



Locarno Pro Open Doors 1-7 | 8 | 2018

Exploring eight countries in South Asia

Afghanistan • Bangladesh • Bhutan • Maldives •
Myanmar • Nepal • Pakistan • Sri Lanka

Open Doors 2016-2018 Exploring South Asia

Closing the circle

In 2016, we started a 3-year long journey of discovery of eight South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The upcoming Open Doors edition will close the cycle by celebrating South Asian cinema in all its diversity with a delegation of professionals from the entire region. Carlo Chatrion, Artistic Director: "During the last three years, Open Doors has given a new generation of directors and producers the opportunity to get known and to discover new production models. The project has focused on a region rich in culture, but not well represented on the international scene. It has given the Locarno public and professionals a chance to hear new cinematographic voices. These three years leave us with some amazing highlights, such as the touching Piazza Grande presentation of the Buthanese film *Hema Hema: Sing Me a Song While I Wait*, and the multitude of connections and experiences that took place will bear their fruit in the forthcoming editions".

The South Asian delegation in Locarno will be introduced to the international industry thanks to the following activities:

- The coproduction platform Open Doors Hub, presenting eight promising projects from the whole region for possible international cooperation.
- The Open Doors Lab, highlighting nine producing talents who significantly contribute to the development of the independent film scene and to the rising of new voices in the region.

Regular meetings will be organized between the selected teams and guests from Locarno Pro and the Festival, from formal occasions (scheduled one-to-one meetings) to lunches and Happy Hours for networking.

- Last but not least, the Open Doors Screenings section presents, every day of Locarno Festival, either a feature length film or a programme of shorts from the region; in total, a selection of around twenty films reflecting the cinematographic creativity of the region over the recent years.


We sincerely hope you will fully enjoy our 2018 edition.

The Open Doors Team

Open Doors Hub 2018

Afghanistan • Bangladesh • Bhutan • Myanmar •
Nepal • Pakistan • Sri Lanka

8 projects in development

- 
- 4 **A Year of Cold (Chiso Barsa)**
by **Min Bahadur Bham**
Nepal
- 6 **Mother (Amma)**
by **Sanjeewa Pushpakumara**
Sri Lanka, France
- 8 **One of a Kind (Wakhri)**
by **Iram Parveen Bilal**
Pakistan, US
- 10 **Rose (Gulaab)**
by **Saim Sadiq**
Pakistan
- 12 **Sand City**
by **Mahde Hasan**
Bangladesh
- 14 **The Postman**
by **Siddiq Barmak**
Afghanistan, Germany
- 16 **The Women (Ma)**
by **The Maw Naing**
Myanmar
- 18 **White Gold (Due-Tsi)**
by **Jamyang Wangchuk**
Bhutan, United Kingdom

A Year of Cold (Chiso Barsa)

Nepal

Synopsis

A pregnant young Tibetan refugee, PEMA, is forced to find her missing Nepali husband, TASHI, for legal reasons as she is on the verge of being ousted from her husband's family home. A monk, KARMA, her brother-in-law who becomes her de facto husband by local custom, accompanies her on a journey to the roof of the world, the Himalayas, to locate Tashi, who can authenticate their marriage and thus her citizenship. Their long voyage transforms their lives and brings them 'awakening'. Together, they find the way out of 'suffering' to 'liberation' and Pema will come to realize the true value of love, family, home and survival.

Director's Note

In the pristine landscape of Nepal, beauty prevails - from the lush flat plains to the mountains rising till eternity. I can never get tired admiring the beauty of my hometown. However, beneath the serene beauty hide dark undercurrents of patriarchy, with its discrimination, marginalization, and social injustice. My second film focuses on the vulnerable position of a rural young Tibetan immigrant chained by the consequences of fate, who is in search of her missing Nepali husband. This story is about love, marriage, and sacrifice where a girl faces multi layered complexities and struggles for her identity and a safe home - all the struggles that the Nepali women go through for a better life and to fight against a patriarchal society.

The main protagonist is a girl, newlywed and pregnant, whose husband(s) are missing under various circumstances. Here, my intention is to portray the struggles of a girl in exile and her coming of age as a woman against all odds and complexities in the patriarchal society. This story portrays everyday hardship and struggles for a home and identity in exile. It also demonstrates the harsh life in the Himalayas and the plight of mountain communities in their struggle for subsistence.

Producer's Note

As a storyteller, Min is interested in depicting the displacement of those left behind by the ramifications of civil war and the dawn of rapid modernization. Particularly of young people and the fragile lives of those living in the rural subcultures of his country with traditions and superstitions that belong to the old world. His films contemplate on the philosophical condition of the Nepali countryside and are composed of social reflections of the grassroots mixed with the dreaming of the individual. Using a poetic approach, he tackles important issues faced by Nepal's minority communities living on the fringes of the twenty-first century. Moreover, Min's style and motivations are very much informed by his background. Having studied Literature, Filmmaking, Buddhist Philosophy and Political Science, he depicts with visual simplicity and lyricism, life in the rural landscape that relates to the spirituality of the people and the land. It is clear that the Nepali identity and culture influence his art.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format Digital, 4K, Color

Estimated running time 100'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Tibetan, Nepalese

Shooting location Northern Nepal
(Altitude 4200 - 7600 Meters)

Shooting period May 2019

Total budget EUR 500,000

Funds secured EUR 95,000

Visual Concept

The visual approach, composing of gritty close ups that slowly evolve to stark wide shots, aims to capture the psychology of the characters in conflict with themselves and rural society as well as the soul of the landscape during their daunting spiritual voyage. Shot in real locations at the high Himalayan ranges, I want to show the extreme hardship faced by the mountain communities in the midst of natural beauty of the terrain. The characters are traveling with a caravan of over 50,000 people on a Yarshagumba expedition, depicted by a meditative mise-en-scene and sonic ambience linked to the Buddhist sensibilities of the Nepalese Himalayas.



Director

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Producer

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Director's Biography

Filmmaker from Nepal, Min Bahadur Bham graduated in Filmmaking, Literature and Buddhist Philosophy. His short film *The Flute* (2012) was selected in Competition at Venice Film Festival. His first film, *The Black Hen* (2015), premiered in Venice Critics Week. It was awarded the FEDEORA Best Film and was the Nepal's entry to the Oscars in 2016. Currently, he is developing his second feature film, *A Year of Cold*, at Cinéfondation, La Résidence.

