

PREVIEW

BAFF moves to universities, schools



A still from Bruno Ulmer's "Mosques: Art and Space," from the 2018 series "Sacred Monuments."



A still from the 2019 documentary "Maguy Marin: L'urgence d'agir."

All but four art film festival events to be free of charge; focus section fetes Leonardo

By Maghie Ghali
The Daily Star

BEIRUT: The organizers of the Beirut Art Film Festival have every intention of staging the event's fifth edition next month, proposing a selection of 60 documentaries on art to be screened daily, Nov. 1-30.

Past editions have been held at Metropolis Cinema-Sofil, but the festival's funds could not cover the venue costs this year, so BAFF has partnered with universities instead.

"This year it's under the theme of 'Change,' with a change of location," gallerist and festival founder Alice Mogabgab said at a news conference held the day before the current civil disobedience campaign began. "The festival ... will spread

to eight universities around greater Beirut and 16 cultural institutes around Lebanon.

"We will be able to create a cultural bridge that goes all over the country, from north to south," she added. "We've had to change location this year but we will keep trying to go forward with a large selection of movies from some of the best production houses in the world."

Most of the films programmed will be screened for the first time in Lebanon and some others will have their international premieres.

Due to them being screened in several educational centers, all but four of the events can be attended free of charge.

Those four screenings will give ticket proceeds to four selected NGOs: AFEL, Brave Heart, MySchoolPulse and The Youth of the Order of Malta.

"These films we've programmed are trying to give us a new or alternative view on these cultural institutions or personalities," Mogabgab said, "and by watching them we can learn to look at other things in

Lebanon from a new perspective."

The festival's focus section this year celebrates Leonardo da Vinci's 500th jubilee, in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute and the Italian Embassy. Five film screenings, a talk and an exhibition surrounding different aspects of Leonardo's work or life are planned.

"The first event is a talk titled 'Leonardo da Vinci and his secrets. A study, a research and restoration work,'" Mogabgab said.

"We're inviting Maria Letizia Sebastiani, director of the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro e la Conservazione del Patrimonio Archivistico e Librario, and Lucilla Nuccetelli, director of the restoration laboratory of Roma's ICRCPAL, who restored da Vinci's codex on birds' flight which sits in Turin University."

Currently housed at the Royal Museums of Turin, the codex was written in 1505-1506 over 37 pages, punctuated by drawings and notes. The codex is a mix of scientific knowledge, theories and art. The talk will take place Oct. 29 at Saint Joseph University's Auditori-

um Francois Bassil.

ALBA (the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts) will also hold an exhibition on the codex from Nov. 1-21 titled "Il codice sul volo degli uccelli," presenting 16 ultra HD reproductions of pages from the volume.

"'Io Leonardo' [marks] the first time BAFF will show something fictional," she said of Jesus Garces Lambert's film, "about his life and it will start showing in cinemas in Italy around the same time as we're showing it."

BAFF's secondary focus is Lebanon, which Mogabgab said remained at the heart of BAFF.

"Again in this fifth edition, the organizers highlight topics related to the land's cultural heritage and its ecological depletion," she said, "taking such cultural achievements and ecological alarms and distresses to schools, universities and cultural centers."

"This year we will try to cover all schools in Lebanon with the screening of two films – 'The Battle for the Cedar,' a documentary film from MTV about how Youssef Tawk, a

villager from Bsharri, set to replant the Forest of the Cedars overlooking his ancestral village," she added.

"The second film is 'Leonardo, the Man who Saved Science,' a documentary about the extensiveness Leonardo's scientific researches [by Mark Daniels]."

BAFF will also express its solidarity with BIPOD (the Beirut International Platform of Dance), following the controversial loss of its performance Citerne Beirut space in August. "We will screen four documentaries about dance," Mogabgab said, "to keep dance in the scene, including a filmed performance, [Mourad Merzouki's 'Vertikal']."

The program includes 22 titles provided by BAFF's collaborating embassies and cultural institutions. Highlights include Stephanus Domanig's "Backstage Vienna State Opera" from the Austrian Embassy and "Picasso, metamorphoses en bleu et rose" by Gaelle Royer, with the help of the Spanish Embassy.

The full program of **BAFF 2019** can be found at bafflebanon.org.