

CENTRALE ÉLECTRIQUE  
PRÉSENTE

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**tiff**  
TROIS JOURS  
DU FILM

Locarno Festival  
Official selection

# LE FORT DES FOUS

FILM DE NARIMANE MARI



MUSIQUE ORIGINALE  
COSMIC NEMAN  
ET DR SCHÖNBERG LOS COUSINOS

PRODUCTION  
CENTRALE ÉLECTRIQUE  
BLONDE / JOON FILM / XENIA FILM  
ALLERS RETOURS FILMS

PEINTURE EL MEYA / AFFICHE FREDERIK BOIS

medienboard  
BerlinBrandenburg



KULTURSTIFTUNG  
DES  
BUNDES



Federal Foreign Office



documenta 14  
Athens / Aθήναι  
Kassel / Kassel  
2017

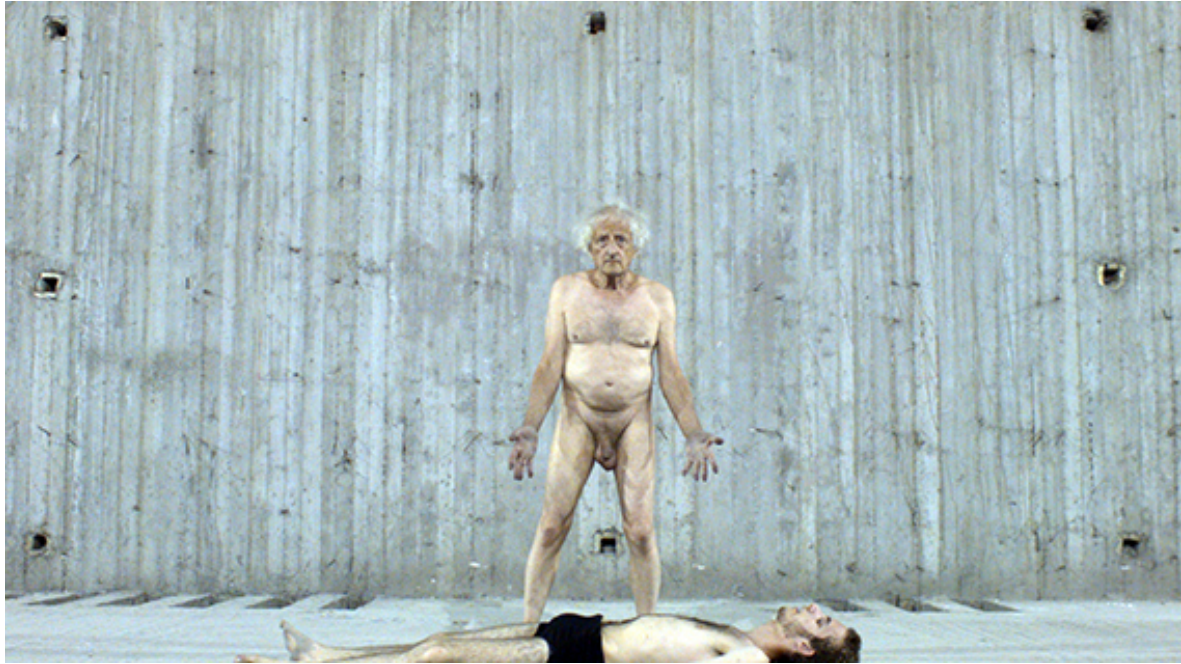


INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS



# Le fort des fous, Narimane Mari 2017

140 min. In Arabic, French, Greek/Subtitles french/english/german/greek  
Algeria/Greece/France/Germany/ Qatar



## SYNOPSIS

Departing from material records of the early colonial “scientific expeditions” and “taming campaigns” led by the French colonizers in North Africa, the story follows a community of young nomads and wanderers as they form an imagined utopian society in response to imperialist rule.

Reenactments, improvisations, and interviews performed and conducted with the inhabitants of Algiers, Kythira Island, and the Prosfygika community in Athens inform this work as instances of alternative temporality and autonomous space that reflects on the displacement and re-appropriation of the telling of history and re-activates memories as resistance strategies.

The use of reenactment and play in this instance bypasses the pitfalls of many other artistic approaches to colonial history and its material records, instead projecting into a hallucinatory realm these histories as tangible, social, and subjective realities in the present.

Narimane Mari shows us that formative experiences speak closely to emotional realities and, in the process, reveal how social, historical, and political forces form subjectivities.