Selected Filmography

The Black Hen (Fiction, 90', 2015)

The Flute (Fiction, 15', 2012)

Production Company Profile

Based in Nepal, Shooney Films has produced several films including *The Flute* by Min Bahadur Bham (Venice IFF 2012), *The Black Hen* by Min Bahadur Bham (Fedeora Award, Venice Critics Week 2015), *Year of the Bird* by Shenang Gyamjo Tamang (Busan IFF 2016), *A Curious Girl* by Rajesh Prasad Khatri (Grand Prix, Berlinale Generation KPlus 2018). We are also developing *Season of Dragonflies* by Abinash Bikram Shah (CNC Prize, Locarno Open Doors Hub 2016).

Selected Filmography

A Curious Girl by Rajesh Prasad Khatri (Fiction, 14', 2018)

The Black Hen by Min Bahadur Bham (Fiction, 90', 2015)

The Flute by Min Bahadur Bham (Fiction, 15', 2012)

Mother (Amma)

Sri Lanka, France

Synopsis

Sri Lanka. Thirty years of civil war have come to an end. KALA, a fifty-seven-years-old widow, an English Literature teacher at the university, is a Tamil who lives in Jaffna (main northern city) with her daughter and grandson. Her son was abducted by an unknown group at the last stages of the war. Kala is on a relentless local campaign to find her son with several dozen other mothers in the same situation. She believes that Rajan was abducted by government forces. Kala receives an invitation from her old university friend MALINI (57), a Sinhala lawyer, to join her in Colombo. Malini's son, a soldier, had gone missing during the conflict. Despite being in opposite sides of the war, the two women embark on a campaign to find their children and set up a National Mothers Front to demand accountability from the authorities and do demonstrations in Colombo. They are helped by several politicians including Ranga, their university classmate with whom Kala shares a painful past. The effort to launch a mass movement invokes resistance from the pro-military groups. After the small success of their first press conference, the two women realize the need to go back to Jaffna to mobilize the mothers there. To protect their family, facing threats and intimidation, Malini goes to Jaffna with her daughter-in-law and her grand-daughter. The journey starts with confirmation of Malini's son death, but they manage to bring a new enthusiasm to the movement. They come back to Colombo. Malini reveals she has a cancer and short time to live. Despite the several and strong efforts to discourage them, the Mothers Front begins to gather momentum. The demonstration in Colombo is a big success but ends tragically as Malini is killed by some policemen in front of the numerous media which cover the event.

Director's Note

I was born in a small village in North - East Sri Lanka where many battles of the 30 years long war took place. I grew up spending most of my life in the war zone surviving through the carnage of the bloody conflict. I feel that I am permanently scarred with psychological shrapnel of the traumatic experiences of three decades of relentless war. While the peace is fragile, vulnerable war weary communities and individuals will not be able to withstand a recurrence of war. Making this film will provide a way for my own redemption from the trauma of a lifetime. The narrative of the film suggests optimism through cultivating love and trust between victims on both sides. Amma is a reflection of memories of my generation told through the lives of two women who embark upon an odyssey for truth and justice. The film explores and poses questions about love, betrayal, brutality, sacrifice, human dignity, freedom, democracy and life. As a filmmaker I strongly believe the story has universal relevance with contemporary social realities around the globe. Empathy I feel with the stories of victims of current global crisis has prompted.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format HD, Color

Estimated running time 90'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Sinhala, Tamil and English

Shooting location Sri Lanka

Shooting period Aug 2019 - Sep 2019

Total budget EUR 480,000

Funds secured Currently raising

Co-producer Dominique Welinski, DW (France)

Visual Concept

When I film, I want to show things by movement and sensual images. I use storytelling techniques such as continuity narrative, evolution of the plot order (syuzhet) as well as story order (Fabula). Amma is based on poetic cinema, which will be portraying a meditative cinematic experience. The cinematic stages of the film will mostly rely on images which will be enhanced by a mysterious sound track. Vividly sensual landscape in Sri Lanka will be captured in medium and long takes in tableau compositions. Camera will be used as an observer, not an intervener to any scene.



Director and Producer

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Director's Biography

Sanjeewa Pushpakumara obtained his advanced degree (Master of Fine Arts) in filmmaking from the Chung-Ang University in South Korea. His first feature *Flying Fish* world premiered at International Film Festival Rotterdam (2011) and was nominated for the Tiger Award. In 2012, he was invited to Paris for Cannes Cinéfondation Residence to develop his second feature, *Burning Birds*. It premiered in Busan and was nominated for New Currents award. In 2014, Sanjeewa was invited to attend Venice Biennale College to develop *Peacocks' Lamenting*.

Selected Filmography

Flying Fish (Fiction, 125', 2011)

Burning Birds (Fiction, 84', 2016)

Production Company Profile

Founded in 2007, Sapushpa Expressions is devoted to making independent art films, with a focus on feature and short fiction and experimental films. It also engages in academic activities to develop film culture through filmmaking and film studies within Sri Lanka.

Selected Filmography

Amma by Sanjeewa Pushpakumara (Fiction, 90', 2019, in development)

Burning Birds by Sanjeewa Pushpakumara (Fiction, 84', 2016)

Flying Fish by Sanjeewa Pushpakumara (Fiction, 125', 2011)

One of a Kind (Wakhri)

Pakistan, US

Synopsis

Noor Malik is a real life superhero. She is the first female math teacher and the founder of the first girls' school in her Multani village. However recent social pressures are putting an end to the girls' school. In efforts to save it, Noor accidentally takes to social media to raise money. Encouraged by her childhood friends, FATIMA, her fashionable sidekick who becomes her "sexuality trainer" and BEEBA, her gay best friend, she creates a sexy avatar called WAKHRI (one of a kind). However, Wakhri must remain a secret because Noor is also a widow mother to a twelve-year-old son Suleiman and her family is conservative.

