

MAG

MAGAZINE

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS**

*INTERVIEW WITH THE
NUDE PHOTOGRAPHER
ELLA ELIJAH*

**PROMISING
ARTISTS**

**LA FEMME IFF 11TH
ANNIVERSAARY IN CANNE**

**6TH EDITION
2023**

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7TH EDITION

Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois opens a new branch in NEW YORK

David Fleiss along with his partner Sylvain Rouillon, Georges-Philippe Vallois, Nathalie Vallois and their partner Marianne Le Métayer announced the opening of their New York joint space. Located in the historically renowned building 1018 Madison Avenue, the two galleries will be sharing a two floors space (5th and 6th floor) operated by Senior Director Natalia Sacasa and Junior Director Cassie Legg. Longtime friendship and mutual respect made this association possible: sharing a space, a team, a website (www.fleiss-vallois.com) while keeping their own identity and program.

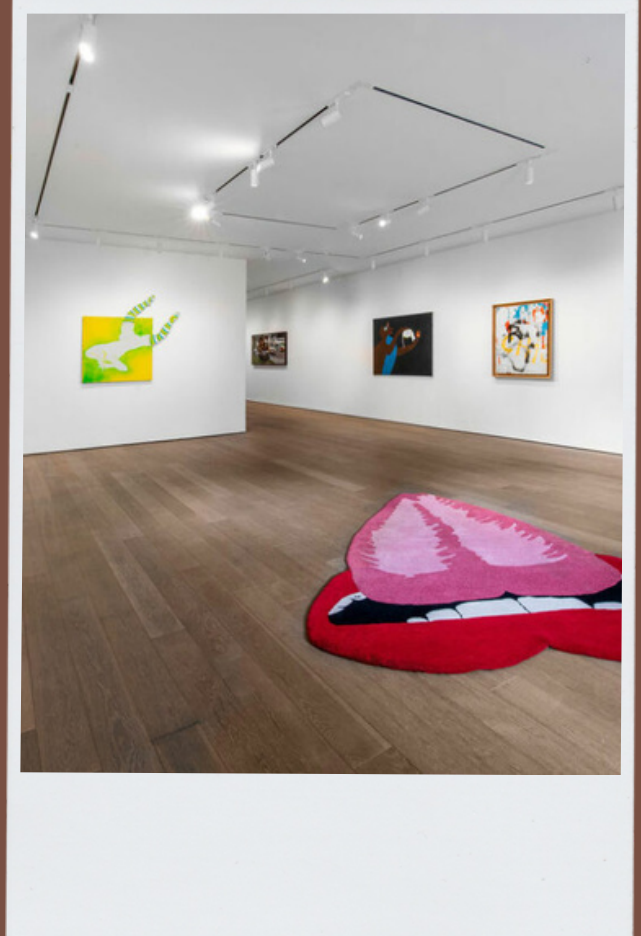


Featuring a double exhibition program presenting some of the most important French and International avant-gardes movements such as DADA, Surrealism and other Avant-Gardes (for Galerie 1900-2000) or Nouveau Réalisme, the 60s and 70s (for Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois). Paris based galleries, Galerie 1900-2000 and Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois will bring more than 40 years of experience promoting internationally renowned artists.

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For over 30 years, Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois has established a program of internationally renowned artists by bringing together contemporary art and historical french movements of the 1960s - "Nouveau Réalisme" and other French avant-garde movements. Beyond orchestrating major historical exhibitions the gallery is renowned for its reference publications and represents the estates of Jacques Villeglé, Jean Tinguely, and Niki de Saint Phalle.



The gallery has also organized the first solo shows in Paris of Californian artists such as Paul McCarthy (1994), Richard Jackson (2002), Martin Kersels (1999). More recently, the gallery has widened its horizon to American Photorealism and presented surveys of John DeAndrea and Robert Cottingham's work. International artists such as Henrique Oliveira (Brazil), Alain Bublex (France), Tomi Ungerer (France) or Zhenya Machneva (Russia), are represented and regularly exhibited by the gallery.

Interview with the international top model “Sensemielja Sumter”

Thank you for being with us; tell us about yourself.

My name is Sensemielja Sumter, I am 33 years old and I am from Amsterdam. I am an international top model, entrepreneur and catwalk coach. I am crazy about fashion. It is an everyday thing for me. In 2018 I was one of the finalists in the Miss Amsterdam pageant. This was an amazing journey, followed by my winning the title of Miss Social Media 2018. My life was forever changed after my first international runway show.



It was still hard in the beginning of my modeling career; I had a few people that believed in my hard work, but not the right ones. I had to work 10 times harder than others, especially as a young black model, but I did it and I never gave up. So many doors closed in my face but also so many other doors opened for me. I met new people and did more shows and video and photo shoots. The right ones started to recognize me and give me opportunities.

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I am the proud founder and owner of Diversity Fashion Week. I do this with my life partner Daisy van der veen. Unfortunately we still see divisions among people. Being unique and different makes you stand out. That's what we want to show the world, together: Fashion is for everybody; it doesn't matter if you're black, white, gay, straight, if you have a disability, if you come from another country or speak a different language. We organize an event twice a year with great themes, models and designers.



