

## Artist of the Month



# Najwa Najjar

The filmmaker and director Najwa Najjar has explored several new artistic grounds as she has written, directed, and produced over a dozen critically acclaimed award-winning films that have premiered at the film festivals in Cairo, Berlin, Cannes, Locarno, and at Sundance. In 2020, she was invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In 2021, she was elected to the European Film Academy EFA and honored for her work at the Aswan International Women's Film Festival and the Tiro Arts Festival in Lebanon. Recently, she was elected to be part of the Academy Writer's Executive Committee.

With a master of arts in filmmaking (US), she has worked in both documentary and fiction since 2000. Her critically acclaimed debut was the feature film *Pomegranates and Myrrh* (2009) that premiered at Sundance and then screened at over 60 festivals, including Rotterdam, Cairo, and Goteborg, receiving many awards along the way. Her second award-winning film, *Eyes of a Thief* (2014), was selected for the Sundance Writer's Lab and the Palestinian nomination for the 2015 Oscars in the category Best Foreign Film; it has also won several prestigious writing and directing awards. Her third feature film, titled *Between Heaven and Earth*, was released in November 2019 and won the 41st Cairo IFF Naguib Mahfouz Best Screenplay award (among



many other awards). It was furthermore selected for the European Film Academy Awards 2020, the Golden Globes, and the Asia Pacific Screen Awards and nominated for the Icelandic TV and Film Academy Awards. Najwa is presently in the preproduction phase of her fourth feature film, titled *Kiss of a Stranger*, a musical.

Previous works include several award-winning films that have also been shown worldwide (Berlin, Cannes, Locarno, Hamptons,) – *Yasmine Tughani* (2006), *Naim and Wade'a* (2000), *Quintessence of Oblivion* (2001), *Blue Gold* (2004), *A Boy Called Mohamad* (2002), and *They Came from the East*, which opened the 2004

European Academy Awards. In addition, Najwa produced a collection of short films by international filmmakers titled *Gaza Winter* (2009).

A speaker on numerous panels on cinema and a jury member of several international film festivals, Najwa has given master classes in directing and writing and has recently started to hold workshops for emerging writers and directors that delve into more detail than her master classes. In addition to book reviews, Najwa has authored articles on Palestinian cinema. She has been a reader for the Rawi Sundance Lab for Arab scriptwriters and an adviser for the Rawi Sundance Scriptwriter's Lab.



Trailers of Najwa's films are available on YouTube: *Between Heaven and Earth* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku9y-Y9xUZs>, *Pomegranates and Myrrh* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgofDQxSGRQ>, and *Eyes of a Thief* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pgNh9kTUaM>. You can find *Between Heaven and Earth* on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/betweenheavenandearthfilmbynajwanajjar/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/betweenheavenandearthfilmbynajwanajjar/about/?ref=page_internal).



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