Wakhri becomes a sexual muse for the sex-starved crowds of Pakistan. She is often found making appearances on the streets to help poor businessmen/women but is also found in the mansions of rich politicians and sheikhs. During one such visits to a politician, Chaudhry, Wakhri finds signs of potential sex trafficking. Chaudhry sniffs some danger around Wakhri and her increasingly public persona. He reveals Wakhri's true identity during a TV interview. Wakhri faces an ocean of social media trolls like never before; people especially angry to know that she chose to be sexual 'despite' being a mother. Her school fires her and she starts receiving death threats. The only bright light in all this is Suleiman, who surprises Noor by accepting Wakhri wholeheartedly. With Suleiman by her side, Noor is empowered to face the rising hate, and to uncover Chaudhry's sex trafficking.

Director's Note

Wakhri is inspired by the unique Qandeel Baloch, Pakistan's Kim Kardashian, who was brutally murdered in 2016 by her brother in an "honor killing". In an effort to tell a story with a more hopeful ending and to have artistic license, we have chosen to tell a fictionalized version of a character inspired by Qandeel's life.

I've personally faced and witnessed a culture of trolling that has especially risen in Pakistan. I've noticed special vitriol and vengeance towards female figures of authority, whether they are filmmakers, actors, politicians or social media stars. With more than 50% of the population being under 20 and the majority of the younger population being unemployed, male and having cell phones, there has been a new level of access to the internet. Recent tragedies like Qandeel's honor killing, Zainab's rape and murder, have shown the impacts of a hyper sexualized world in a community and country where sex education and inter-gender mingling is restricted.

Wakhri questions our inherent compartmentalization of female roles: for instance, a mother cannot be sexy. This type of social compartmentalization, I feel is the root of Pakistan's gender politics. When Qandeel was murdered, I was shocked to see some self-identifying feminists lacking empathy towards her. In her death, we re-realized that the pressure of honor and being honorable runs far deeper in our culture than we care to admit.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format HD, Color

Estimated running time 120'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Urdu

Shooting location Pakistan

Shooting period Mar 2019 - May 2019

Total budget EUR 635,000

Funds secured EUR 120,000

Co-producer Iram Parveen Bilal, Parveen Shah Productions, Pakistan/US

Visual Concept

Much like the film *Chef* or TV shows *Sherlock*, we will show social media in graphics where at times the frame will be literally Wakhri's news feed. Wakhri's scenes and all the homages to viral videos will be saturated color, almost exaggerated, like a 90s music video. The camera will be handheld and unpredictable, like a home video.

Noor's scenes will mostly show her alone in the frame with classical framing and less camera movement showing her locked down disposition in a traditional society. The color palette will be earthy.



Director

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Director's Biography

Raised in Nigeria and Pakistan, Iram is an activist. Her first feature, *Josh*, was Pakistan's premier film on Netflix and is now in the permanent selection at the US Library of Congress. Her latest feature film, *Forbidden Steps*, is a France/Pakistan/US co-production. Bilal initiated Pakistan's Oscar committee and is the founder of Pakistan's first professional screenwriting lab (Qalambaaz). She believes genuine curiosity is the antidote to fear.

Selected Filmography

Josh (Against The Grain) (Fiction, 104', 2013)

Forbidden Steps (Fiction, 100', 2018)

Poshak (Fiction, 11', 2011)

Production Company Profile

In a short span of less than four years, Sanat Initiative has managed to become a top tier visual art space in Pakistan, by concentrating equally on cultivating the audience's tastes and appetite for intelligent articulation and provocative expressions. We are now partnering with Parveen Shah Productions to focus on creating thought provoking cinematic pieces.

Rose (Gulaab)

Pakistan

Synopsis

Gulaab is a love story centered around Mir, Sassi, and Heera - a man, a woman, and a trans woman - as they battle through desire, love and sexual repression in the heat of a Lahore summer. Mir is a 25 year old unemployed married man with severe fits of anger and a suicidal history. Sassi is his naïve, ambitious, and considerate young wife who slowly develops a love for him through the process of her domestication as a housewife in their religiously conservative joint family household.

Heera is B-grade soft porn, stage dancer – a firecracker starlet whose transgender identity is a secret for the world. Heera hires Mir to be her new bodyguard and he enters her brazen new world where his repressed ideals and anger finally find an outlet. His initial disdain and judgement of Heera soon turn into fascination, and an intimacy that allows him to be himself in this world of sexually liberated outcasts. Heera finds his honesty and his anger disarming but knows that revealing her identity to him would lead to no good. Meanwhile, Sassi sees her husband slipping away and begins to blame her own physical appearance for it. This naivety leads her to surgically get the big mole on her face removed to make Mir fall in love with her.

This impossible love tragedy forms the crux of *Gulaab*, which explores how each of its three central characters struggle to conform to the normative ideas of gender and who one is allowed to fall in love with in this world.

Director's Note

If you're a feminine kid in Pakistan, calling you a 'khusra' – a degrading term for trans people - is the go-to insult to shame you into normative masculine behavior. As a teenager, I felt the weight of those words on my burgeoning shoulders several times as they shamed me into inhibiting my instinctual body language, pitching my voice deeper than it really was, and masking my gay identity.

Later in life, as I became more comfortable with my sexuality, I reflected back at how the connotation of those terms was so dehumanizing for the trans community or anyone not conforming to the social ideals of genders. I learnt that the only way to stay functional within my family was to put on a mask of a heteronormative identity, and live my youth as a gay man in private or closed circles. This idea of a double identity and the masks that help you slide in and out of those appearances stuck with me.

Even later in life, I met Naghma Gogi, a trans stage dancer and her real life became an inspiration for this film. I decided to explore the aforementioned feelings through this story. My interviews with Naghma have helped the film a great deal in adding a layer of authenticity to the world and the emotional life of a trans woman who has to hide her true self in order to attain success as a desirable female dancer.

In a nutshell, *Gulaab* is in equal parts a heartbreaking love story, a critique of violent toxic masculinity, and a celebration of the bold resistance of Heera, Sassi and Mir.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format Digital, Color

Estimated running time 130'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Urdu

Shooting location Lahore, Pakistan

Shooting period Oct 2019 – Dec 2019

Total budget EUR 500,000

Funds secured Currently raising

Co-producers Mahak Jiwani & Apoorva Charan, US

Visual Concept

Visually, *Gulaab* is a representation of two contrasting worlds, the repressed public and household space of Mir versus the colorful and sexualized secret space of Heera. It plays with varying subjectivities by putting the viewer in the heads of the three characters to equally empathize with Mir's conservatism, Heera's sexual rebellion, and Sassi's domestication through subjective point-of-views and long takes that help us absorb the reality of each.