I am also the co-owner of the Diversity Modeling Agency (DMA). I started DMA with two other companions, Daisy van der veen (my life partner) and Marcel Schwab (our dearest friend). DMA offers a platform for anyone with unique features who would like to develop their talent and pursue a modeling career. This also includes intensive personal training. DMA takes pride in infusing diversity into the fashion industry. This year we brought two of our models, Ritikka and Shae, to a show in Cannes, to the anniversary event of the La Femme Independent Film Festival.

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What are the challenges you faced during your career?

There are so many challenges you have to deal with as a model; for example, you may get a makeup artist who doesn't know how to work with your skin color or hair type. Thankfully, this is less common today than when I started. But because of that, I started to teach myself how to do makeup so that if I were to come into such a situation, it could be solved in an instant. One of my biggest challenges has been not to forget who I am and to keep believing in myself despite people's making you doubt yourself, mainly because of my skin color and my hair - I almost wanted to have a lighter skin color and different hair. It made me feel so different and so unwanted, and that if I looked different, I could achieve much more, much faster. Modeling isn't just glitz and glamour. It is hard work and being able to deal with the less pleasant things and learn from them.

I also notice that the models who are plus-sized are not easily chosen. I have never had any problems with that, as for me it always has to do with my color and hair, but I have often witnessed others' being rejected for their size or height. That's also one of the reasons why I'm afraid to gain weight: because the outside world doesn't get to see what weight gain does to the model, how insecure they become. Some starve themselves because of it. It's painful to see, and it isn't okay. All body types should be normalized.



Did you experience any kind of racism or sexism, as most women suffer during their career because of their colour/ gender/ sexuality?

Yes, racism certainly; you still come across those moments, but less often than before because the fashion world is starting to become more diverse - but still isn't there yet. Sexuality also, especially in our field: We live in a world where men are at the top and people believe that without a man, a woman is not or cannot be strong enough. Luckily, that is also changing, but there is still a lot that needs to be done, and that starts with us and our new generation. I notice that my partner and I also have to prove ourselves here 10 times harder than a man would. We as women are always seen as weak or not smart enough, while reality shows otherwise.

Thank you for having me and for the opportunity to tell freely my story.

ADDICTION IS A DISEASE, NOT A CHOICE

Article

By Maggie Anwer

Addiction & alcoholism are diseases, not choices that people make; please understand that addicts are suffering and going through a lot. We must stop judging them for what they are going through; they are in pain that we can't imagine, so we have to be kind to them as they aren't kind to themselves. They feel lonely and unlovable and it's sad, very sad, as they beat themselves up every minute for being like that and feel guilty for making everyone around them suffer.

They are doing their best to be okay. Sometimes they are and sometimes they aren't. It's not a choice, nor is it a matter of strength: It is a disease.

Understand that right now, they are fighting very hard to be okay not only for their well-being but for the sake of everyone around them. Some of those around them made them feel unwanted. Trust me, we don't want to be in their shoes.

It's hard and the worst part of it is that people make them feel ashamed of what they are going through, when what they really need is the same care, acceptance, openness and empathy we give to someone who has diabetes, or heart disease, or cancer. Yes, addicts deserve the same empathy.

Be good, be kind, understand that it's out of their hands, that they are doing their best. Be the place where they can feel accepted and be aware that it wasn't their fault. It is just their fate / destiny that they have to go through this. You know why? Because every movement they wish they weren't alive, they wish they could be better, they are struggling and fighting. So please, please, be kind, understand they envy you for being healthy and they aren't, but more than that, they feel ashamed, guilty and worthless. It isn't fair to make them feel that way; it is time to raise awareness that it is **A DISEASE, NOT A CHOICE**. Make them feel loved, accepted and that they will always be welcome at home. They are fighting their demons and they can't fight you as well. They need a warm, safe place to understand them and help them. Be their home, please; if you can't, then just be kind to them.



INDIAN FLAUTIST J.A.JAYANT



FLUTE J A JAYANT

Young Carnatic Flute exponent J.A.Jayant, is an artiste, collaborator, teacher and composer performing across the globe and popularising the art of flute playing. A prodigy performing since age 7, he has enthralled audiences in over 1800 solo and *jugalbandi* concerts in India and all over the world. A wunderkind, affectionately called Flute Jayant by many, was born in a musical family. He was naturally drawn into early training on bamboo flute in the Indian classical music tradition of *guru-shishya parampara*, from age 4, from his grandfather and guru, late Flute T. S.

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Jayant has a unique, virtuoso fingering and flute blowing technique to present his music beautifully even in the very difficult lower octaves on the bass and double-bass, thick-walled bamboo flutes, while maintaining shruthi suddham (perfect pitching) and supreme tonal quality. His expressive, graceful (bhaava-laden) rendering bringing out the depth and soul of the lyrical aspects of compositions he presents (gaayaki-form), have consistently won him lasting appreciation from one and all, including senior musicians, co-artistes, connoisseurs and music lovers (rasikaas). His expedient playing and uncanny lyrical expressivity have inspired many flautists of the current generation and the younger crop to imbibe his style. He is the first carnatic flautist to unveil 106 cm long Double Bass (Bansuri) flutes in his performances casting a meditative spell on the listeners and also playing on 15 cm long piccolo flutes.

