

Borderlands: Turkish-Armenian-Greek Film Festival

April 30-May 6, 2004

For thousands of years the eastern Mediterranean has been the meeting place of different peoples and home to a panoply of religions, cultures, and languages. Moments of conflict were interspersed with long periods of coexistence. Only beginning with the age of nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century did some movements assert that states should represent one particular group. The result was an intensification of ethnic conflict manifested in so-called population “exchanges”; the forced deportation of entire communities—Muslim, Christian, and Jewish; and the genocide of Armenians. Yet despite this troubled history there remain hopeful examples of coexistence.

“Borderlands” brings together exciting and engaging films produced in a variety of countries and languages by directors of Turkish, Armenian, and Greek background. The films deal with the burning theme of coexistence: amid a history and a present marked by severe conflict as well as mutual coexistence, how do people of different cultures live side-by-side? How does the memory of past events continue to shape people’s lives today?

SPECIAL EVENTS

Ohanessian Lecture and Film Festival Opening Reception **“Exploring the Reality of Living Together in Turkey”**

Friday, April 30, 9:15 PM—location: Bell Museum of Natural History (10 Church St. SE, Minneapolis)

(The lecture will be preceded by a showing of the film)



Etyen Mahçupyan is one of Turkey’s best-known journalists and intellectuals. He writes political columns for several leading newspapers and was editor of *Toplumcu Düşün*. Mahçupyan has degrees in chemical engineering and business administration and has taught political science at Ankara University. He is the author of nine books, including *Ideologies and Modernity*, *From the Ottomans to Postmodernity*, and *Centralism in Turkey: State and Religion*. Alongside his career in journalism, Mahçupyan is actively involved in Turkey’s film industry. He wrote the screenplay for

“Mrs. Salkim’s Diamonds,” the festival’s lead film.

Film Festival Closing Night Panel Discussion and Reception **“Film—Politics—Culture”**

Discussion with Etyen Mahçupyan (screenwriter), Philippe Videlier (French intellectual historian), and Theofanis Stavrou (Russian and Greek cultural historian).

Thursday, May 6, 9:15 PM—location: Bell Museum of Natural History (10 Church St. SE, Minneapolis)

(The panel discussion will be preceded by the showing of Sinan Çetin's "Propaganda")

SCHEDULE

FILM DESCRIPTIONS

SINASOS

Greece 1997 / 62m / English subtitles

Director: Timon Koulmassis, Iro Siafliaki

Ever since antiquity, the Greek people lived on both shores of the Aegean Sea. In 1923, following the Greek-Turkish war and in the name of the idea of nationhood, the first organized "ethnic cleansing" of the 20th century was carried out with the consent of the Great Powers. One and half million Greeks left Turkey under the most inhuman conditions, and 400,000 Turks were forced to leave Greece. Through the story of the village of Sinassos, its present-day Turkish inhabitants and the testimony of the last Greeks to live through this tragedy, as well as that of their descendants, this film reconstructs the memory of the daily life of the two nations that despite their differences lived side by side for centuries in Asia Minor until their violent separation.

JEWS OF ARMENIA

USA 2001 / 25m / English

Director: Vartan Akchyan

Documenting for the first time the existence of the Jewish community in Armenia, the film presents a journey never taken before. Breaking myths about the relations between Jews and Armenians and discovering new realities in the past and the present, this documentary looks at the traces of a 13th-century Jewish community of Armenia; shows the perseverance of a tiny, yet devoted group of Subbotniks on the shores of Lake Sevan; and follows the personal journeys of the younger generations of Jews of Armenia. It is a story about the harmonious and sincere coexistence of two cultures that at times had to find refuge in each other's lands.

MRS. SALKIM'S DIAMONDS

Turkey 1999 / 137m / English subtitles

Director: Tomris Giritlioglu

Cast: Zuhay Olcay, Hülya Avsar, Ugur Polat

Nimet and Durmufl move from Nigde to Istanbul where they stay with Durmufl's old friend Bekir, who finds him a job as a porter. But Durmufl soon becomes dissatisfied with his lowly position and becomes obsessed with the wealth of Mr Halit, the owner of the building where he works. He even covets Halit's mistress Nefise. But then a new property tax levied on non-muslims living in Turkey means that Mr Halit has to get rid of his immediate possessions in order to be able to pay the taxes for his foreign bride Nora. Eventually this infamous Property Tax will come to affect everyone...

BACK TO ARARAT

Sweden 1988 / 100m / English subtitles
Director: Peã Holmqvist

The only documentary film available on this subject, this movie is a powerful reminder of a long-suppressed global injustice. Director Peã Holmqvist takes the viewer on a journey to Anatolia where the Armenian Genocide happened, to Syria and Lebanon where refugees came first, and finally to France and the United States where survivors tried to build a new life.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

Turkey 61m / English subtitles
Director: Kazim Öz
Cast: Feyyaz Duman, Nazmi Qyryx

Set against the backdrop of the Kurds' 15-year struggle for independence, this is an intense film about the devastating effect of the war. Faruk and Ali meet on the bus. They are about the same age, but have very different aims: Faruk is going to do Turkish military service; Ali is on his way to the mountains to join the Kurdish rebels. Not knowing each other's backgrounds, a temporary but genuine friendship develops during the 20-hour bus ride. Months later they bump into each other again during a bloody battle between the army and the rebels...