Gulaab (red rose) and the color red is a recurring motif in the film that symbolizes sexuality, love, secrecy, and also death because of its significance in Islamic funerals.



Director

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Director's Biography

Saim Sadiq is a Pakistani filmmaker currently finishing his MFA in Filmmaking at Columbia University, NYC. In 2014, he directed two short documentaries in Lahore that were broadcasted on national networks and led to fundraising campaigns for the minority Christian community in Pakistan. He was also featured in the BBC show Free Speech Stories for the same. His short film *Pasban* has travelled globally across several film festivals.

Selected Filmography

Nice Talking to You

(Fiction, 19', 2018, In Post-Production)

Nowhere (Fiction, 16', 2018)

Pasban (Fiction, 16', 2017)

Production Company Profile

Sabiha Sumar and S. Sathananthan set up Vidhi Films in Karachi in 1992. It is the only independent film company in Pakistan with extensive collaborations with ZDF/Arte, Channel Four and BBC. The company has produced all of Sabiha Sumar's films and HBO's Oscar and Emmy winning documentary *Saving Face*. Currently Vidhi is producing Saim Sadiq's debut feature film *Gulaab* and preparing Sabiha Sumar's new film *Dawaat Naama* (*The Invite*).

Selected Filmography

Azmaish - A journey through the subcontinent by

Sabiha Sumar (Documentary, 83', 2017)

Good Morning Karachi by Sabiha Sumar

(Fiction, 85', 2014)

Silent Waters (Khamosh Pani) by Sabiha Sumar

(Fiction, 99', 2003)

Sand City

Bangladesh

Synopsis

SAND-an unstable element, reveals the life in the ruthless metropolis of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Three parallel stories about three individuals. A Buddhist Monk, A Woman and A Man. They are not directly related. Only one thing is common in their life. It is SAND. The monk, Karunananda returns to the city after visit a monastery demolished by fanatics. He collects sand of the broken Buddha temple and tries to make a sand mandala to recover pain. But urban noise distracts him to complete the mandala which deserves greater attention. Emma, the woman collects sand for her cat litter. She does it every week with her scooty. One day, she finds a finger in the sand, an amputated finger with red nail polish. Instead of being panicked she gradually develops a bond with the finger. Hasan, the man works in a sand washing plant. He steals sand from the plant to make glass by himself at home. And this fantasy leads him toward destruction.

Director's Note

I have been both a subject and an observer of this city all my life. With age and the intervention of my camera, the negotiations and the revelations of the city changed; through the lens of my camera, the skeleton of the city unfolded before my eyes. As an image maker and story teller, images and sounds represent the essence of the city to me. When I look at the city through the lens, I become an outsider and insider at the same time and I cannot escape my city. With this film, I want to focus my gaze on deconstructing the monolith of this city. I want to join my camera in searching for the spirit of this city and its citizens. In this process, I want to trace the journey of my tormented soul and the roads it takes through the metropolis. This film is my chance to make a journey into my reality and coming face to face with my own story, instead of escaping it. Through this journey, I want to explore the many facets of urban survival, fantasy, sexuality and religion. I also want to weave a story by exploring my own emotions with the city and depict how this city constantly occupies my thoughts and creations.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format HD, Color

Estimated running time 90'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Bengali

Shooting location Dhaka, Bangladesh

Shooting period May 2019 – Jul 2019

Total budget EUR 350,000

Funds secured EUR 20,000

Visual Concept

Overtly saturated and bright colors, dust and sand together give to the city a unique grittiness that adds a harshness and a texture. For me, a just use of color in cinema lends a harshness to the image that complements and accentuates the claustrophobia and grittiness of my characters and their suffocating world. At the same time, I want to make sure that nothing stands out as unnaturally stark. I will try and bring out how the normal and the mundane becomes surreal before our eyes. With a perspective akin to a paralyzed man's gaze studying the world around.



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Director's Biography

Based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Mahde Hasan is an introspective and visually keen screenwriter and director. Time and memories are very fundamental elements in his life and work. His short film *I Am Time* was showcased at 69th Locarno Festival in the Open Doors Screenings section and he placed first for *Where is the Friends Home* in the movieofmylife section at 70th Locarno Festival. *Sand City* is Hasan's debut feature.

Selected Filmography

Where is the Friend's Home (Experimental, 1', 2017)

Death of a Reader (Experimental, 9', 2017)

I Am Time (Experimental, 10', 2016)

Production Company Profile

Khona Talkies was established by Rubaiyat Hossain and Ashique Mostafa in 2008 with the vision of using young Bangladeshi talent to produce films locally with foreign co-production. Khona Talkies has produced and acquired a few award winning, internationally acclaimed as well as locally significant independent films. Khona Talkies attempts to work with themes that are otherwise silenced and marginalized.

Selected Filmography

Under Construction by Rubaiyat Hossain (Fiction, 88', 2015)

Statement After My Poet Husband's Death by Tasmiah Afrin Mou (Fiction, 15', 2016)

720 Degrees by Ishtiaque Zico (Experimental, 5', 2010)

The Postman

Afghanistan, Germany

Synopsis

When Amir's teenaged son dies in a rocket attack, his family falls apart. His wife Nazira falls silent, his young daughter runs the house. Amir turns to his job as a postman for solace. It is the winter of 1991. As Kabul is circled by war, he goes about delivering letters to people's homes. When his younger son gets in trouble, Amir is forced to seek help from Sailay, the beautiful letter reader appointed by the secret police. He gets trapped into doing work for her that he doesn't completely understand. Will he be able to escape this web and save his family from the coming war?

Director's Note

The years of civil war beginning the winter of 1991 was a time when history took a decisive turn for Afghanistan. *The Postman* is an attempt at reliving that time, to be able to understand the present a little better.

I lived through the years the film is set in, which makes it an important project for me personally as well as artistically. The era contains the genesis for many of the problems facing Afghanistan today. The film will approach this version of Kabul as part dream, part nightmare. It will combine nostalgia for the quiet, modern city with the awareness of looming war, through the shottaking and music, as well as the editing. My earlier film *Osama* excavated the hidden stories of Kabul during the Taliban era. In *The Postman*, I will dig deeper into this soil to build on this portrait of the beauty and tragedy of being a Kabuli.