As a global ambassador of Indian instrumental Music, Flute J.A. Jayant has been invited to perform regularly at pre-eminent sabhas and venues such as the Madras Music Academy, Swathi Sangeethotsavam, Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival, Shanmukhananda Hall - Mumbai, Kalakshetra Foundation, Siri Fort -New Delhi, Purana Qila - Delhi, Chowdiah Hall - Bangalore, HCL Concerts, Kennedy Center - Washington D.C, Drive East Festival - New York, Théâtre de la ville- Paris, Fes Festival of World Sacred Music - Morocco, Les Orientales d'anjou festival, Södra Teatern - Sweden, World Sacred Spirit Festival, Darbar Festival - UK, Milap Festival - UK, Sydney Music Festival, DUCTAC Auditorium - Dubai, Rietberg Museum - Zurich, to name a few. He has performed at other major centers and festivals across India, USA, Canada, France, UK, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Australia, Dubai, Kuwait, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Bali, Mauritius and Reunion Islands. Some of these have included jugalbandis with several musicians. He has collaborated with Cristal Baschet artist Loup Barrow, Guitar virtuoso John Sund, Hindustani musicians - Flute Pt. Ronu Majumdar, Shehnai Pt. Ashwani Shankar, etc. Carnatic musicians - Veena Sri Rajhesh Vaidhya, Mandolin Sri U. Rajesh, and others. He has also recorded his flutes for leading music directors including Harris Jayaraj and others.

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Michael: that's impressive, last thing for our readers. What is the difference between the flute you play and another one?

Flute J A Jayant:

To differentiate a good bamboo from ordinary ones is an art. As a kid I would easily differentiate my grand dad's professional flute from the ones that he got me, for they weren't of the same bamboo quality and of course the tone would differ. My family members say I cried one night asking for my grand dad's flute from the TV when one of his concerts was being broadcast. I have that flute now. It has a lovely colour from the outside and is over 35 years old.

I don't mean this in comparative terms, but the flute is a very complicated instrument. I always feel flautists have the job of mastering an imperfect instrument, in that no flute is perfectly tuned. The flute that I play and am comfortable with might not be the best for another flautist and vice versa. The shape of the flautist's lips, his blowing capacity, formation of his fingers, length of his fingers, placement of the flute, etc. are all factors in determining which flute works best for a flautist. The flute maker's job is probably the toughest – they work so hard!

I select the bamboo and get my flutes custom made. Tone and the depth in one's playing are very important. I choose my bamboo according to what would suit my blowing technique and how I want my flute to sound.

My double bass flute is one of the longest flutes ever made and played – it can traverse one octave and a half octave lower without the usage of any extra fittings in the form of a lever. My flute maker wasn't sure if he would get a bamboo that long and if he could tune it, since he had never heard such an idea before. I have started playing it in concerts since my age of 22 establishing it in my concerts. It has a very bassy sound and adds a really nice flavour to a 2-hour concert. It has a meditative feel and I love it. The audience looks forward to it in every concert of mine.

Michael: Thanks for being with us, and we wish you all the best,



DARK FEATHERS

By Anita William

Dark Feathers is a psychological thriller. Crystal J. Huang stars in the film as the leading lady Kate. Dancers Gilles Marini and Karina Smirnoff portray the male leading role Remy and his wife Amelia. As summarized on the production's IMDb page, depicting the storyline of the film's protagonist, *Kate must choose loyalty to a historical Asian clan, and her non-traditional love, amidst the deaths of her dance partners being investigated by her new lover.* Michael Madsen portrays Kensei, the operator of an underground society.

Director and actress, **Crystal J. Huang** discussed how this movie is not your "run of the mill" detective film. The storyline within the film tries to deliver a philosophical idea that given evidence, the cause of an event cannot always be figured out by reasoning alone, even in simple cases. This is in contrast to old detective movies such as one adopted from a Agatha Christie novel in which a detective is always able to crack a case by subtle reasoning based on evidence.

Secondly, the film intentionally provides multiple possible causes to each death of Kate's partners. The stories are driven by possibilities, not definite events in the past, to provide room for audiences to imagine and explore, asking themselves who did it. It is a film of mystery, and one that has the intensity to keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

Remy is a detective married to Kate's dancing teacher Amelia, as portrayed by Gilles Marini. Marini is a French actor known for his role in *Sex and the City*, and world acclaimed dancer who has won multiple seasons of *Dancing with the Stars*. Remy is interested in solving these cases and becomes Kate's new partner. He later realizes he is following the steps of Kate's dead partners.

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Dance being a core element of the film *Dark Feathers*, Amelia is portrayed by world dance champion Karina Smirnoff. She is known as a professional dancer on *Dancing with the Stars*, where she won the thirteenth season with army veteran and soap opera star J. R. Martinez. Her character is jealous about her husband and the best student being together and forming a seemingly close relationship.

The story is written by Jin Yao, Daniel Benton, and Crystal J. Huang, inspired from real life events. Additional producers include Lan Kay and Ned Kisner.

Comments from the cast

. Karina Smirnoff (Amelia): "I enjoyed spending time with the cast and how friendly the production was. And it was amazing to reconnect with Gilles Marini on such a great project".

