

Talking About Trees

(Black History Month Film)

Directed by Suhaib Gasmelbari. Sudan, 2019. 93 min. (PG)

Starring: Manar Al Hilo, Suleiman Mohamed Ibrahim,
Altayeb Mahdi, Ibrahim Shadad



The film opens during a black-out in Khartoum that animates four friends to re-enact a classic scene from *Sunset Boulevard*, using their mobile phones.

Gasmelbari (b. 1979) remembers a time in Sudan when “cinema was more popular than football.” His film follows the once famous directors of the Sudanese Film Club, banned by the 1989 military coup, as they set out to bring film history back to the people.

The film was inspired by one such event that Gasmelbari witnessed:

“After they set up the canvas screen and the show started, sandy wind began to blow, moving the screen left and right. Two of them (Manar and Ibrahim) quickly got up and sat on each side of the screen to anchor it down by tying both corners to their chairs. No one left despite the wind, and the audience continued to be engaged by the film. As the wind strengthened, the screen blew up and deflated like the sails of a small boat. Sometimes the picture would go out of frame, and then come back. I was watching the faces of both men as they held the screen while laughing nervously like sailors in a storm. It was then that I felt that this casual trip to this village near Khartoum granted me one of my most important existential lessons about resistance. It ignited the need to make the film.”

The title refers to a poem by Bertolt Brecht that Manar Al Hilo quotes in the film: “What kind of times are these, when to talk about trees is almost a crime, because it implies silence about so many horrors?”

Post-screening Q&A with film critic Danny Leigh

“For those who prefer to watch movies in the comfort of their own streaming services, the eye-opening documentary Talking About Trees may make them reconsider the value, both cultural and political, of being able to see something on the big screen.” Jordan Mintzer, *The Hollywood Reporter*

Berlinale Documentary & Audience awards

You can rate the film by a show of 1 - 5 fingers (5 = top) at the door on the way out. A committee member will be noting the scores.

You can also comment on: Twitter @wfc screenings ; the WFC Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WimbledonFilmClub/> ; or by email to info@wimbledonfilmclub.com

Please dispose of these notes yourself or take them with you. Thank you!