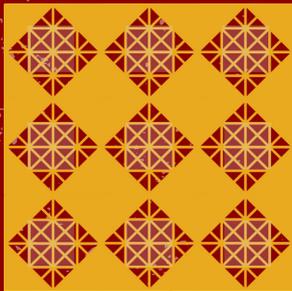




MENA Arts UK presents



#WeAreMENA Film Launch



ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



FILM+TV
CHARITY

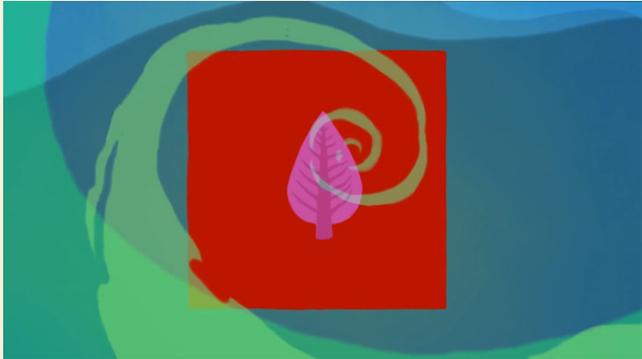
who we are

MENA Arts UK is an arts organisation for UK-based professionals working in the live and recorded arts who have a connection to the Middle East, North Africa and surrounding areas.

In December 2020, we launched a free online directory for MENA+ talent. We also launched a competition to commission eight MENA+ artists to capture their work on film.

Over the past two months, our commissioned artists have been developing their films. Their challenge was to create a one-minute piece responding to the question: How should the MENA+ arts community celebrate what we have in common? The result is eight enchanting, joyful and thought-provoking films spanning animation, music, poetry, dance, installation and comedy.

the films



A CUBE IN LOVE

Majid Adin

A Cube In Love tells a symbolic story of a journey from ancient wisdom to love, from love to truth, and truth to creation.



MRS EL ARABY

May Ziadé

Mrs El Araby explores the restricted space within which Arab women are allowed to exist in white Western media.



INTIMATE BIRTHS

Bint Mbareh

Mushrooms facilitate death in many ecosystems: they ensure death is a transformation rather than an ending....



KISS BETWEEN OUR BORDERS

Amina Atiq

A metaphorical & historical love story between an Ethiopian coffee plant & a Yemeni farmer. Home lives between our walls & it never left - we left home.

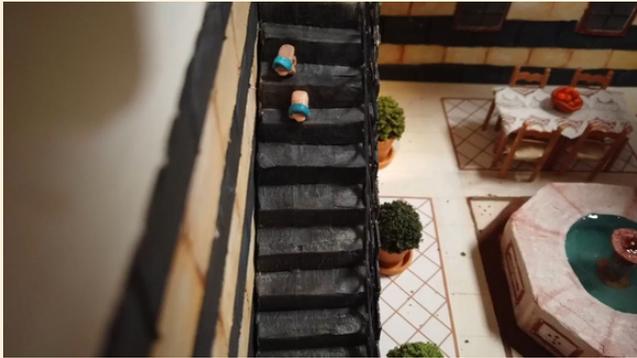
the films



UNVEIL YOUR EYES

Maral Mamaghanizadeh

An expression of Maral's experience as a Deaf refugee. Her life & home town of Birmingham through the lens of her Middle Eastern upbringing.



THIRD CULTURE GLITCH

Jida Akil

An interpretation of reconnecting with cultural roots as a foreigner to one's heritage.



DARBOUKA

Nooriyah Qais

A physical conversation between three MENA dancers who're geographically separate yet connected by the beat of the drums.



THE ART OF UPRISING

Peyvand Sadeghian

The Art of Uprising is a celebration of the ability amongst diasporic artists to imagine different futures.

the winners



Nooriyah Qais

Nooriyah is a DJ, presenter and filmmaker. As a DJ, she is known for playing upbeat popular records infused with Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) sounds, paying homage to her heritage. She is currently a MENA specialist resident at Foundation FM and Plus 1 Radio. Nooriyah has occupied many London stages including: *The National Theatre*, *The V&A Museum*, and numerous clubs. She has also presented/played for *Rinse FM*, *Westside Radio*, *Reprezent*, *Balamii* and *BBC Studios*. Nooriyah is now forging her way as an international DJ, having made her New York and Rotterdam debuts. As a filmmaker, she explores the themes of home, culture and gender with films showcased at the *V&A Museum*, *Liverpool Arab Arts festival* and more.