Producer's note

The Postman began as a story I carried in my head for years. It was a film I knew I wanted to make when I began working as a producer, at a time when the Afghan film industry was trying to rebuild itself. It carries personal as well as professional significance, as it is set during a time when my home changed forever. Many Afghans are still stuck in that moment, and I feel telling this story will help others understand our reality better.

Our natural and top choice for this project was Siddiq Barmak, who has taken Afghan cinema to the world stage through his career. Afghans have long been represented by others. Now, after years of democracy and a media boom, we are a different nation. Barmak has the emotional and cultural resources needed to tell this story with Afghan sensibilities. While set in a particular period, *The Postman* talks of family and transformation, of coming home to safety. I am confident that this contemporary subject will appeal to audiences worldwide. It has already been well received at NFDC Filmbazaar's Co-Production Market in Goa, and received support from the Busan Script and Development Fund.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format Digital HD, Color

Estimated running time 90'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Dari/Farsi

Shooting locations Afghanistan, Tajikistan

Shooting period Mar 2019 - Apr 2019

Total budget EUR 465,000

Funds secured EUR 50,000.00

Co-producer Karsten Stöter, Rohfilm, Germany

Visual Concept

Postman is set in the winter of 1991, which was a time when the world looked at Kabul differently. The visual treatment highlights the duality of nostalgia and impending change that underlie the narrative. Snow is an important motif, obscuring underlying tensions and heightening the invisibility of Kabul to the outside world. Its characters seem to be in a limbo, of a white and gray palette. Long shot taking and a deliberately slow pace will emphasize this feeling of claustrophobic reality and uncertainty. We will use visual references of the 1990s- like Soviet-era cartoons and architecture, to reveal the city's interiors and exteriors.

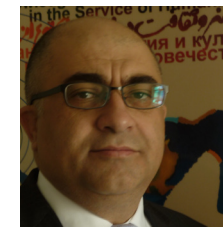


Director

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Director's Biography

Siddiq Barmak (born September 7, 1962 in Panjshir, Afghanistan) is a Golden Globe-winner Afghan film director and producer. He received an M.A degree in cinema direction from the Moscow Film Institute (VGIK) in 1987.

His first feature film *Osama*, won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film in 2004.

Selected Filmography

Osama (Fiction, 82', 2003)

Opium War (Fiction, 90', 2008)

Production Company Profile

Star Group is a production company based in Kabul. It was established in 2006 to create work that is rooted in Afghan experiences. We have produced documentaries, shorts, features and educational content, working with filmmakers from across generations. We draw on years of combined experience, international training and exposure to present stories from our region, that speak not only to an international audience but to Afghans everywhere.

Selected Filmography

Neighbor by Zobiair Farghand (Fiction, 90', 2009)

An Apple from Paradise by Homayoun Morouwat (Fiction, 90', 2008)

Darwais by Zobiair Farghand (TV serial, 2009)

The Women (Ma)

Myanmar

Synopsis

Four women share the same dormitory room near the factory area of Yangon. They all come from remote villages, and moved to the city to work. They are Mi Thet (19), Sa Phay (21), Ei Lay (14) and Khin Su (23). Mi Thet and Sa Phay work at a garment factory, but haven't been paid for months. When the women workers' strike starts, Mi Thet joins the strike, hoping to retrieve the money that she will then send to her family. Sa Phay decides to keep working, thinking that this is the only way to save money, get educated and help her family. Mi Thet realizes that the strike is not helping her in her goal, and she is unfairly dismissed by the factory against her will. When coming out of the strike camp, she is raped on the road by a biker. Ei Lay works night shift at an ex-military general house as housemaid. Despite her master's son attempts to rape her, she continues working in the house as a carer for the grandmother. With her new job in the house, her life changes. Khin Su is 8 months pregnant and is employed as a room maid in a hotel. After losing contact with her husband, who works on a fishing boat in Thailand, Khin Su gives birth alone. Ei Lay starts looking for a way to become independent. The four women are gradually choosing their future paths. Some people disappear slowly into the dark and some other come out slowly.

Director's Note

Before the election in Myanmar in 2015, I lived under the military dictatorship. This closed system deformed our society. During that time, I was experiencing many negative emotions such as repression, fear, unfairness, anger, shame, disgust toward my society. During the student's democracy movement in 1988 I printed and spread flyers. At that time I was in high school. In that period, I lost many acquaintances and friends. For a long time, I saw how people are cruel, how people endure their everyday life while suffering in our closed society. Naturally, my current work has focused on ordinary people who suffer in their everyday life. They are weak or strong, passive or aggressive, they keep silent or speak out loud. During my life, I saw various kinds of disparity, and my interest for the interaction of individual psychology, people's behavior and influence of society has gradually grown stronger. Indeed, my film tells the story of ordinary women working in Myanmar - four different women living in the same room. Even though they are smart, they can't get proper education. Despite working hard and keeping their hope high, they can't escape from poverty. Their lives are not strongly connected, but from their present, we can see their past and future. I will portray them starting from their physical environment to their inner landscape, which is influenced by the several problems in the local society.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format 4K, Color

Estimated running time 95'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Myanmar

Shooting locations Yangon and village in delta

Shooting period Jun 2019 - Jul 2019

Total budget EUR 120,000

Funds secured EUR 20,000

Visual Concept

The film will be shot during the rainy season in Myanmar. Low key color with cold dark tone will be used, to reflect the general mood. Some primary colors will be key colors of the main characters, and illustrate the evolution of their situation. The camera will follow their stories with slow speed, in order to give time to focus on the delicate shades of their psychology. I would like to portray ordinary events and objects through an unfamiliar look, using this to connect all stories.

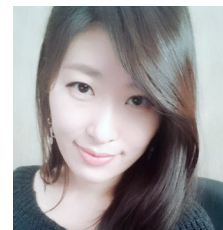


Director

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Producer

Youngjeong Oh

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Director's Biography

Based in Myanmar, The Maw Naing studied film-making at Yangon Film School in 2005 and FAMU Prague in 2008. He is a poet, artist and a filmmaker. His short film *Between the pages* (2010) is permanent collected by Fukuoka Museum. His co-directing documentary *Nargis: When Time Stopped Breathing* (2011) attended several festivals including CPH:DOX, IDFA. His debut feature *The Monk* (2014) premiered at Karlovy Vary and circulated in several international film festivals, winning three prizes including NETPAC award. He is currently working on his second narrative feature film.