**Hila Peleg**

Cosmic Neman et Doctor Schonberg LOS COUSINOS / **Musique originale**

Narimane Mari et Antonin Boisshot / **Image**

Narimane Mari et Corentin Doucet / **Editing**

Antoine Morin / **Sound design**

Benjamin Laurent La chambre rouge / Studio Orlando / **Mixing**

**Production** Centrale électrique, Marseille

**Co-productions** Blonde Fenia Cossovitsa, Athens / joon film Ann Carolin Renninger, Berlin

Xenia Film Mina Drouche, Paris / Allers Retours films, Alger

**Festivals strategies** Pascale Ramonda, Paris

Born in Algiers in 1969, Narimane Mari began her professional life in Paris, working with two consulting agencies in communication of which she is one of the co-founders: Devarrieux Villaret and Nogood industry. She worked at the creation of supplements culture for the daily newspapers and on various projects of magazines for Canal+ and France Télévision. In parallel, she participated in the development of Art Galleries and has initiated a collection of photographic books.

In 2001, she produced her first film L'ARPENTEUR by Eléonore Petit, which won the **Jean Vigo** award. Since 2006, she produces within the film production company CENTRALE ELECTRIQUE, of which she is founding member, films of directors and artists engaged in modern history.

In 2010, she founded, in Algeria ALLERS RETOURS FILMS on the same editorial line.

Her filmography as a director includes PROLOGUE (2007), a medium-length film about the artist Michel Haas (for the Museum of Solutré) who won the special prize of the Jury at the 1st International Film Festival on contemporary artists. In 2011 she directed and produced SCHOLARS IN THE LAND OF ISLAM 90 episodes of 7 minutes animation for the Algerian national television.

LOUBIA HAMRA, her first feature film of fiction received the **Grand Prix** at FID Marseille in 2013, the award **Renaud Victor** (Jury of prisoners of Baumettes), the **special mention** of Marseille Esperance, the **Grand Prix** of CPH: DOX 2013, the **Overkill Award** at Images Festivals Toronto in 2014.

LOUBIA HAMRA was selected by more than 50 festivals and shown at the Shanghai Biennale 2014, at the Centre Pompidou Paris in 2015, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul and in Reina Sofia in Madrid 2016 and at the Keimina TV program of Documenta 14 in 2017.

The same year, she produced ROUND ABOUT IN MY HEAD by Hassen Ferhani, filmed in the largest slaughterhouse in Algiers where men live and work behind closed doors to the throbbing rhythms of their tasks and dreams. The film won the **Grand Prize** at FID, the **Grand Prize** at Torino Film festival and two **Golden Tanit** at the JCC, the **public-award** at Belfort Film Festival.

In February 2015 she created the installation LA VIE COURANTE initiated with Hors Pistes at Centre Pompidou, an urban choreography on the collective intimacy. This evolutive installation will continue over several years, in several cities of the world.

In 2016, she produced ATLAL of Djamel Kerkar, a film about the wounds and ghostly ruins of terrorism in Algeria, which won the **first prize** at the FID Marseille.

**LE FORT DES FOUS**, her second feature film is currently presented at Documenta 14 as an installation and will world-premier in the internationale competition "Cinema of the present" at Locarno Filmfestival. It is also presented in Toronto, NYFF, BFI in London, RIDM in Montreal, Mar del Plata, Santiago de Chile, Sao Paulo...



Interview with Narimane Mari by Antoine Thirion

**Why this title, *Le fort des fous*?** At first, I had imagined the second part of the film to take place in the Algerian desert where a utopian society arises to oppose powers and states, and go so far as to build a fort around themselves. The idea of the fort presupposes madness and creates insanity both within and outside the fort, madness for those who take refuge in it or are excluded from it. But also the madness of hoping for a different society that will never change if one does not accept to be both inside and, at the same time, deprived of the illusory protection of the walls whatever these walls may be. That's *Le fort des fous*. But since I was unable to film in the desert, we instead went to the Greek island of Kythira which is the sort of dreamy world we want to create, outside of time and space, with the belief that we are capable of starting from scratch and rewriting History. It is an impossible and even foolish desire. They can only die from it in revenge and self-destruction. In this idealistic world with beautiful notions about community, a scapegoat ends up being designated. This is a well-known situation in Algeria or elsewhere, during civil wars one's neighbour becomes the monster to slay, know with terrorist acts one's neighbour becomes the monster to denounce, and the refugee who is capable to go through anything becomes the monster to eliminate.

**It's almost like a voice in a dream or a nightmare.**

Yes, a language to which you can't cling and can't reformulate. This first part talks about our fantasies and anxieties. It's like in my first film, *Loubia Hamra*, where the Colonel says in a terrifying voice: "You think war is over" which makes the message take on monstrous proportions because the kids in the movie do not understand this foreign language and could not understand the meaning of those words.

**The same problem seems to be reformulated three times. Was the succession of these three parts the one you had in mind at the beginning?** I have always had, more or less, this organization in mind. In the first part - as specified in the title card at the very beginning of the film - I use military mission reports that were named "Taming Campaigns." This reflects an obsolete way of thinking that says: "I bring knowledge; I bring civilization to human beings who have not discovered it on their own." This is the classical dominant thought and it moves around. For example, the courses the professor gives to his recruits where he makes them believe that they belong to an elite, while he actually prepares them for slaughter. This is the dominant thought in today's, yesterday's, and tomorrow's elite schools, where you are told that you are the best and where a sense of domination is created. One cannot apprehend life that way.