. Scott Lea (James): "Working on the set of *Dark Feathers* was a unique and beautiful journey. The artistry of the dancing along with the acting in this film was truly remarkable. Crystal also brought a direction that I think will resonate with the audience and leave a lasting impact."

. Betty Ge (Maggie): "This movie has beautiful scenes and very attractive plot

. Iveta Faraci (Natalia): Working on *Dark Feathers* is a dream come true. I am so honored to have been able to bring the artistry, the intrigue, and the thrill of ballroom dancing to the screen with such an amazing team".

. Andrea Faraci (Angelo): "This is the first great ballroom dancing movie in over a decade, and I'm honored to have been a part of it. It's been an amazing experience to bring something I love so much to others through the big screen".

Natalia Nikolaeva (Julia): "Working on *Dark Feathers* was a blessing and a true art. Everything in the story was so fresh and new, and I haven't read anything like that before".

From the writer of the film Jin Yao:

"*Dark Feathers*" is a romantic drama, a femme fatale thriller, a detective story, a psychological case study, a multicultural celebration, and a dancing musical. However, nothing mentioned above is new. What makes this film different? I would say that it attempts to deliver the concept that "truth is Unchaseable".

Interview with the french scriptwriter “Florence CAZEBON”



When the Mysterious Priory of Sion invites itself to Rennes-le-Château (Rennes Castle). By Florence Cazebon-Taveau

Screenplay published by Edilivre Editions.

Thank you for being with us; tell us about yourself.

I am a French scriptwriter and plural artist: historical writer, poetess, but also an international painter and medium with several vibrations. As a medium, I paint exclusively with my fingers.

In my screenplay, I've combined the wonderful with the spiritual, with action and a secret, which together make a great and beautiful movie.

Over 15 years of historical research, I have written ten books about the treasure of Abbey Saunière (ABM editions, Edilivre, ABCD'R Editions). My screenplay adds my imagination and my knowledge of being a medium to the real-life Rennes Castle, which has an intriguing history.

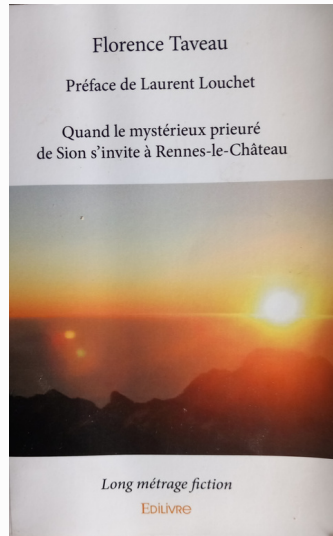
What is your film about?

The treasure of templars Abbey Sauniere and Abbey Boudet of Rennes Castle in France with the Priory of Sion, the Graal of Templars, mediums (Florence, Manon) and real historical people against the enemy, the Brouillard Society.

Why did you choose this story?

The mysterious Priory of Sion has kept the greatest secret in human history – and the fabulous treasure of Rennes Castle in France – for centuries. The originality of my screenplay is inspired for the most part by the mediumship of historical characters (Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, Chopin, Goerge Sand, the Empress Sissi of Austria, King Louis II of Bavaria, Opus Dei, Blanchefort Templar, Christ, and Mary Magdalene).

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The most important aspect of building a character is the mystery and spirituality combined with the action under the medium aspect. I want to play the medium, Florence, in the movie.

If you were to shoot this film again , would you change anything? If yes, what and why?

Nothing, I wouldn't change anything because my screenplay is densely rich with history and again has wonderful potential to be a very cinematic, suspenseful, compelling and intriguing drama. The seeming convergence of plotlines that span centuries, the incorporation of mysticism and the supernatural powers of mediums, and the large cast of colorful historical characters bringing to life secret societies and deadly or suspenseful plots driven by famous artists, religious leaders and politicians are compelling and timeless and will make the movie a success.

I know this history and these characters intimately.

What is your next film?

I have a project on Camille Claudel and Rodin via my published screenplay at Edilivre Editions. On YouTube, you can see the teaser; I play Camille Claudel.

What is your favorite film?

Hitchcock's The Birds.

In your opinion, who is the most influential Director?

To quote Hitchcock, "To make a great film you need three things – the script, the script, and the script."

EMERGING FROM THE SILENCE

By Michael J.



'Emerging from the Silence' is a 46 minutes mid-length-film written and directed by Tino Theresa Dungal, co-directed and produced by Isabella Schiemer and starring Jona Moro, Laila Avissar-Zatar, Saskia Norman, David Ketter, Valerie Anna Gruber and Felina Marie Schmedl.

The film was shot and produced in Austria and has won international prizes such as Special Mention Award at the La Femme Independent Film Festival (Cannes), Best Director at the London Movie Awards (London), Best First-Time-Filmmaker at the LA Independent Women Film Awards (Los Angeles) and others. It is Tino Theresa Dungal's first film project and it was realised in cooperation with students of the Vienna Film Academy (Director of Photography: Anna Viola Haderer, Montage: Lisa Isabella Grabner)

The film addresses the reflection process of the young adult Chri, who deals with their past and starts to come to terms with the trauma of sexualized violence they survived in their childhood.

