



Eccomi ... Eccoti
(Here I am ... Here you are)

a film by Raed Rafei

Two men. Two realities. And a world beset with real and imaginary boundaries.



DIRECTOR Raed Rafei | PRODUCTION Raed Rafei, Ina Nordhardt | CAMERA Raed Rafei, Corinne Stank, Jaid Youssef

EDITING Raed Rafei, Anne de Mo | SOUND DESIGN Raed Rafei, Lama Sawaya

SOUND MIXING Lama Sawaya @ GB Studio | COLORING Steal Hibi (Les Visuels)



With support from Ashkal Alwan

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Eccomi ... Eccoti (Here I am ... Here you are) ها أنا ... ها أنت

Content

Two men, two contrasting realities, and a quest for a shared future despite a world of physical and imaginary boundaries.

Eccomi ... Eccoti is a road-trip documentary that explores the depths of a transnational gay relationship in today's world. Set between Lebanon and Italy, this essay film is a poetic collage of fragments from a personal archive of shared moments: still travel photos, ambient sounds and videos of everyday instances. Through conversations between the filmmaker and his partner, this film raises questions of love, commitment, familial trauma, European border restrictions, LGBT rights and ongoing persecutions all within the contours of a shimmering queer utopia.

Credits

Lebanon 2017, 68 min, Color, Arabic/French/Italian/English with English subtitles

Director	Raed Rafei
Production	Raed Rafei, Irit Neidhardt
DoP	Raed Rafei, Corinne Shawi, Jad Youssef
Editing	Raed Rafei, Ann de Mo
Sound Design	Raed Rafei, Lama Sawaya
Sound Mixing	Lama Sawaya @ DB Studio
Coloring Bilal	Hibri (Rez Visuals)

With support from Screen Institute Beirut, Ashkal Alwan (The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts), Goethe Institute and the AFAC (The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture).



Film-maker Raed Rafei

Raed Rafei is a Lebanese filmmaker, researcher, and multimedia journalist. For over a decade beginning in 2004, Rafei was a print journalist covering political, social, and economic issues in Lebanon and the Middle East for local and international publications including the Daily Star and the Los Angeles Times. In 2013, he obtained a Master's degree in Journalism with a focus on video journalism from the City University of New York. He then worked as a freelance director and producer for television reports and documentaries for networks including CNN, ARTE, and Al-Jazeera.

Rafei's work also extends into independent docufiction and essay filmography. In collaboration with his sister, Rania Rafei, he co-wrote and co-directed his first feature film in 2012: 74 (The Reconstitution of a Struggle), a hybrid documentary about the 1974 student occupation of the American University of Beirut. The film was released at the FID Marseille film festival, where it received a national prize. It has since been screened at international film festivals around the world and received several awards. Eccomi ... Eccoti (Here I am ... Here you are) is his second feature film. In 2017, Rafei joined the University of California, Santa Cruz, to pursue a PhD degree in film and digital media.

Filmography

Prologue - co-directed with Rania Rafei - 2011 - 49min

74 (The reconstitution of a struggle) - co-directed with Rania Rafei - 2012 - 1h40min

Eccomi ... Eccoti - 2017 - 68min

Salam – 2017 – 19min

Queer Utopia : From Stonewall to Tell Garden – 2021 – 8min

Director's Note

On a visit to the Uffizi museum in Florence, I was mesmerized by the 15th century portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino by Piero della Francesca. The two profile paintings were placed in separate frames, but were facing each other, their gazes interlocked for eternity. It was as if I had witnessed two individuals with intertwined destinies who could, nonetheless, never actually meet.

The paintings symbolized and mirrored my own relationship as a Lebanese man to Sandro, an Italian man. Shared passions, common cultural references, and inexplicable chemistry drew us to one another, while real and imagined boundaries prevented our two worlds and two realities from truly merging.

Over a period of seven years, we became a nomadic couple, meeting during road trips and vacations in Europe and elsewhere. Gradually, I developed an obsession with the idea of capturing our shared moments and conversations. I recorded sounds, took a plethora of photos, and made short videos with my camera and my mobile phone. To me, these



moments encapsulated the complexity of being in a transnational gay relationship in the 2010s.

Returning to my reality in Beirut, I would attempt to digitally reconstruct those moments within a growing personal archive and alongside my evasive memories. Perhaps, due to the complexities of our reality, I subconsciously worked to capture that which I knew would inevitably prove transient; I was acutely aware of the difficulty of a narrative of longevity for this relationship.

I come from a part of the world where homosexuality is still criminalized, and where dark forces of extremism, as well as global neo-liberal and neo-colonial policies constantly thwart collective and individual aspirations. Sandro comes from a European reality that seemingly cheers universal LGBT rights, but does so within a reality of increasingly barricaded borders and rampant discrimination against immigrants.

Real geopolitical obstacles, much bigger than the two of us, had shaped how our personal story was unfolding. With a Lebanese passport, it was complicated for me to visit Europe regularly, let alone live and work there. And Lebanon, beset with insecurities and instabilities, did not seem like a welcoming place for a gay couple.

Beyond the real tangible elements that separated us, our situation provoked deeper discussions about the nature of couples in our contemporary world: what it means to share life with someone, form a family or build a future together. At the time, there were many reports in the international media about, on the one hand, the legalization of gay marriage in western countries, and on the other, the prosecution of gay people in the Middle East. To me, these reports often seemed shallow and failed to capture the complexities of the queer condition in the world today.

I decided to make *Eccomi ... Eccoti* as an intimate poetic and political essayistic film and a personal response to simplistic narratives about queer individuals and couples. The film was constructed as a virtual road-trip between Lebanon and Europe through a collage of a personal archive of various visual and auditory materials.

In Italy, I asked Sandro about his experience navigating his difficult childhood with disapproving parents and his exposure to gay identity politics in Italy in the 1980s and 90s. Aware of the power of art and poetry to bring us closer together, I became fascinated with the Italian leftist intellectual, poet, and filmmaker, Pier Paolo Pasolini, his queer cinematic worlds, and his tragic personal history. With Sandro, I visited Pasolini's place of birth, and where he was assassinated and buried.

In Lebanon, I felt burdened by the compelling modern demand of coming out and being visible as a queer man— but the rediscovery of my hometown, Tripoli, as a visitor and filmmaker, proved a humbling experience. Wandering in the city over several months, armed with a camera, I pondered the relevance of my westernized gay identity crisis. I was overwhelmed by the expansiveness of the city with its palimpsestic walls and structures and



its many layers of history. Queerness felt immanent, diffuse, mysterious, and impossible to encompass.

In a state of limbo between these two worlds, I was drawn to the luring but fraught comfort of my shared existence with another man. But as it became increasingly difficult to find a common physical space and a clear vision for a future together, cinema was my way of piecing the fragments of this relationship together. Through film, I tried to grasp the miracle and mystery of being queer and in love in the world today.

mec film
Emdener Strasse 48d
10551 Berlin
Germany

www.mecfilm.de
info@mecfilm.de