To these existing texts I added excerpts from Sarkozy's Dakar speech that he seems to bring to me on a silver platter, to make the link between different eras. We could just as well do the same with Macron and so many others... All this remains quietly as is and fighting it will bring, and already brings, a necessary and harsh conflict. I had nothing to invent here but just to stage this grotesque thought in the most grotesque manner possible.

The Colonel's voice is imaginary, as I did not want the spirit of his speech to be limited to the French language. It concerns the English, the Portuguese, as well as all dominant countries and peoples. I thought it more appropriate that one would fear and dread this voice without understanding it and that it would reveal itself in all its cruelty through reading. Additionally, the subtitles allow the viewers, wherever they come from, to read in their own language and make this story their own and not that of others.



***The first part evokes a latent iconography, that of colonial, ethnological images, whose strange, cruel and innocent beauty is well known. Were you inspired by any particular documents?***

Only one, but it says everything that needs to be said. During these colonial campaigns, the missionaries went into the desert dressed in Red, White, and Blue, with heavy weaponry that was impossible to transport in the sand. They even tried to transport a steam engine. It's like this railway project that the film mentions, it was to cross the entire desert. That was delirious. They thought nothing was impossible but found themselves facing the desert warriors who massacred them with spears in a very short time. To protect themselves; the soldiers would throw themselves on the ground and burned on the sand. They ended up having to pay folks in the local population to fight their battles for them. Still relevant today... That's what interested me in those images, the outfits, the impossible training sessions and the illusion of the overpowering capacity of nationalist colours.

***What is this place where you film the first part?*** That's De Gaulle's old place, his desk and his office during colonization. Afterwards it became a French high school and that's where I went to school. Then it became an Algerian high school. Rumor has it that now the idea is to turn it into a military establishment, to close the loop...

***Are your actors students at this high school?*** No. I put an ad on Facebook or met them in the street. We filmed after the end of the school year, during Ramadan. Fortunately I only filmed four hours a day. They were all weighed down by fasting and it was a bit hard for them but it also helped to truthfully show the inability this youth has in facing what they were learning. But we had a lot of fun to.

**What about the Colonel's character?** At first I did not know who I'd cast in this role. In fact it was very good that he was young. I asked him if he knew how to fight. He told me that he had practiced fencing and gave me a demonstration using a broom handle allowing me to see the incredible beast he could be.

**You used a poem by Antonin Artaud at the end of "Loubia Hamra." Here you end this first part with words from Pasolini.** It was about showing the double pain to which these young men who were involved in this terrible adventure were condemned. Even if at sixteen or eighteen, you can believe that you are going to discover the world and that spreading civilization is a good thing. The war will eventually kill them and Pasolini's text condemns them as well. There are only two characters that get away with it: the Captain who spews out this story and gets drunk to escape it and the photographer who transgresses the propaganda he is in charge of by creating intimacy for everybody with his selfies. I really love the scene with the selfies. I did not know how it would work in the middle of it all, but it does work. After death, life returns like a kind of dream. Is it just in their heads, does it really happen? I don't really care. The goal for me was rather to film this community that believes it can build a new History. It begins with the kisses given to the two survivors to try to wake them up, something that clearly comes from the world of tales.

**How did you bring the actors of the second part together?** Through street castings, Facebook, ads in the cafes of Exarcheia, an anarchist district of Athens. It could only be a dazzling choice. You leave from one day to the next, three weeks on an island with 40 or 50 people you don't know, who don't speak the same language as you do, you really have to be brave. I met them for 15 minutes each and we simply chose each other. Once we got on the island they lived their encounter, as they would have in the initial project in the desert. I wanted to accompany this experience; these shared moments, these exchanges, but also understood that I ran the risk that the film would be more than four hours long, which I could not afford because that's really not my subject. For me, what is at stake in the second part, beyond what binds us socially, is above all how much we need to build our dream in order to avoid conflict or to escape what ultimately needs to be met head-on.

**The film is at the same time very close to in spirit and very far in representation from the public squares movement (Occupy Movement) which went through North Africa, then Europe, until the Nuit Debout social movement in France.** I told them that when I am filming, I am filming them as individuals who have decided to be together to act on the world. As for me, I do not have a community ideal. I do not have that hope. The squat's meetings and gatherings interest me. These open meetings in which all sorts of thoughts, stories, experiences, and visions are shared and where everything is meant to be horizontal. Heval himself lives this very strongly, and I do not know how he does it. For me community is not in a fort, or in a building or in a neighbourhood. If we launch - with Heval and others - these assembly around the film, it is to invite others everywhere to open up on this shared experience and this common fight. The world is the community. That's why I also love this fight in Rojava, because it's way more than an ethnic or community story. It is that too of course, since at first it concerns the Kurdish people but it goes beyond that and that is necessary now. The Native Americans who fight against the pipelines are primarily doing it to safeguard their historical heritage, but their struggle has opened up to the world because the environment is a political issue that concerns the world.