For writer and director Tino Theresa Dungal it was important to put the survivor's perspective in the centre, to refrain from voyeuristic or violence glorifying narratives and to portray the process of surviving as strong and brave. With the film, they wanted to make visible the long-term consequences of sexualized violence and to show survivors that they are not alone with their feelings. Furthermore, they wanted to raise awareness for how difficult it can be to speak about sexualized violence or even to realize that an experience had been violent. Especially the fact that sexualized violence is very often committed in close relationships makes it so difficult to reprocess the experiences. The film focuses on psychological violence, the abusive use of the word 'love' and on the isolation, to which the main character was being forced, but also on strategies of integrating the trauma and of moving on.

THE RISING



The Rising is a Conspiracy, Science Fiction, Thriller Featurette, 28 minutes in length, written, directed and produced by **Mila Perkins**. Other producers include **Dionne Gipson, Peter John, Rika Givens and Andra Hayes**. Starring **Dionne Gipson, Tony Nevada, Ray Buffer, Andre Pelzer, Verlon Roberts** and an ensemble of seasoned actors.

The film was shot and produced in multiple locations throughout Los Angeles. **The Rising** has won best Science Fiction film at the LA Independent Women Film Awards, best Conspiracy Thriller Short at The Silicon Beach Film Festival at The Chinese Theaters in Hollywood and best Fantasy/Experimental film at La Femme Short Film Festival in France.

The Rising is an amalgamation of social issues weaved into several conspiracy theories and presented as a hybrid genre film. The filmmaker achieves her objective through the use of strong characterization, linear narrative storytelling, provocative dialogue and suggestive undertones. The inspiration for the film was realized by Mila Perkins during the pandemic, when conspiracies were at a peak.

At the time, the filmmaker was unaware that she was intuiting some of these events in her story, which unfolded 18 months later. The story begins with Joe Sutton, a Veteran who loses his computer business to an eviction. Out of desperation, he becomes entangled with a conspiracy group and assists the group in carrying out their dastardly plans through the spread of misinformation. When Joe discovers his college sweetheart Kendra is the group's next target, he attempts to rescue her but fails in his pursuit. Kendra is captured and unveiled to the group's supreme leader, The Grid. The mighty leader exposes his plans to take over the world one facet at a time, with Kendra by his side.

Mila's deliberate use of inciting themes is bold and very timely. **The Rising** addresses issues such as disinformation, inequality, female leadership, democracy and alien existence. Kendra, played by the talented Dionne Gipson is cleverly positioned in a subtextual manner to exaggerate and counteract the imbalance of female leadership in our society. The filmmaker's use of the word Patriarchy is not to dishonour masculine counterparts but rather to address the disparities in feminine elements in decision making, governing bodies and society. Mila signifies that when our world operates mainly as a patriarchal run system, imbalances are evident within all spheres of society, not only impacting women but future generations.

Mila extracts her theological references of the divine feminine from Hinduism, in which Shakti the feminine essence and Hindu goddesses are honored, revered and held highly. She believes that all humans carry masculine and feminine blueprint and when both aspects are activated and in balance within the individual and collective, human consciousness is able to thrive to its optimal capacity.

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HESHAM SOLIMAN

By Michael Joseph



Hesham Soliman is an Egyptian film producer and one of the most influential filmmakers in the Middle East.

Hesham was born on 29 September 1967 in the city of Cairo, in the Zamalek neighborhood.

He studied in one of the most famous schools there, the Amoun Private School.

After graduating from the Faculty of Commerce at Cairo University in 1988, he started his career in production as a production assistant. He also began his studies in the production department at the Higher Institute of Cinema, graduating in 1992.

One of the most important works that he participated in at the beginning of his film career was *Elmowatin Masry* ("Egyptian Citizen") with the well-known Egyptian filmmaker Salah Abu Seif, who worked with him as an assistant producer until he graduated.

Hesham also worked with the well-known film director Youssef Chahine as production manager of Misr International Films, working on some of his most important works: *Elmohager* ("Migrant"), *Elmaseer* ("Fate"), *Ela'akhar* ("The Other"), *Skott Hansour* ("Silent Roll Camera") and other films.

Hesham Soliman founded his own production company, Hama Film Production.

After that, he participated in the production of many important Egyptian and international films as well as many advertisements for major corporations.

Because of his obsession and love for cinema, he opened the Hesham Soliman Heritage Preservation Museum that became the first museum dedicated to Egyptian cinema accessories from the 1920s through present day. It contains more than 1,500 pieces, originating from his own holdings and contributions from filmmakers who love the concept.

Hesham Soliman started caring for people of determination (those who need assistance due to a disability that limits their intellectual and/or physical abilities) a long time ago. In the beginning, he contributed as much as he could to motivate, encourage, and assist them, and introduce them to others in the industry and the media. He also taught them about people of determination and the importance of their active participation in society.



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Through his work as director of the Egyptian DMC channels, he was given the opportunity to present the first “people of determination” broadcast in the world, focused on Down Syndrome, by TV Anchor Rahma Khaled.

Until recently, Hesham worked as an assistant to the chairman of the board of the United Company in the production sector.