Amina Atiq

Amina is a Yemeni - Scouse writer, performance artist, facilitator & activist. She was awarded the *Liverpool John Moore's University Citizenship award* for her active & community engagement work, awarded the best North West volunteer by *Human Appeal*, a Young Associate for *Curious Minds* and *BBC Words First Finalist 2019*. Amina is currently writing her first one-woman show, *Broken Biscuits* to explore her grand-mothers 1970s Yemeni - Scouse household to untangle what it means to be British. In 2020 she produced her first documentary, *Unheard Voices*, commissioned by *DadaFest* capturing the stories of Yemeni shopkeepers in Liverpool. Currently a remote writer in residence with *Queensland Poetry Festival* and *Metal Southend*.

the winners



Majid Adin

Majid studied fine art and animation in Iran, where he was arrested because of the political nature of his work. He fled his country and arrived in the UK in 2016.

He now lives in London and works as an artist.

He won a prestigious competition to create the official music video for Sir Elton John's 'Rocket Man'. He has since made a number of other animated short films and exhibited work at the Venice Biennale (2019) and the House of Illustration. Majid is a Trustee on the Board of *Good Chance Theatre*. He is currently working on his first graphic novel, *'Hamid and Shakespeare'* which will be published in April 2021.



May Ziadé

May is a French-Lebanese writer and filmmaker whose work explores the emotional and physical unfoldings of cultural conformity. She has written stories that have been adapted into short films and comics.

Before swerving towards a career in the arts, May graduated from a MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology and worked as a researcher on issues of temporality and space, and subaltern Feminist histories. Since then, she's worked as a producer's assistant in film.

She is currently working on developing her first fiction short film that deals with the early Arab feminist scene in 1920s Cairo.

the winners



Bint Mbareh



Jida Akil

Bint Mbareh is a first-time filmmaker with experience in television production, songwriting and an interest in sound. Her most recent research was an exploration of how rain-summoning song and ritual in Palestine acted and may continue to act as a ritual of time-bending. Control of the notion of progress is essential to Israel's global image, so the artist challenges this notion by repurposing a Palestinian woman's pleasure - rain-summoning - as a means of determining climate, therefore time - what time of year, as a starting point. Several installations and performances down the line, the singer was offered the MENA Arts UK grant to explore death with the Palestinian sonic and musical tradition in mind.

Jida Akil is a Syrian/Lebanese early-career theatre designer currently based between London & Cyprus.

She designs set & costume for both theatre and dance with a design-led devising approach.

The themes of her work often revolve around political and socio-economic issues which also explore dramaturgy inspired by lived experience.

Jida is currently completing her bachelor's degree in Performance Design at Central Saint Martins.

the winners



**Maral
Mamaghanizadeh**



Peyvand Sadeghian

Maral is a Deaf Iranian artist. Her work explores the barriers she encounters in everyday life, being Deaf, female and a refugee. Maral communicates through her artworks, combining feminism and cultural politics. Her wearable sculptures, jewellery, and immersive installations tell a story; as an artist and narrator, she depicts the wearer's character through the objects she creates.

In 2017, Maral became a political refugee as her work, 'The Politics of Voice; The Tale of Tresses' directly challenged the patriarchal society in Iran. Her work continues to challenge stereotypes, break boundaries and open people's hearts and minds.

Peyvand is an Actor, Puppeteer and Theatre Maker born, bred and based in London to Iranian and Chinese parents. Although she has experience in front of the screen, this will be her first time making a short film.

Recent credits include: **DUAL دوگانه** (Vault Festival Show of the Week 2020), **Rich Kids: A History of Shopping Malls in Tehran** (Fringe First 2019 & Sundance Festival), **Myths and Adventures from Ancient Greece** by Hannah Khalil (Watermans Arts Centre).

Upcoming: **Pirates** by Reggie Yates, (due for release this year)

thank you

We are so grateful that our competition was supported by Arts Council England and the Film and TV Charity.

Credits: Competition Producer - Sepy Baghaei; Events Producer - Ramzi DeHani; Translators - Shifa Askari, Lara Sawalha, Homa Shamehvand, Farokh Soltani; Editor - Sarah Agha; and Captioner - Laila Alj; Press/PR - Mary Rahman; Evaluator - Gregory Nash.

A big thank you to the judges who worked through all of the brilliant applications & chose our final 8 commissions: Hannah Khalil, Sabrina Mahfouz, Saeed Taji Farouky & Sepy Baghaei.

Special thanks to Abid Hussain - Director, Diversity at Arts Council England.

A special mention to our steering group who keep MENA Arts up & running: Arian Nik, Jessie Bedrossian, Kerry Kyriacos Michael, Laila Alj, Lanna Joffrey, Laura Hanna, Lara Sawalha, Nadia Emam, Penny Babakhani, Philip Arditti, Ramzi DeHani, Sepy Baghaei & Shireen Farkhoy.

If you'd like to support our work & make a donation however big or small - [click here](#)

Photographer credits: *Robin Clewley, Ray Roberts*

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