**In a way, the film also plays with the skills of the movie viewer like in the scene where the naked man pretends to machine-gun down the audience, who collapses, rises, and applauds. This scene is the one that turns the utopia of the second part into the Direct Cinema of the third one. I imagine it was not written in the script?** No. When I went to Athens to try to make images of this human uniformity of which we were speaking, Michel was with me. On the plane, I thought this was not enough. I said to myself that we had to bump off everyone – metaphorically, that we could no longer accept our laissez-faire. I had gone up a notch and was upset by what was happening in Algeria where a whole series of arrests took place in the world of culture and media. Of people who are not heads, but mere employees. I myself was accused of being a "collaborationist" because of this film. I was only in the first part of my shoot and was a bit nauseated by art and its images. I needed to move into action. You have to know that I produce very politically engaged documentaries, but it's the movie directors who film subjects that can be extremely hard to live and share. I only accompany them. Also, in this scene, nudity

is important because it is a move into action with the most fragile thing we have, our body. I very much liked that Michel is totally at ease with the fact that he's done this scene. I am also interested by the noise itself. I like that it is those who have suffered from the violence that end up applauding him. For me, it does not so much underline Michel's act as it does the fact that they need to be destroyed in their relationship to the world in order to be able to rise again. I too need to be killed. If I walk only in one direction, I need this one way to stop, but I've always tried to self-destruct to avoid this. These are encounters that shake things up, that make us forget the principle of certitudes and reconsider our thought in constant evolution. It is collective thought that collapses in this scene. But of course, I'm not here to bump off everybody, so I bring them back to life. It is theater. It is play. It is very important for me to stay in a theatrical dimension.

***But through this gesture, is it not this theatrical mode that you dismiss, this type of reenactment on which Loubia Hamra rested, and again for the first part of *Le fort des fous*?*** I do not think my film says that this way does not work. But in *Loubia Hamra* I suffered less from the aesthetic dimension because it is very funny and suits well the dimension of childhood. The first part of *Le fort des fous* deals with a subject from the past, a factual situation, and that distance allowed me to make images. The aesthetic question arose for the latter part of the movie. At the beginning, Michel's scene was to be the end of the film. I thought it was not going to be enough, that it did not go far enough. As it is the case for many sheltered people from our European countries, violence is very difficult to bear or accept - whether it is ours, internal, or the one projected by the world - so when I make images that I share, I naturally place myself in the role of the mediator. This is less true in my social life. I also needed to be more direct here. Wanting peace is also looking at what society will come out of this peace. In truly wanting to achieve peace we end up having anyone do anything. If there are no fighters, if there is no struggle, rights will regress and capitalism will advance even further. Heval said to me: "We are not even citizens, we are subjects." We are like the king's subjects. At a given moment, beauty is a form of protection. We must not ignore chaos.

***Was the scenario close to the end result?*** Yes, but it ended with the end of the world. I had shot scenes of Shibari or Japanese bondage and staged a mise-en-scene where bodies were hung in trees, like chrysalises that had difficulty unfolding and could not free themselves from their shackles. When I discovered Shibari, it made me cry. I found it showed a dimension of what we are, the attachment we have for one another, this notion of suffering, of emotional zenith, of catharsis. It's almost mystical. I had thought of an end of the world scene where we fell back into the empty desert. The scenario was way more metaphorical, because I wasn't yet in reality, and the only person who made me want to dive into reality is Heval. There are very few people that you want to follow. The first part has not changed, with this military fort in Algeria. The second had much more dramatic construction and staging on the idea that even a harmless dream no longer belongs to you. Even your innocence no longer belongs to you, it becomes subject to speculation. I was interested in working on the fact that capitalism is so powerful that even what you are in your childhood dreams and in your most absurd ideologies becomes an economic matter and takes on an exchange value. So it changed. Reality caught up with me. I did not know at all how it would integrate with the rest, but we had to start. There was also a great deal of work on the question of the Encyclopaedia and the desire to rewrite History.

***Michel Haas mentions it at some point in the second part, saying that he had abandoned this idea of an encyclopaedia to favour the landscape which finally prevailed in contemplation and pure presence.*** Yes. The community had to burn the Encyclopaedia so as not to let others use it for bad ends. The character of the photographer was much more important, and now that he was freed from his ethnological mission, all his work was burned. I remember saying that to Heval who said to me: "I do not want to burn the encyclopaedia." Finally, it's the scenario that we burned.