He wrote the song "Radia" ("Satisfied") for two singers with visual impairments, Maryam Al-Najdi and Hadeel Majed. He also wrote the song "Nafas El Harouf" ("Same Letters") which was recorded by the artist Donia Samir Ghanem and a group of children of determination. They performed the song “Those Coming with a Difference” in the presence of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi live at the Forum. Hesham also participated with the Zayed Foundation for People of Determination in the production of the song "Basma Amal" ("Hopeful Smile") to benefit people of determination and the blind. It was sung by the Egyptian artist Ahmed Gamal and the Emirati artist Aryam with the participation of two blind Egyptian artists, including Maryam Al-Najdi, and the Emirati artist Latifa Al-Zaabi.

Hesham Soliman was honored at the Awladna Foundation Forum for people with special abilities because of his active efforts with the Awladna Foundation and other institutions.

He became an ambassador of the Baheya Hospital for Cancer and the honorary ambassador of the Supreme Council for Persons with Disabilities.

Hesham also distinguished himself by writing the article "A Fixed Weekly Chapter about Children of Special Ability" in the prestigious Rosa Al-Youssef Magazine.

Hesham received many honors and appreciation for his work with people of determination from several institutions in Egypt and abroad. He has participated in many festivals and conferences for people of determination, and he wrote three books with Dar Nahdet Misr:

- Good Day... Your Day Is Laughing, the proceeds of which go to the Misr El-Kheir Foundation
- It Really Happened for a family at the Ahl Masr Hospital for Burn Treatment
- 100 Tips and Advice

He is currently preparing his fourth book, 1,000 Words of Advice, in which literally one thousand writers will write a piece of advice, which will become the first book to be written by more than a thousand people.

Hesham collaborated with the international filmmaker Maggie Anwer to produce 10 films to support talented filmmakers, and also collaborated with her during her Children’s Film Festival. Together they created a special jury that, for the first time in the history of the cinema, had a member from who was a “Child of Special Ability”. This had been Maggie’s idea, and Hesham supported it immediately. He hosted the event at his theater and the kids and their families joined him, watched the films, and a Hama team trained the kids how to be on a jury and assisted them in choosing the films and expressing themselves. It was a huge success and brought much happiness to the kids and their families, as they felt they were part of society.

THE STORY OF POMEGRANATE

Article by Weam Namou

After seven incredible years of working on this project, I am in awe of the dream we have brought to life. This is the first Iraqi American feature film, uniquely led by women talent and made by the community it represents. It's a fresh film filled with beauty, inspiration, and humor. Having it screened by the prestigious La Femme Independent Film Festival for the world to view is exciting and something the cast and crew have been waiting for nearly two years! This platform will help turn the spark we ignited into a radiant blaze that will illuminate countless lives.

Pomegranate follows the life journey of Niran, a young Muslim woman coming of age in metro Detroit after emigrating from Iraq. She lives in Sterling Heights, also fondly called "Little Baghdad," which has a large population of Chaldeans (Christian Iraqis). Moving from war-torn Iraq to the U.S. was difficult for her, especially since it meant living as a liberal Muslim immigrant in a neighborhood of well-to-do, conservative Christians during the 2016 presidential election.



Weam Namou

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Niran walks a fine line between ancestral norms and the freedoms of a new generation. Inspired by her idol Enheduanna of ancient Mesopotamia, Niran navigates societal challenges, fights against cultural stereotypes, and aims to make her voice heard by all those around her.

Enheduanna, the first known poet in world history, was a woman who lived more than 4,300 years ago. The High Priestess, writer, and princess was a genuine historical figure. In contrast, Niran’s story is a mixture of real and imagined stories that focus on Middle Eastern women who cope with many issues as they transition from old traditions to modern, western society. Admittedly, some of the tales involving the fictitious Niran mirror my own.



Weam Namou, Jamal Adams & Lindy Lenk

As a longtime resident of Sterling Heights, I deeply admire its rich cultural tapestry, which served as the backdrop for the movie’s production. The vibrant city is adorned with family-owned produce markets at every corner, where freshly baked samoon (diamond-shaped pocket bread) and khoubuz (flatbread) greet customers each morning. Restaurants such as Ishtar, Baghdad Restaurant, Kabob House cater to the community’s diverse needs. Additionally, three mosques and three Chaldean churches, one located in Sterling Heights and two in neighboring cities, highlight the community’s devotion to their faith.



**Weam Namou & Kevin Hewitt
(cinematographer)**

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Weam Namou & Sam Sako (producer)

Within our Iraqi American community, occasional tension exists between Muslims and Christians. The film addresses this tension through honest and smart dialogue. Chaldeans, the indigenous people of ancient Iraq, have endured displacement from their ancestral lands due to centuries of warfare, oppression, and genocides. The destruction of their villages by the Islamic State in 2014 further intensified their trauma and deepened their wounds. Muslim Iraqis have also suffered due to corruption and radical religious groups in Iraq, but the media often ignore their experiences.



Sam(ya) Rahmani

That is why Pomegranate is such an important and needed film. Through the magic of storytelling, we are shattering stereotypes and nurturing new ways of thinking. It's a significant undertaking, especially for women who, in our society, tend to live in the shadows. Yet here we are, defying the status quo and doing so with the spirit of teamwork and community because of the many men and women who have lovingly helped make this possible. I was lucky to work with legendary Hollywood Executive Producer Scott Rosentfelt and Hollywood veteran Sam Sako, along with a long list of talented people whose hard work brought us this far. I'm grateful for the numerous festivals that have chosen this film for their "Official Selection" and the wins.