Selected Filmography

The Monk (Fiction, 93', 2014)

Nargis, when time stopped breathing
(Documentary, 90', 2010)

Between the Pages (13', 2010)

Production Company Profile

One Point Zero was founded in 2011 in Yangon by The Maw Naing. We produce short and feature-length documentaries and fictions based on social and political issues in Myanmar, and look for international collaboration to promote this kind of cinema from our region. Our works include *The Clinic* by Aung Min and *The Monk* by The Maw Naing in 2014, which was co-produced with FAMU, Czech Republic. Among our next projects, The Maw Naing's second feature *The Women*, and a feature documentary by Tin Win Naing.

Selected Filmography

Than Gyap by The Maw Naing (Documentary, 90', 2018, work in progress)

The Monk by The Maw Naing (Fiction, 93', 2014)

The Clinic by Aung Min (Documentary, 21', 2011)

White Gold (Due-Tsi)

Bhutan, United Kingdom

Synopsis

As Bhutan transitions to democracy, JAMYANG, a government officer from the capital is sent to educate the people in a remote village. Hiding the fact that he was sent there as punishment for insubordination at work, the fate of his job lies in the completion of the task. He meets SONAM, a beautiful young village girl whom he grows fond of. The day the village stream dries up, Jamyang's true story is exposed. To redeem himself, he offers to help find a water source. The only source lies high in the rugged mountains. Investigating a rumor by the village mute, TSAGAY, they discover a channel connecting the source to the village, but no other village claims ownership of the source. As is tradition, an archery match settles the dispute. A strong earthquake rattles the region, permanently blocking the channel. However the following morning, a spring flows by the village through an opening created by the earthquake.

Director's Note

I grew up in a district with no electricity and telephone. During school holidays I toured villages with my father, a civil servant, who educated villagers on clean drinking water, AIDS and family planning. I still have vivid images of these visits in my mind, during which I personally came across all the scenarios and the characters that I portray in my story, and it was their stories that inspired this film. Although the central theme of *White Gold* is about self-discovery, there is an underlying theme of climate change and the reality of its effect on the Himalayan region and beyond.

I am in the process of casting the protagonists. However, I will hire the same crew who worked on the recent Bhutanese films *Honeygiver Among the Dogs* and *The Red Phallus*. We will shoot in the high mountain villages of Bhutan.

Producer's Note

I first met Jamyang in September 2017 at Focus on Asia Fukuoka International Film Festival, Japan. Having visited Bhutan and having curated a film programme on water and climate change in the Himalayas, together with a broader interest in Himalayan cinema, *White Gold* struck a chord with me. With my background in film festivals, distribution and post-production, I will be providing input throughout development and production, formulating the international strategy and advising on post-production. The film will be aimed at international and specialised festivals, with the hope of securing distribution in some territories, including local distribution in Bhutan. The intended audience will be cinephiles, Asian film enthusiasts, those with an interest in Himalayan culture and also environmental issues. At Open Doors we will be looking to connect with other co-producers, financiers, buyers and with local private funders in Bhutan.

Technical Information

Genre Fiction

Shooting format Digital, Color

Estimated running time 90'

Production status Writing and development

Shooting language Dzongkha

Shooting location Bhutan

Shooting period Sep 2019 – Nov 2019

Total budget EUR 488,000

Funds secured EUR 50,000

Co-producer Thinley Dorji, Gumar Films, Bhutan

Visual Concept

I hope to approach this emotive issue from a fresh perspective. I will use mostly non-professional actors in real locations with natural lighting and sound. I like a freely moving style of photography as I don't like to cut or move the camera unless it is motivated; I like non-interventionist approaches to film directing and an avoidance of complex editing. These features satisfy my desire to get closer to everyday reality that is the essence of my film; I want to provide a window into reality and give a sense of honesty that will help emphasize the subject matter. I am particularly inspired by Kurosawa's and Kiarostami's bodies of work.



Director

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Director's Biography

Jamyang played the Dalai Lama in *Seven Years in Tibet*. He acted and directed his debut film *Gyalsey* in 2011, moving his first steps as a filmmaker. After collaborating on the award-winning Bhutanese film *Honeygiver Among the Dogs*, he studied film producing at the inaugural Busan Asian Film School in 2017. He has since directed shorts and documentaries and is now working on his second narrative feature *White Gold*.

Selected Filmography

The Open Door (Fiction, 15', 2018)

Of Gods and Arrows (Documentary, 17', 2015)

Production Company Profile

Day for Night was founded in 2006 with the aim of enabling broader access to diverse visual culture. Working in film festivals, distribution and subtitling, the natural next step is (co-) production. We are particularly keen to support emerging Asian filmmakers with an auteur-driven approach. Recent films we have distributed include *By the Time it Gets Dark* by Anocha Suwichakornpong, *Tharlo* by Pema Tsedan and *Court* by Chaitanya Tamhane.

Selected Filmography (Distribution)

By the Time it Gets Dark by Anocha Suwichakornpong (Fiction, 106', 2016)


Tharlo by Pema Tsedan (Fiction, 123', 2015)

Court by Chaitanya Tamhane (Fiction, 116', 2014)

Open Doors Lab 2018

Afghanistan • Bangladesh • Bhutan • Myanmar •
Nepal • Pakistan • Sri Lanka

9 proactive producers / filmmakers-producers

- 
- 22 **Diana Saqeb, Mardumak Media**
Afghanistan
 - 23 **Md Arifur Rahman, Goopy Bagha Productions**
Bangladesh
 - 24 **Pema Tshering, Dakinny Productions**
Bhutan
 - 25 **Ma Aeint, Electronic Pictures**
Myanmar
 - 26 **Nawa Nidhi Dahal, Simal Cinema**
Nepal
 - 27 **Dostain Baloch & Farhad Jamali, Junz Films**
Pakistan
 - 28 **Seemab Gul, Parvaaz Pictures**
Pakistan
 - 29 **Sumudu Malalagama, Green Pictures**
Sri Lanka



Diana Saqeb

Mardumak Media

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Biography

I am an Afghan female filmmaker and producer, based in Kabul. I studied cinema at Tehran Art University, Iran. Until now and since 10 years, I have mostly produced my own documentaries and short films. I aim to contribute to local young filmmakers' work by creating international connections through my company. Currently, I am developing my debut feature *Shirin Gol*, *The Woman of Kabul* and looking to start a co-production with a European main producer.