## LOS COUSINOS

Is the new music project created in 2017 by the 2 french music composers/musicians El Doctor Schonberg & Cosmic Neman, members of the electronic music band Zombie Zombie. In the last 10 years they've been breaking down music styles playing with different groups such as Herman Dune, The Berg sans Nipple & Antille.

This new project is dedicated to film soundtracks only. When film director Narimane Mari asked Cosmic Neman at the end of 2016 to make the music of her new movie « Le Fort des Fous », he offered the Dr Schonberg to work with him and they formed together Los Cousinos.

Cosmic Neman 's been working with Narimane Mari several times already, making the music of her first movie « Loubia Hamra » with Etienne Jaumet as Zombie Zombie (2013), then alone for her video & music installation « La vie Courante » at Centre Pompidou(2015).

The almost 3 hours long, movie of Narimane Mari in 3 acts wasn't a piece of cake to make the music for. They had very little time to compose « Le Fort des Fous » 's soundtrack, starting working in february, the soundtrack had to be finished in April 2017 to be shown at Athens & Kassel's Documenta in April & June 2017.

Los Cousinos had planned to install their studio on a small tropical island of the carabbians far away from any big cities, but the deadline was too short, they decided to stay in their hometown in Paris and install a temporary studio at Dr Schonberg's place in the 18th : they gathered a lot of instruments in one room, analog keyboards & sequencers, drum machines, electric bass & guitar, but also acoustic instruments such as percussions, trumpet & violin. Every track of the score usually starts by a music sequence on an analog synth and then Los Cousinos add arrangements with more keyboards, percussions or strings & horns arrangements. Some tracks are more ambient using tricks like playing electric bass with a bow. What gives some singularity to Narimane's movie are those long scenes without talking but set to music, there's a strong relationship between the images and the music : the music understands the images & the images understand the music, the key of that is probably a great intuition on both sides, where improvisation is part of the mechanism of composition.

Narimane Mari gave them a few musical directions but mostly give them carte blanche trusting their approach of music, this is great but sometimes it leaves to many possibilities. When they composed the first pieces for the first act Narimane liked it right away, it gives them confidence and they wrote the music of the first act in one week only, but working for long days. For the opening scene Narimane wanted an adaptation of the french anthem « La Marseillaise » covered by Albert Ayler, Los Cousinos asked free jazz sax player Quentin Rollet to play saxophone on it, it sounded so great that Los Cousinos asked him to play more and other tracks. Also, electronic musician Clemens Hourrière (ex member of Turzi) is playing guitar, synths, & drum machines on a track in the 2<sup>nd</sup> act that brings a great atmosphere to it.

Los Cousinos made the music of the whole movie in 3 weeks, sometimes working fast is the best way. Hopefully after these first experience they'll be able to move to the carabbians to make more movie scores in better conditions !





## DOCUMENTA 14

### ***What was the project of the staging event you presented at the documenta 14 ?***

I accepted the documenta 14 because of Adam Szymczyk's idea when he said: "Learning from the south", "Learning from Athens." The curators went to live in Greece and it really changed the way they looked at the world, because one still has to move to change views. They selected my project on the basis of its original scenario, so I did nothing specifically for the documenta.

The movie version is different but it carries the same subject. I agree with this displacement principle - even if, in my case, the displacement was in the opposite direction from South to North.

But Greece remains the North's South. The question was mainly to decide how to show the film, since I did not want to have to consider the context of staging an event. It's neither my job nor is it my concern. In Kassel, Adam and Hila Peleg, my curator, told me about the Ballhaus,

a large building built for Napoleon's brother, Jerome Bonaparte. I was curious and decided to go see it.

With its unusually large chandeliers and its fake marble paintings, the building is the perfect illustration of the bourgeois dream. Everything there is outrageous, rich, and set in an immense and spotless park.

This place was the perfect setting to bring to life the contrast and the opposition of my subject matter.

I also wanted people to be seated on the ground to see the film. The way people from the South sit down on the floor is very significant too. I find that when seated on a cushion the body is not directed to face in a particular direction, you have to take responsibility for the position you want to sit in.

Sitting on a sea of cushions requires that you pay attention to your neighbour. You can't just settle down thinking that the room's seating plan is made so that the person behind you can see over your head.

You are in a way responsible for other people's eyes and aware of those around you.

Also, for some people, sitting on the floor, climbing on cushions with their shoes, causes discomfort.

What would one do with this freedom, how would one assume it?

I wanted an overly comfortable environment to see very uncomfortable things.