THE AX

Turkey 1999 / 27m / English subtitles
Director: Kazim Öz
Cast: Hikmet Karagöz

The recipient of numerous prizes at European film festivals, *The Ax* is a controversial short that was banned by the Turkish authorities. The story centers on the old Kurd Zelo whose village has just been cleared by Turkish troops. Left behind alone, Zelo faces his memories.

RAVISHED ARMENIA

USA 1919 / 15m fragment / silent

Director: Oscar Apfel

Cast: Aurora Mardiganian, Irving Cummings, Anna Q. Wilson, Henry Morgenthau

Based on the eponymous memoir by Aurora Mardiganian, a survivor of the Armenian genocide, and adapted to the screen by Hollywood screenwriter Harvey Gates, *Ravished Armenia: The Story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Christian Girl, Who Lived Through the Great Massacres* was shot in 1919. Mardiganian and American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau play themselves. The film was shown in the USA, Mexico, Cuba, Great Britain, and France. This 15-minute fragment was recently found in France and is the only piece left of Mardiganian's attempt to tell the story of Armenians' persecution also on film.

ARARAT

Canada 2002/ 115 m

Director: Atom Egoyan

Cast: David Alpay, Arsinée Khanjian

A film within a film, *Ararat* is Atom Egoyan's most provocative film to date. It is a story about truth and denial—on both an intimate and a grand scale. The estranged members of a contemporary Armenian family are faced both with Turkey's denial of their catastrophic past and with their own complicated present: A mother who only wants peace, a young woman who wants nothing but retribution, and a young man whose journey to uncover his roots is jeopardizing his future.

BORDERLINE

Greece 1995 / 81m / English subtitles

Director: Panos Karkanevatos

Cast: Aris Lebesopoulos, Christos Klavrouzos

Widely acclaimed as one of the best films to emerge from Greece in many years, *Borderline* has played to critical raves at several international festivals. *Borderline* centers on two brothers, Stelios and Yannis. The impulsive Stelios skips their small town, deserts from the army, and is thought dead until Yannis, now a city cop, recognizes his name on the papers of an illegal immigrant seaman. He begins a search for his lost brother that takes him across many borders: the line between past and present, between Greece and its neighboring countries, between one identity and another.

LANDSCAPE IN THE MIST

Greece 1988/ 125 m/ English subtitles

Director: Theo Angelopoulos
Cast: Tania Palaiologou, Aliko Georgouli

The winner of Venice's Silver Lion Award, Theo Angelopoulos's "Landscape in the Mist" is the beautifully filmed odyssey of two children. On a trek from Greece to Germany, in search of their unknown father, 14-year-old Voula (Tania Palaiologou) and her 5-year-old brother Alexander (Michalis Zeke) find themselves on an unfamiliar street corner. Snow has been falling. Celebratory music—accordion and voices—can be heard from a restaurant. As the children watch, a bride in white runs sobbing from the party... Brilliantly choreographed and full of human tableaux, this film provides a rich look into Greek life.

PROPAGANDA

Turkey 1999 / 120m / English subtitles
Director: Sinan Cetin

Loosely based on a true story, this satire spins a tale of turmoil and hilarity that engulfs a Turkish village on the Syrian border. When the new customs official Mehdi appointed by the central government arrives, he discovers that the border, previously only loosely defined, is supposed cut the village in half. Mehdi plunges ahead with his bureaucratic tasks, unable to comprehend their meaning, justification or potential consequences... Populated by an appealing cast led by two well-aged superstars of Turkish comedy, Cetin's film also boasts great camera work with extensive wide-angle shots that capture the scenic backdrop of the Central Anatolian plain (standing in for the border region).

"Borderlands" is presented by the Arsham and Charlotte Ohanessian Chair in the College of Liberal Arts, the Program for Modern Greek Studies, and the Center for German and European Studies of the University of Minnesota, in association with Minnesota Film Arts. It is part of "Coexistence," a large outdoor public art exhibit sponsored by the University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts—May 1 - June 12, 2004 (Minneapolis), and June 14 - July 6, 2004 (St. Paul)—and of the Borderlands project (<http://igs.cla.umn.edu/borderlands.htm>) of the University's Institute for Global Studies. For details on Coexistence see www.chgs.umn.edu/coexistence.

All films will be screened at the Bell Auditorium, 17th and University Avenues SE, University of Minnesota. See <http://www.mnfilmarts.org/?venue=2&page=5> for parking info and directions.

Admission: \$6 general public, \$5 students/seniors, \$4 MN Film Arts members.

coexistence

In Minneapolis: May 1 – June 12
Hennepin County Government Center

In St. Paul: June 14 – July 6
Rice Park