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Natally Boutros | Actress



Ismail Taher & Zain Shami



**Sam(ya) Rahmani and Lamar Babi
Actors**



**Zain Shami and Amanda Kashat
Actresses**



Weam with the cast



Ismail Taher | Actor

Pomegranate is not just a story about the Iraqi community in Sterling Heights; it is a universal tale that explores themes of identity, intergenerational conflict, and the power of dialogue. By examining the lives of these characters and their struggles, the film invites audiences to reflect on their own lives and the ways in which they engage with others who hold different perspectives.

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Model Léa Chauveau

Model Gabrielle Chabot

photos by
Ella Elijah

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INTERVIEW



**MODEL GABRIELLE CHABOT
PHOTOGRAPHER ELLA ELIJAH**



**MODEL & PHOTOGRAPHER
ELLA ELIJAH**

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Model Léa Chauveau



Model Gabrielle Chabot



Model & Photographer
Ella elijah

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MODEL GABRIELLE CHABOT
PHOTOGRAPHER ELLA ELIJAH

A photo book by Thedannyguy & Yogarwa

NUDE ART

DANNY & ARWA

EXCLUSIVE

SUMMER 2021

THE SEA

THE SUN

AND LOVE

THE NUDE PHOTOGRAPHER DANNY & NUDE MODEL ARWA

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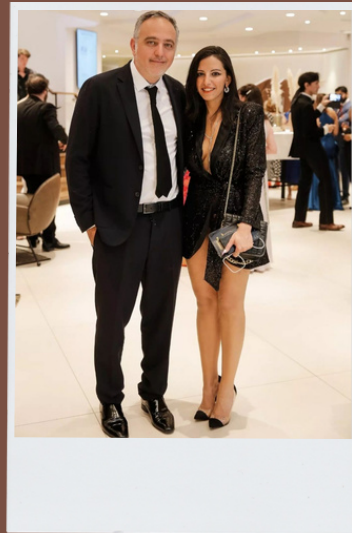
*After
Kiss*

ARWA & Danny

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY MOHAMED HEFZY The Pride of Egypt

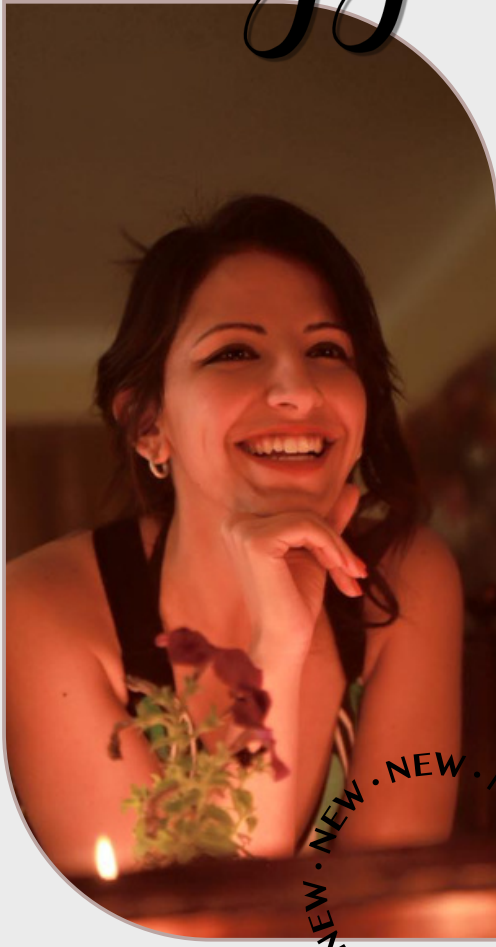
Happy birthday to one of the most influential filmmakers in the world and one of our great supporters. For 20 years he has supported indie films and filmmakers, and he is one of the leaders who supports women in the film industry. He is the first filmmaker to hire over 50% women in his films and for the Cairo Film Festival when he was president of the festival. His support extends to producing, distributing films about, for, and made by women, and he opened the gate for Arab and Egyptian filmmakers to have a place in international film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice and more.



Additionally, his movies and TV shows have been nominated for and received Golden Globe and Emmy awards. Hefzy is an official member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in the producers' branch. He is the first film producer to collaborate with Netflix, bringing it to the MENA region, in addition to being an international film producer, distributor, and great supporter of film festival creators like Maggie Anwer and others all over the world. He has been honored by numerous film festivals and countries for his tireless efforts. We want to thank him for his endless support and for his love of the cinema, and we wish him the happiest of birthdays.



