committed artist who founded the association, 1000 visages, which aims to democratise cinema on a global level.

Filmography

2006 - Paris vs Banlieu, cm / 2006 - Taxibhone Francaoul, cm
2006 La clou en chasse unautreclou, cm / 2008 - Ma poubelle géante, cm
2011 - Sur la route du paradis, cm

Short film "Soubresauts" by Leyla Bouzid, Tunisia/ France 2011, 22 minutes

The dominant theme of the movie is the one of the gender politics. Woman is the most important character in Maghreb film production, moreover, the main theme developed is the relationship between woman and man, woman and family and woman and emancipation.

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