## HEVAL MAZLUM

Greece right now is a destroyed country with millions of poor people. The Greek state due to oppression, doesn't tolerate anyone and any action that opposes it. This is what I can say from my participation in the local-horizontal movement. The first years after december of 2008 is the Arab spring of the local area, in political terms. Anarchism has risen, a path to a libertarian world. The last years I started to seek an alternative to the capitalist exploitation and state oppression. Community is a reality that opposes fascism. Resisting the catastrophic economical systems, the repressive armies and reactionary retirement is something I do support. I find important to organize myself, so I can be part of the social solution. These political points are accompanying me till today. My intention is to share the mindset of collective way of living and the propose standing against fascism. Rojava, is a land that faced the biggest amount of tyranny in our time. I took the decision to travel there and experience first hand the social change and support it. Many people have died here, many have been tortured, many have suffered. Even if somebody isn't a deep political person, these facts can not leave him/her untouchable... I'm here to support the confederalistic system, to support the resistance. Even by living here, try to rebuilt the society, while many have left or are seeking shelter to the capitalist centers, is resistance. If people won't keep ground, then ISIS will take. ISIS is the toy-tool of the big tyrants, they used it for their interests. The women liberation here is an example, what a fighting community can achieve for itself and the society. I came to learn from them.

Heval Mazlum is simply just a character. His first name means friend in Kurmanji (one of the kurdish dialects). His second name means the oppressed one (aggrieved, inoffensive, underdog are secondary definitions). He was born in the south part of Balkans' territory called Greece, and more specifically at the greek, bulgarian and turkish triangle. He is involved energetically from a young age into the anarchist revolutionary movement, through his participation in collectives, social centers and social, class, political struggles. He denied to serve the greek national state army because of/claiming characteriological disorders. He studied greek civilisation and worked until now in different technical works as a skilled or unskilled worker. He identifies himself as a worker for a omnipotent justice, equality and freedom. At 2015 he travelled in Rojava-Kurdistan as a solidarity fighter beside the kurdish movement for communalistic confederalism, against the ISIS fascist gangs and the worldwide imperialist centers that breded him.



## THE COMMUNITY & THE OCCUPIED PROSFYGIKA

([Sy.Ka.Pro.](#)) (2011-2017)

**MEMORY** We found ourselves in a terrain of social desolation, needing the basics for survival, in conditions dominated by the experiences of displacement and of war, exploitation, individualization, and fragmentation. The establishment and organization of the Alexandras Avenue Prosfygika community struggle (2011-12) came at a time of renewal in the movement, heightened resistance actions, and mass societal participation across the entire activist arena.

Since then (2010-2011), the first attempts at collective organization by the neighbourhood squatters focused mainly on objective problems as opportunities rather than barriers, through employing the tools of equality, freedom, and solidarity. In the beginning, we concentrated on the issues of horizontality, self-organization, community autonomy, communal ownership and equality. We practice this first as an assembly, with the goal to disseminate the project conceptually and dialectically throughout the neighbourhood. Followed by a growing quantitative and qualitative support to the neighbourhood during the period of economic crisis and refugee arrivals, and the organization of the Community\*\* and the Assembly of Prosfygika Squats. The situation has changed radically since 2013, significant progress has been made in every aspect of daily life, as well as the overall level of self-organization in the Prosfygika.

**PRESENT** There has been a substantial growth and great qualitative leaps in the organization of the community struggle. The self-organised structures and infrastructures were strengthened over the years. The operating structures include a bakery, a children's centre & learning structure, a health structure, a collective kitchen and skipping. There are also two working groups, the working group, and the infrastructure group crucial to the long term survival and viability of the community. We have united in action and transformed the fragmented neighbourhood into a united community of struggle. If anything we can be sure of, that we are in effect erasing the designs of the state, and capital. These plans designed to plunder the physical territory, its people, and the memory of resistance and liberation contained in the historical Alexandros Avenue Prosfygika neighbourhood. Today, we are continuing to

fight on a field of primary needs and problems. The deep financial and social crisis, its physical and psychological effects on the exploited local populations and streams of migrants and refugees, and the effect of the ruling parties on the oppressed social body, continue to harm our project of autonomy.

Suppression & Defense of the Alexandras Avenue Prosfygika Neighborhood Squats

Prosfygika was transferred from the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (TAIPED) to the Attica Regional Government.

The suppression towards Prosfygika neighborhood squats and its community struggle has since become more prevalent. This increased suppression is demonstrable is evident when looking at the proclamations of 'development and revitalization' designed to respond to the artificial needs, instead of the real needs, of the Prosfygika community.

The development proposals include the construction of a Refugees Museum, a museum in memory of the first residents (from Asia-Minor 1930s), with additional student dormitories, and shelters for the homeless and new refugees. These proposals as a response to the social concerns of poverty and intolerance are an obvious ploy, given that the Prosfygika neighborhood is already inhabited by people. What museum could portray the refugee problem accurately when the very same refugees and migrants inhabiting and struggling in the neighborhood trace their everyday reality to the history of the Prosfygika neighborhood? The state is planning a museum-mausoleum to bury the memories and histories of wars that have in fact never ended. In addition, the police suppression and fascists are attempting to weaken the neighborhood. Their objective being to privatize the political control and decisions over the neighborhood. The on-going Golden Dawn trials (taking place once a week) at the Supreme Court of Athens, a neighbor of Prosfygika, pose a permanent threat to the community.

