



ACAF

History of Histories: Afghan Films

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2013

History of Histories: Afghan Films 1960 to Present

Asia Contemporary Art Week 2013
Signature Program
Hosted by Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Co-Curated by Leeza Ahmady and Mariam Ghani
A series of film screenings dedicated to Afghan cinema
and film production.

March 1 - April 5, 2013



Top: *Hamasa E Ishq (Epic of Love)*, 1984 Directed by Latif Ahmadi

Bottom: *Wajima (An Afghan Love Story)* Film Screening and Conversation between Leeza Ahmady, Barmak Akram, and Mariam Ghani at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Friday, April 5, 2013

History of Histories: Afghan Films Curatorial Statement:

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents a dynamic film program, *History of Histories: Afghan Films 1960 to Present*, running from March 1st through April 5th, 2013, dedicated to the evolving landscape of Afghan cinema. Curated by ACAW Director and independent curator **Leeza Ahmady** and artist **Mariam Ghani**, the series will unfold through weekly screenings of newly digitized fiction films, newsreels, propaganda shorts, and documentaries from *Afghan Films*, Afghanistan's national film archive, alongside contemporary works by independent filmmakers, showcasing the rich dialogue between the past and present of Afghan visual culture. The program is organized in connection with *No Country: Regarding South and Southeast Asia*, the inaugural exhibition of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, curated by **June Yap**.

Highlighting a diverse selection of contemporary independent cinema with rarely seen works from Pad.ma (Public Access Digital Media Archive) housed at Afghan Films, the archive's collection reflects Afghanistan's vibrant culture and shifting ideologies from the 1960s to the '90s. In contrast, contemporary film works explore the everyday complexities of life in modern Afghanistan.

The compelling lineup includes recent fiction shorts by Kabul's Jump Cut Film Collective; *Khan-e-Tarikh* (The House of History) (1996), a film essay on the civil war by Afghan Films cameraman Qader Tahiri; *Akhtar Maskara* (Akhtar the Joker) (1980), a feature film adapted by Eng. Latif Ahmadi from a story by Rahnawad Zariab; *Kabuli Kid* (2009), the acclaimed debut feature by Barmak Akram; and documentary shorts produced during the Kabul workshops of Ateliers Varan, a filmmaking training program founded by direct cinema pioneer Jean Rouch.

Ahmady and Ghani's *History of Histories* film program was conceived as a key component of the exhibition *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* in connection with curator June Yap's exploration of the region's artistic diversity, its intertwined histories with neighboring regions such as Central Asia, shared cultural narratives, and common collective challenges. This exploration offers an understanding of aesthetic practices that transcend political and geographic boundaries. The film series provides a complementary view of Afghanistan's cinematic heritage, culminating in an evening screening and discussion with celebrated filmmaker Barmak Akram.

All screenings are free with museum admission. Approximate runtime per screening: 170 minutes and subtitled in English.



Afghan President, Babrak Karmal Press Conference Newsreel 1980 Courtesy of Afghan Films



Afghanistan Hospitality News Reel 1970's Courtesy of Afghan Films

History of Histories: Afghan Films **2-5pm Friday, March 1 and March 22**

Selections from the Afghan Films archive, 1967-80

In a series of select newsreels, documentary and propaganda shorts, and feature film clips drawn from the archive of Afghan Films, Afghanistan's national film institute, the changing fashions, mores and politics of the constantly reconfigured state are reflected.

Khan-e-Tarikh (The House of History), 1996 Directed by Qader

Tahiri The only documentary produced by Afghan Films during the civil war years, *The House of History* is an intensely personal essay film that chronicles the destruction of Kabul during the civil war, followed by a meditation on the ruin of Kabul's archaeological museum and the efforts to save fragments left behind after its destruction in 1991.

Fiction shorts by the Jump Cut Film Collective, 2009-10

The Jump Cut Film Collective was founded in Kabul in 2009 by a group of young, independent filmmakers, who share both production duties and formal concerns. *In the Name of Opium* (dir. **Sayed Jalal Hussaini**) employs a non-traditional, circular narrative structure and no dialogue, while strong cinematography sets up a series of memorable images, each a part of a larger opium-driven vicious cycle.