Maggie Anwer



- **Maggie Anwer is a producer, director, writer, model, and distributor. She is the president of the La Femme independent film festival, WICA Hollywood**
- **Owner of five international Film Festivals in Europe, the UK, the US, and Canada**
- **Owner of WICA (World Independent Cinema Awards) Los Angeles, WICA Vancouver, and WICA Paris, and the Caribbean Independent film festival**
- **She is a consultant and strategic planner & advisor for more than eight European film festivals, including London, Milan, Nice, Madrid, Antwerp, and Barcelona IFF.**
- **She is the Founder of Magica Cinematheque.**

- **She is the first woman to be the president of two international film festivals in the US – WICA Los Angeles and WICA New York.**
- **She is the first woman who owns more than 5 independent film festivals**
- **She is the CEO of MAGICA Productions and Magica House, founder of MAG Magazine, the youngest member in the chamber of the cinema industry.**



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- She is also a consultant for four prestigious European Film Festivals. In addition, she is a jury member for the Nice International Film Festival, Madrid International Film Festival and Milan International Film Festival, and for a syndicate of festivals for Drama Series MFF, AFF, SDFE.
- Her films have been screened for a global audience in Cannes, Clermont, Rome, and Arab countries and she has been honored by CIC, KAFF, ALEXiFF. The American producer Nicolas Gonda loved her film Barcodia and remarked, “She is a great talent.”
- She is the first woman to be a consultant for four international film festivals in Europe – Milan, Nice, Madrid and London – for 3 years



- She has distributed many films all over the world; last year, one of the films she distributed won more than 200 international awards.
- She has created marketing strategies for international film festivals, including the upcoming scripts.
- She writes scripts; the most recent script, “covid nights”, won the Golden award in Romania at the Wallachia independent film festival.
- She has produced more than 30 films and co-produced short films as well.
- She is the founder of the first Egyptian international film festival in Europe; Princess Katarina from the British Royal Family supported this festival and Her Royal Highness is now the ambassador of the festival because she believed in it so much.

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- She is the first woman to be the president of two international film festivals in the US – WICA Los Angeles and WICA New York.
- She is the first woman who owns more than 5 independent film festivals.
- She is the co-founder of the Caribbean film festival.
- She is the president of WICAs in Los Angeles, New York, Vancouver, Toronto and Sydney.
- She is the founder of La Femme Royal Club in London.
- She is the founder of MAG Magazine art
- She received a certificate from Harvard University for William Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice course.
- Certificate from Cambridge University's Filmmaking, Writing, Production, and Directing courses
- Certificate from King's College London's Filmmaking course
- Attended the British Film Institute's History of Victorian Films course
- Attended Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's The Life of Shakespeare and His Work classes 2022
- Maggie is the president of the FAHA IFF, the first Egyptian international film festival in Europe. This festival took place in London, with Princess Katarina, the great-niece of the late Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip, as ambassador.
- The 9th edition of FAHA was held in Cannes, France.
- On 2013 she traveled to Saudi Arabia, produced, directed first female play, produced a documentary about Om El Doud in ElMadina, and made a workshop about filmmaking for women



- She collaborated with the Indian musical festival to screen films that she produced or distributed; this festival is supported by the Maharaja and the royals in India.
- She collaborated with an international Chinese platform to support the Chinese filmmakers by screening ,and distributing there films all over the world.
- She Founded the La Femme Royal Club to raise the awareness of the mental health , to support the family in crisis.
- She created a special competition for the LGBTQ films in her festivals ,and she created a special award for the mental health under the name of " Social Awareness"
- The former French prime minister attended the screening of *Abu Simbel* and mentioned that he liked the film during his interview.
- Her company, Magica House International, collaborated with one of the oldest festivals in France, Les Orientals; they screened films that her company distributed.
- She is nominated as one of the most influential female filmmakers for the second time by a film magazine in France.

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- Maggie spoke as part of a film production and distribution panel with the British director Howard J Ford and British producer Ben Pickering at RADA, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts.
- Maggie travels to France, Italy, Egypt and Canada to bring her most important works to the screen; she has also been to Syria to capture the raw conditions there during the war. She is a supporter of women in Arab countries, introducing filmmaking by providing workshops and producing plays and a film for women in Saudi Arabia. She created a festival in Morocco and conducted a workshop for children to be introduced to the world of film. As a model, Maggie has worked on numerous campaigns, including “No for Female Circumcision”, and was a VIP guest at the Royal College of London for the celebration of the International Day of Action for Women's Health.
- She created a festival in Ethiopia for the children, she supported filmmakers in Sudan to create their own festival & she created workshop for children with physical challenges
- She is nominated as one of the most influential female filmmakers for the second time by a film magazine in France.
- She was a VIP guest at the Philharmonie de Paris Indonesian ballet concert, as well as at the Paris premiere of John Wick, also attended by Keanu Reeves, and Quentin Tarantino's discussion in Le Grand Rex
- She interviewed the scriptwriter of the *Chaplin* play, the first musical performed in Saudi Arabia; she marketed the play in Europe as well.
- Maggie is a co-producer for two feature films and one documentary that are in progress.
- She was the face of Ferrara Diamonds
- She is always invited as a VIP guest in the most prestigious premiers, and festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Venice and London Film Festivals
- She is currently developing a slate of features and TV projects for production.



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VOTE FOR THE MOST
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HISTORICAL FILM
ICONIC ACTOR
INDEPENDENT ARTIST/
FILMMAKER
THE ARTIST OF THE MONTH

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“ DO YOU UNDERSTAND HOW LUCKY
PEOPLE ARE TO FIND WHAT'S RIGHT FOR
THEM?
ITS SUCH A BLESSING.”

◦ E.M. FORSTER & RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA

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