



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 Stal Hbi (Les Visuels)



With support from Ashkal Alwan

# Eccomi ... Eccoti

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

### **Content**

Two men. Two realities. And a quest for a common future in a world beset with real and imaginary boundaries.

Eccomi ... Eccoti unfolds as a virtual road trip navigating between Italy and Lebanon. Conditioned to live in a long-distance relationship with his partner because of strict European visa regulations, the director patches together the moments shared together in an attempt to create a possible day-to-day reality for their couple.

He questions his partner, Sandro, about his youth and the striving of a generation of gays to assert their homosexuality in a hostile environment. Back in his homeland, the director grapples with his own difficult relationship with his father and a society that regards homosexuality as an aberration. Stuck in limbo between Europe, a promise land for homosexuals but that remains inaccessible, and the Arab reality, that rejects his nature, the director seeks solace in the warmth of the couple.

### **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 Beirut-based Lebanese filmmaker and multimedia journalist. For over ten years, he has worked as a reporter covering political, social and economic issues related to Lebanon and the Middle East for local and international publications. In 2012, he co-wrote and co-directed, with Rania Rafei, his first feature film, “74 (The Reconstitution of a Struggle)”, a hybrid documentary about the 1974 student occupation of the American University of Beirut. The film was released in July 2012 at the FID Marseille film festival where it received a national prize. It has since been showed at many international film festivals and received several awards. Eccomi ... Eccoti (Here I am ... Here you are) is his second feature film.

### Filmography

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

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

Salam – 2016 – 19min

## Director's Note

On a visit to the Uffizi museum in Florence, I was astonished by the portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino by Piero Della Francesca. The two profile paintings are placed facing each other. Their two gazes seemed to be interlocked for eternity. It was like seeing two individuals with intertwined destinies who can, nonetheless, never really meet.

The painting carried for me all the symbolism of my own relationship as a Lebanese man with Sandro, an Italian man. Shared passions, common cultural references and an inexplicable chemistry constantly draws us to one another but, at the same time, we are faced with real and imagined boundaries that prevent our two worlds and two realities from ever merging.

For the past four years, we became a nomadic couple meeting during road trips and vacations in Europe. Gradually, I developed an obsession with the idea of capturing these shared moments somehow emblematic of happiness with the loved other. I recorded sounds, took a plethora of photos, and made short videos with my camera and my phone. Returning to my reality in Beirut, I would attempt to reconstruct those moments with the help of this growing archive and my evasive memories. I was aware, however, of the impossibility to build a narrative for this relationship based on established daily routines and common future prospects.

I come from a part of a world where homosexuality is criminalized and dark forces of extremism and intolerance are constantly looming over individual aspirations. Sandro comes from a European reality ever marching towards a seeming utopia for the gay individual and the gay couple.



There are real barriers between us related to the fact that with a Lebanese passport, it is difficult for me to live in Europe, which is increasingly making its borders closed in face of immigrants from the South. Also, Italy does not still recognize gay marriage nor for that matter any form of union between homosexuals.

But beyond these real tangible elements that separate us, our condition stemmed a deeper discussion about the nature of a couple in our modern world, what it means to share life with someone else, form a family or dream of a common future.

These thoughts and elements became the basis of my film, *Eccomi ... Eccoti*, an intimate poetic and political essayistic film.

The film is built as a virtual road trip between Lebanon and Europe; a collage of different visual and auditory material. In Lebanon, I search for peace and acceptance by my social and natural surroundings. Aware of the looming danger of being “caught” or discovered as gay, I become fatalistically drawn towards the vortex of exile and social ostracism. I wander in the city where I grew up to find a place for myself and attempt to mend my broken relationship with my father.

In my trips to Europe, I experience the bliss of freedom and security but I am also aware of the collective indifference and the solitary anonymity I could face.

In this state of suspension between two realities of increasingly diverging worlds, the solace seems to only come from the warmth of one’s shared petty existence with an Other. And when it’s impossible to share daily life with that Other, then only cinema can knit the fragments together to build a seemingly uninterrupted narrative.

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