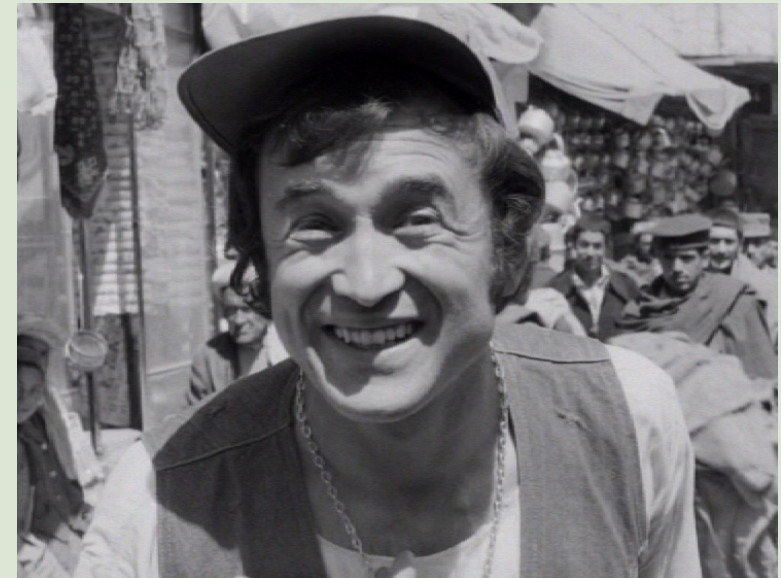
Feature: Akhtar Maskara (Akhtar the Joker), 1980

Directed by Latif Ahmadi

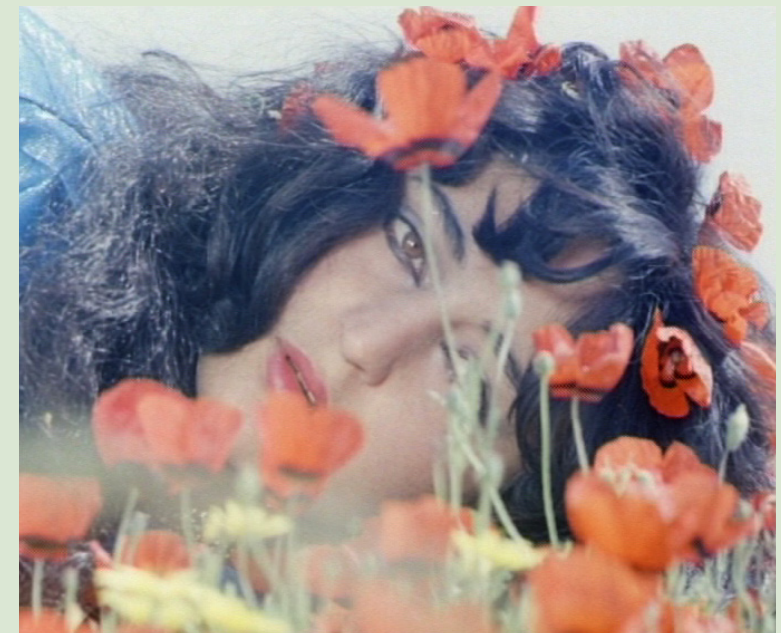
A stinging social critique of the gap between rich and poor, old and new Kabulis at the end of the 1970s, and the story of an unusual young man who falls into the cracks in between. Shot with sharp cinematography, a twisting plot, and occasional breaks where the unreliable narrator addresses the camera directly, it has a quality unlike anything else in Afghan cinema.

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1071 5th Ave,
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Akhtar Maskara (Akhtar the Joker), 1980 Directed by Latif Ahmadi



Hamasa E Ishq (Epic of Love), 1984 Directed by Latif Ahmadi

History of Histories: Afghan Films
2-5pm Friday, March 15 and March 29

Doc shorts from Ateliers Varan Kabul, 2011

Ateliers Varan, the documentary training program initiated by direct cinema pioneer **Jean Rouch**, has operated workshops in Kabul since 2006. The shorts *Dusty Night* and *The Postman* observe the rituals and rhythms of the city without judgment or commentary, unless offered by the participants.

Fiction shorts by the Jump Cut Film Collective, 2009-10

The early shorts from *Jump Cut*, *ANT* (dir. **Hashem Didari**) and *Devious* (dir. **Sayed Jalal Hussaini**), display a preoccupation with the use of non-linear temporal structures, as well as their interest in the illegal and informal economies, and the petty and not so petty thefts, grifts and deceits that spring from the inequities and poverty of Kabul.