Despite its different faces – progressive, authoritarian, compromising – this suppression plunders the neighborhood of the oppressed of its land and vigor at every turn.

## **ABOUT PROSFYGIKA WITH NARIMANE MARI**

*And just before the shooting in Kithyra, you had this encounter in Athens...*

Yes in a totally unexpected way. I wanted to film inside the walls of an old fort but it would have cost 4000 Euros which I certainly did not have, especially to pay for walls.

Then, Fenia Cossovitsa - my Greek producer - told me that she knew a place with old walls. She took me to this truly astonishing squat. Here was, on the one hand, this idealistic community that we were to create on the island with an idealism that was completely out of reality, and, on the other hand there was this idealistic community of squatters, totally committed to reality.

I no longer had to invent them and simply could not let this pass. There are however more complex issues. Namely that some of the occupants of this squat are so actively opposed to the system and are wanted by the police and the secret service.

This meant I could not film without consequences. In addition to this I took part in several activities of the squat and found out that it was finally not community life, once again, that took over even if they do consider it in an extremely intelligent way.

Responsible human involvement is exhausting.

A one-hour encounter with Heval changed the course of the film.

The squat is caught between a courthouse, a huge police station, and two hospitals: a very strategic and coveted place in Athens called the Prosfygika District.

It was built in the 1920s to host the first waves of migrants and has a very particular architecture. The city wanted to demolish it for the Olympics but a lot of people, architects, intellectuals, and artists fought against it, made a lot of noise and stopped the destruction project for a time.

Now they want to turn it into a Museum of Immigration. More nobler and disgusting.

Inside the squat there are generations of former migrants and their descendants, squatters who got here because of the hell created by the economic crisis, foreigners, even some from Harvard, Japan, Venezuela, from all over and in recent years new refugees. The squat has replaced the State that is unable to welcome them or provide them with a role in society and restore their dignity.

In my film, several languages are spoken and everyone takes the time to listen to the others and to translate. The number of languages shared during the Prosfygika meetings is just enormous. People speak Urdu that's translated into Farsi, from Farsi someone translates into Greek, from Greek into Turkish, then from Turkish into Arabic, from Arabic into English, from English into Spanish, from Spanish into French. This goes on for hours and is magic.

Whatever the subject at hand, from who will be responsible for baking bread for the week, or handling electricity and water cuts in one of the apartments, or dealing with immigration services raids, to the fascists who are considering an attack for some reason or another, from an ongoing political trial, or the organization of classes for children, or a woman who does not speak Greek and whose child is seriously ill, to a lost dog found in the squat, these subjects and all the answers that are given by those present are somehow translated to be understood and shared by all. It is human rehabilitation at play.

When I met Heval, it became clear to me that I could not keep him out of the film and I also realized that even I could no longer stand outside of it all. I can accept my role as mediator, even as maker of beautiful pictures, but at some point one gets fed up. I no longer wanted to stage or direct – even if I already don't do it much. We are all in the frame, all in the same story, even if it was not easy to enter the story to start with. While I'm behind the camera filming the first minute Heval says to me: "But who am I talking to? If I speak to you, you must be here, facing me. He was right. So I went in but without any questions. I did not want to ask any. It was not my concerns that needed answers but his. It was up to him to convey his struggle. He was doing it towards the outside world for the first time. I held back my little curiosity for a long time and did not want to intervene but had to do it a few times. Especially when he said "I want a war". I wanted to remove any doubt - even my own - that we were in front of a guy who loves violence and expresses it like a little boy would. I said: "You want to win this war?" He replied that this is not about him, that it's a bad question and goes on to add: "What I want is not what I hope." This said it all.

And then, one morning around 6:00 AM I witnessed a raid by the cops, Special Forces, who wanted to force open this space by taking advantage of the ongoing trial of fascists that was taking place at the courthouse next door. They beat the crap out of a guy who had done nothing, except stand in front of them, motionless, in defiant opposition. I tried to stop them with camera on my back and screamed in French, acting like a foreign journalist. That didn't work. I was an eyewitness against them and that's how I met Annie, who is the political and legal advisor for many of activists, a very combative and classy woman. She agreed to be in the film. It's amusing because there are spectators who are completely unreceptive to Heval, and who are in fact very scared of him. Annie on the other hand reassures them, while she has exactly the same message as Heval's. A question of social class I guess. It's somewhere the principle of the film: speak in many places.