Production Company Profile

Mardumak Media is a film production company based in Kabul, founded in 2013 by Diana Saqeb, involving professionals in different fields from art and culture. Mardumak produces documentaries and fiction films with an international flair, touching on society-, women- and human rights-related stories. Mardumak Media is also active in the local scene by organizing artistic, cultural and human rights events such as film festivals, screenings, mobile cinemas, and more.

Selected Filmography

Mohtarama by Diana Saqeb (Documentary, 60', 2013)

Dark Red by Diana Saqeb (Fiction, 20', 2016)

Twenty Five Percent by Diana Saqeb (Documentary, 37', 2008)

Line up

Shirin Gol, *The Woman of Kabul* by Diana Saqeb (Debut Feature, 75', 2020)



Md Arifur Rahman

Goopy Bagha Productions Limited

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Biography

AFA Producing fellow Arifur Rahman's debut feature *Kingdom of Clay Subjects* has World Premiered at 42nd Seattle IFF, has won the Best Film Award at 7th Chicago South Asian FF. The film has been theatrically released in Bangladesh, North America, Australia. His second film *Live from Dhaka* has played at Singapore IFF and International Film Festival of Rotterdam. He has produced shows in collaboration with BBC, Scottish Documentary Institute, Bangladesh Documentary Council, and NHK. Currently, he is developing his next feature *Paradise*.

Production Company Profile

Goopy Bagha Productions Limited is focused on making independent narrative fiction and documentary films which are specific to subcontinent society and culture, yet universally relatable. Exploring and understanding human condition and emotion is the central theme of their storytelling inspiration. Goopy Bagha has co-produced contents internationally. The company looks for young filmmakers with intrinsic cinematic style and worldview to collaborate with nationally and internationally.

Selected Filmography

Kingdom of Clay Subjects by Bijon (Fiction, 89', 2016)

Live from Dhaka by Abdullah Mohammad Saad (Fiction, 89', 2016)

Barber in Paradise by Arifur Rahman & Bijon (Documentary, 28', 2018)

Line up

Paradise by Bijon (Fiction, 100', 2020)

Seventh Heaven by Arifur Rahman, Bijon (Documentary, 80', 2020)

Memories in One Twelfth by Makoto Sugano (Documentary, 80', 2019)



Pema Tshering

Dakinny Productions

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Biography

I have been a producer at Dakinny for 8 years. I also co-founded and co-organized the only (short) film festival in Bhutan: Beskop Tshechu. After producing two shorts that circulated in international festivals, *Jamyang and the world of Bodhisattvas* will be my first feature production and overall the second animated feature from Bhutan. I am looking to improve my skills as creative producer and to gain new contacts to strengthen the small and new film community in Bhutan. I feel it is essential that our works connect with both domestic and international audiences and markets, to increase the financial viability of Bhutanese cinema and to take local voices across borders.

Production Company Profile

Dakinny Productions is a Bhutan-based production company founded by one of the first female filmmakers in the country, Dechen Roder. Licensed in 2009, it produces fiction films and documentaries, short films and other audio visual content. Dakinny recently produced *Honeygiver Among the Dogs* by Dechen Roder, which premiered at Busan IFF and later screened in Berlinale Panorama, Fribourg IFF, Hong Kong IFF, Vancouver IFF among others. Dakinny Productions continually aims to produce films which are targeted for both domestic and international audiences and markets.

Selected Filmography

Honeygiver Among the Dogs by Dechen Roder (Fiction 132', 2016)

Realm of the Gods by Pema Tshering (Fiction, 19', 2011)

Sound of Time by Pema Tshering (Fiction, 4', 2010)

Line up

Jamyang and the world of Bodhisattvas
by Pema Tshering & Chand Bhattarai (Animation, 75', 2019)

I, the Song by Dechen Roder (Fiction, 100', 2020)



Ma Aeint

Electronic Pictures

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Biography

Ma Aeint is a postgraduate in social works. She co-founded Electronic Pictures film production in Yangon in 2012. She is active in local independent film activities such as sharing of knowledge, film debates and workshops. She also participated in 2017 FAMU Summer Campus. She is currently developing as producer and co-writer the feature-length project *4 Legs*, which won the Main Jury Award 2016 at Myanmar Script Fund. She is selected to participate in 2018 Ties That Bind producers workshop for her second feature *The Other Side of the River*.

Production Company Profile

Electronic Pictures film production was founded in 2012 by Mg Sun and Ma Aeint, with the vision of producing independent films that reflect the social background of Myanmar. Together, we endeavor in making a change for new Myanmar film movements. Until now, we have produced mainly short films and animations. We co-wrote our first feature film script *4 Legs* in 2016, which is now in discussion with potential co-producers. At the same time, we are developing our second feature script *The Other Side of the River* and looking for international collaborations.

Selected Filmography

Rights by Mg Sun (Animation, 3', 2013)

Dream by Mg Sun (Fiction, 5', 2017)

O by Mg Su (Animation, 1'30", 2017)

Line up

4 Legs by Mg Sun (Fiction, 90', 2019)

The Wedding by Mg Sun (Fiction, 20', 2018)

The Other Side Of The River by Mg Sun (Fiction, 90', 2020)



Nawa Nidhi Dahal

Simal Cinema (pvt) Ltd.

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Biography

Nawa Nidhi Dahal is a Nepali film producer based in Kathmandu. He has been producing short films since 2012 and most of them have been successfully travelling in the international festival circuit. His first feature film *Ekasi Saaun* by Reason Gajurel is currently in post-production. He is currently developing Manoj Babu Pant's debut feature *Simi Nasa*. He is also one of the 21 fellows of 2018 Busan Asian Film School (AFiS)'s 6 months film producing course.

Production Company Profile

Established in 2016, Simal Cinema Pvt. Ltd. has produced various short and feature length films. Initiated by 14 young film graduates from Nepal, the production company aims to finance and support independent Nepali cinema and aspires to create a new movement in the local cinema culture. It produced Prakash Angdangbe's *Desh Khojai Jaanda* (2016), which was screened at various film festivals. Among the projects in line up for 2018/20 is Manoj Babu Pant's *Simi Nasa*.