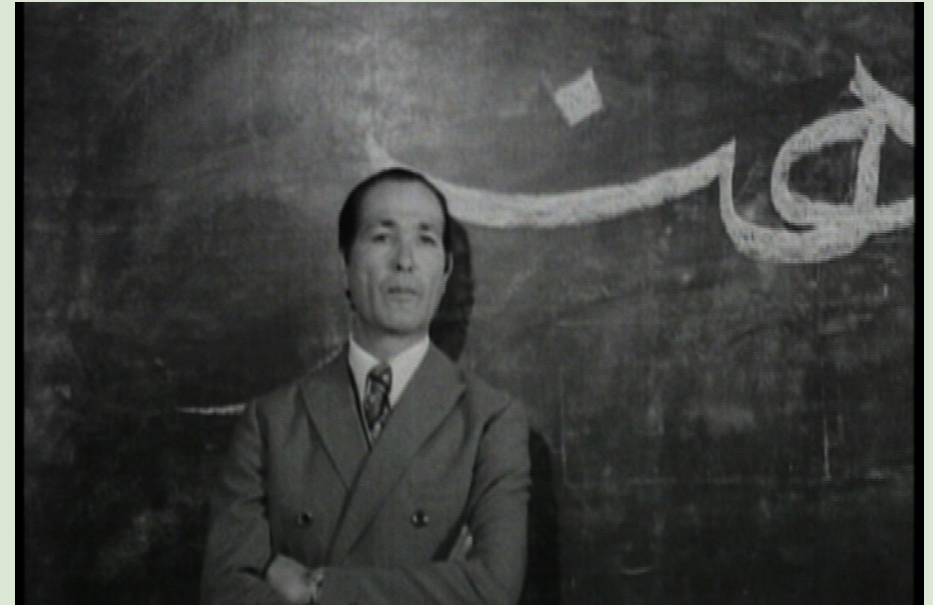
Feature: *Kabuli Kid*, 2009 Directed by Barmak Akram

In writer-director **Barmak Akram**'s debut feature, the life of cab driver Khaled (Hadji Gul) is thrown for a loop when he discovers that his last passenger left an infant boy in the backseat. Khaled embarks on a chaotic adventure from one end of war-torn Kabul to the other to find the mother. *Kabuli Kid* will be screened on March 15 only.

Feature: *Mujasemaha Mekhandan (The Sculptures Are Laughing)*, 1976 Directed by Toryalai Shafaq

The deliriously paced story of an artist who falls in love with a spoiled rich girl, who marries a gangster who draws both his bride and her former love into his wacky schemes. A window into life in Daoud's republic, from art school to fashion shows to house parties to weddings. *Mujasemaha Mekhandan* will be screened on March 29 only.

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Mujasemaha Mekhandan (The Sculptures Are Laughing), 1976



Kabuli Kid, 2009 Directed by Barmak Akram

History of Histories: Afghan Films
6:30pm Friday, April 5

Screening and Conversation with Barmak Akram

Wajma (An Afghan Love Story)

A special one-time screening of *Wajma (An Afghan Love Story)*, the most recent film written and directed by **Barmak Akram** (b. 1966, Kabul) that follows the clandestine relationship of gregarious waiter Mustafa and pretty student Wajma. Beginning as a playful and passionate affair, after Wajma discovers she is pregnant the consequences of the societal rules the pair has broken rapidly unfold. Awarded the World Cinema Dramatic Screenwriting prize at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival.

Following the screening, **Leeza Ahmady** and **Mariam Ghani** join Akram in a discussion about filmmaking in Afghanistan, as well as the historic context and themes of cinema from the region. Program concludes with a reception and exhibition viewing of *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*.

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Wajma (An Afghan Love Story) Film Screening and Conversation between Leeza Ahmady, Barmak Akram, and Mariam Ghani at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum



Wajma (An Afghan Love Story) 2013. Directed by Barmak Akram, film still



Wajma (An Afghan Love Story) 2013. Directed by Barmak Akram, film still



ACAF Asia Contemporary Art Forum

In 2019, **Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACAW)** updated its name to **Asia Contemporary Art Forum (ACAF)** to reflect nearly two decades of programmatic evolution and growth. In 2014, the “n” was dropped from “Asian” in the organization’s name to emphasize Asia as an expansive and inclusive artistic state of mind, transcending geographical and national boundaries.

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