***As the film progresses, the outside world becomes less and less present. With Heval, you do not make presentations. He is a character we directly meet through his thought.***

I did not want to say – like I did in the first part of the movie with the Colonel's language - that the strength of his activism, his commitment, his clairvoyance, his dazzling political thought, could come from a specific place. What interests me in Heval is that he is fully conscious of the fact that he embodies the problems of the current system for people no matter where they come from. What he says is valid everywhere, not just for Greece. It's valid for everything that is happening to us. In France, we've already seen it and will see even more of it with this new government. We will lose all the social thought of the world. There are, of course, pockets of resistance.

But capitalism is eating what's left of our humanity, even if Greece is a blatant model of capitalist perversity. So I did not want to connect Heval with Annie. They are the same people. Anchoring them each in their context would have meant that they each belonged to a separate reality.

From this vantage point, the character of the translator has a crucial role. The manner in which Heval or Annie sometimes go over the translation and speak directly to the camera in English illustrates this necessity, this urgency of which you speak, of getting out of the particular to reach the general.

Other voices do tell something essential. There is also in the act of translating the responsibility to carry, to convey the word of others. Making the effort to wait for information is very important. I very much like the fact that we must take the time to decipher each word, mistakes included, and cling to this concentration because those words deserves it. Today, the level of listening to others is at an all time low. People are no longer connected to one another and that is very difficult. I know it is hard for the viewer to have to go through the exercise of having to wait for information but I find it extraordinarily beautiful. I experienced it during their meetings. Everyone speaks in their own language and all the other languages follow in a domino effect.

## **ABOUT ROJAVA**

### **Dilar Dirik: “Radical Democracy: The First Line against Fascism”**

<https://tragedy-of-revolution.complit.lsa.umich.edu/2017/04/13/dilar-dirik-radical-democracy-the-first-line-against-fascism/>



Peinture réalisée pour l'affiche du film

## MAYA BENCHIKH EL FEGOUN – EL MEYA

Society interests me, especially mine. Its rites, traditions and myths create my body language and it is these gestures that give birth to my paintings. It is not sociology or anthropology; it's a world that's alive with beings who are not ashamed of being what they are. The body is very important and painting at human scale too. I like people to be on an equal footing with my characters who allow them to be approached. My treatment of the flesh comes from there. Pink, white, brown, heavy bodies set in a defined space appear in front of us in a clear, direct, strong and visceral way. Narimane shares freedom with me, that of narrative and gestures that do not care about the limits of the world. With reality, imagination, our dreams and nightmares, fear and insolence acting as forms of courage. It was simple for me to enter the universe of Le fort des fous because I was already in it.

<https://benchikhmaya.wixsite.com/elmeya/oumlil>

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## Co-Productions

**Blonde**, Greece, is a company that feeds on its mixture of internationally creative input. It has produced numerous Greek and international awarded feature films, covered some of the biggest events in Greece and abroad, collaborated with distinguished TV channels and has created various commercials and video content. Fenia Cossovitsa is an acclaimed film producer with many years of experience in the development, shooting and post-production of feature films, documentaries, TV programs and other audiovisual projects with a background of over 20 Greek and international feature films and documentaries in her resumé, working with such internationally acclaimed filmmakers as Peter Bogdanovic, Jonathan Nossiter and Tony Gatlif. Recent works and awards: Fipresci Award at Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2015 for the film *Blind Sun*, a feature film by Joyce A. Nashawati, *Voir du Pays* a feature film by Delphine and Muriel Coulin, Festival de Cannes 2016 – Official Selection - *Un Certain Regard* - Best Screenplay Award. Audience awards at Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2016 for the feature films *I still hide to smoke* by Rayhana and *The Other me* by Sotiris Tsafoulias. Her latest coproductions, *DJAM* by Tony Gatlif premiered in Festival de Cannes 2017. [www.blonde.gr](http://www.blonde.gr)

**joon film**, Germany, is a film production company and platform for artistic collaborations. Its approach is finding ways of producing films and making film works visible which are situated outside traditional markets and hierarchies — not perceiving film so much as a strongly self-contained discipline within its own medium but exploring the boundaries between film and print, trespassing into other forms of expression like literature, graphic art or print-making. Ann Carolin Renninger is the founder of joon film. She lives and works in Berlin and Glücksburg. Besides her commitment for the artistic film at joon film she works as a producer at zero one film, Berlin. She was a jury member at various film festivals and art stipend programs. In 2016 she received an Art scholarship Film/Video Berliner Senat. Her first film *'From a Year of Non-Events'*, co-directed with René Frölke, premiered at Forum Berlinale in 2017. [www.joonfilm.de](http://www.joonfilm.de)

**Xenia Films**, France, is a production company created by Mina Driouche in order to accompany directors with a singular artistic approach. Mina has also been the producer of two feature films with Les films de Françoise, a company in which she is associated with Valérie Donzelli : Julia Kowalski's first feature film : *Crache Cœur* (*Raging Rose*, a french-polish coproduction, Acid Cannes 2015) and Gilles Marchand's *Dans la forêt* (*Into the forest*, a french-sweedish co-production, Locarno 2016).



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