Selected Filmography

Kafal Pakyo (Bayberries Have Ripened) by Niranjana Raj Bhetwal (Fiction, 16', 2014)

Ananta Yatra (The Eternal Journey) by Sunil Pandey (Fiction, 15', 2016)

Avashesh (The Remains) by Manoj Babu Pant (Fiction, 17', 2017)

Line up

Simi Nasa (The Land of Ancestors) by Manoj Babu Pant (Fiction, 110', 2018)

Untitled by Niranjana Raj Bhetwal (Fiction, 13', 2018)



Dostain Baloch & Farhad Jamali

Junz Films



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Biography

Dostain Baloch is a film director, producer and screenwriter. Originally from the Sistan & Baluchestan province, he lives in Karachi, Pakistan. Since graduating from IDSP film school in 2014, he has written, produced and directed 3 short films.

Farhad Jamali is a filmmaker and producer, originary of Balochistan and based in Karachi. He completed his Bachelor in Media Science (Film Major) in 2016 at SZABIST University Karachi. Since then, he has been developing several projects involving musicians and local artists.

Farhad Jamali and Dostain Baloch are a duo of filmmakers-producers aiming to tell stories from their home region Balochistan, sharing the same vision for a minimalistic and Neo-realistic kind of cinema. They are co-founders of Junz Film, where they are currently developing their first feature production: *Seer – A Wedding*.

Production Company Profile

Junz Films is an independent production house, founded in 2014 by young film graduates in Karachi. Junz Films collaborates with local artists to extract urban and rural stories that connect to the very roots of social issues in Pakistan, in a non-conventional and independent style. Our goal is to introduce Balochi Cinema to the international scene. The regional stories that we want to tell and their natural style detach from the mainstream Pakistani films, and are closer to Neo-realistic cinema. To foster them, we look at the international scene to find partners with the same mind-set.

Selected Filmography

Threads of Shame by Dostain Baloch (Fiction, Short, 2018)

Unmarked Grave by Farhad Jamali (Fiction, Short, 2018)

Don Akhbaar 2018 by Dostain Baloch (Documentary, Short, 2018)

Line up

Seer – A Wedding by Dostain Baloch, Producer Farhad Jamali, Fiction (Feature length, 2018-2021)

Gunshaam by Dostain Baloch, Producer Farhad Jamali (Fiction, Feature length, 2020-2022)

Shappuki – Little Smugglers (Working Title) by Farhad Jamali, Producer Dostain Baloch (Fiction, Feature length, 2019-2022)



Seemab Gul

Parvaaz Pictures

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Biography

Graduate from London Film School, I am an independent producer based in Karachi. My portfolio includes documentaries, short drama and hybrid films. My work has been supported by Channel 4 (UK), CBA WorldView and Arts Council England. My films have shown in HotDocs, SXSW, Sheffield Doc Fest and Geneva Contemporary Art Centre. I've participated in ESoDoc Int. (Kenya), Low Budget Film Forum (Romania) and AniDox (Denmark); I'm now looking to increase my skills in fiction films to develop my debut feature. I am also an educator, and I aim to applying the international experience I am gathering to help revive Pakistani cinema.

Production Company Profile

Parvaaz Pictures has recently been founded by Seemab Gul with a view to supporting the ongoing revival of Pakistani cinema. Inspired by social-realist and art house world cinema, we aim to make thought provoking feature films with socio-political elements from talented Pakistani auteurs. Parvaaz Pictures is developing creative documentaries and mixed genre fiction films for the local and international market. International co-productions would be ideal to make highly engaging controversial films free from censorship, with a potential to reach large audiences worldwide.

Selected Filmography

Zahida by Seemab Gul (Documentary, 29', 2018)
One Day in Whitechapel by Seemab Gul (Fiction, 13', 2015)
Looking for Raza by Seemab Gul (Documentary, 30', 2018)

Line up

Sacred Room by Seemab Gul (Fiction, 95', 2020)
A film about caste and intolerance in a religious setting in Lahore. Can a holy man be accepted by the clergy if they discover that he was born in a brothel?

Dia: Flame by Hamza Bangash (Fiction, 95', 2019)
Film explores how an online relationship can be dangerous to a young woman grappling with mental illness in Pakistan.

Bumbshells by Seemab Gul (Mockumentary, 85', 2021)
The first ever all-girl punk band cause havoc through controversial activist stunts in public spaces in Pakistan.



Sumudu Malalagama

Green Pictures (pvt) Ltd

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Biography

I am Sumudu Malalagama, producer and filmmaker from Sri Lanka. I have produced and directed films since 2009. My passion recently took me to Asian Film School Busan (course in International Film Business) and to BIFF 2017. There, my feature project *Heli; The Daughter* won a development grant for its pitch. I believe that cinema is the medium that can connect to the whole world, and together with the creatives at Green Pictures I am looking to work within the international scene. I look forward to gaining more skills and contacts to promote a more collaborative and experimental kind of cinema in Sri Lanka.

Production Company Profile

Founded in 2014, Green Pictures is an independent filmmaking circle equipped with creative souls. Our company believes in and supports independent cinema. Our films are inspired by real life. Our concepts always move forward to transcend stories and explore experimental forms of cinema, as it is our goal to defend a director's own interpretation and expression. Until now, we have produced several short films. We are constantly looking for innovative ways and collaborations to share stories to the whole world.

Selected Filmography

Silent violence by Shanaka Bodiyaaduge (Experimental, 6', 2016)
Garden of Eden by Sumudu Malalagama (Experimental, 4', 2015)
When Tharkovsky Meets Godard by Viraj Liyanarachchi (Fiction, 25', 2013)

Line up

Heli; The Daughter by Viraj Liyanarachchi (Fiction, 80', 2019)
The hidden truth about Sri Lankan women working in Middle Eastern countries.

Can't I Stay by Malaka Samith (Fiction, 80', 2020)
The story of a Communication Engineer, and of how her communications are lost in this fast-paced era.

Indonesian Puppetry by Chanaka Wijamunige
(Documentary, 60', 2011 to present)
Three generations of Indonesian puppetry artists.



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