

BACKYARD

by Khaled Abdulwahed

The experimental short film deconstructs and reconstructs copies of the photograph of a Syrian cactus field projected on a wall in a flat in a Berlin backyard. In autumn 1998, near his home in the southwest of Damascus, Khaled Abdulwahed took a landscape photograph of a cactus field on a 35mm chrome film. The old cactus fields in that area link the city with the countryside.

Cacti grow all over the Middle East and are used for their fruits and as borders between houses and villages. The thorny, tough plant is also a symbol of resilience. The cactus field in Khaled's film "backyard" consisted of 500,000 square-yards that belonged to farmers, who used to sell their cactus fruits every summer in the streets of Damascus. In the summer of 2012, the cactus fields were destroyed during the uprising, and the war started to form a new landscape. Khaled's picture on the film was damaged and lost, but he still had a scan of the photography-film. A silhouette of a camera stands in front of the copied picture that is projected on a wall. The silhouette of Khaled's head moves behind the camera, checks the frame, we hear his breathing, the camera's clicking. Khaled searches for the picture on the negative strip, cuts the negative, focuses, zooms, scans and develops. Helicopters, bulldozers, tanks, soldiers, fire and ash hit the cactus field. The picture is being erased. Piece by piece, Khaled carefully reconstructs the photograph's viewpoint with a pen and a circle, he re-develops his picture. Following the cactus field's forceful deformation and the deformation of the cactus field's picture, the battles between original and copy, reality and image, he modifies, overwrites, adapts his memory.

Script/Director/Photography/Sound/Editor **Khaled Abdulwahed**

Director Assistant **Amel Alzakout**

Creative Consultant **Merle Kröger**

Producers **Alex Gerbaulet, Ines Meier**

Produced by **pong film GmbH**

Co-produced by **Khaled Abdulwahed**

Country Germany 2018

Length 26 min.

Format DCP (english Version), 16:9, colour, 5.1 / stereo

Word Premiere

29. FID Marseille - Festival International de Cinéma / International Competition 2018

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Director

Khaled Abdulwahed, born 1975 in Syria, is an artist, filmmaker and photographer based in Berlin.

Between 1996 and 2000 he studied Fine Arts and Graphic Design at Adham Ismail art school in Damascus / Syria, and at Frederick University in Nicosia / Cyprus.

Since 2000 he works as a photographer. In 2002 he had his first solo photography exhibition at Goethe Institute in Damascus. In 2003 he exhibited his art works during the French Cultural Centre Francophone Photography Festival in Damascus and was selected for the Arles World Campus as part of Arles Photography Art Festival in France. In 2008 he exhibited at Dupont Art Space in Paris, 2009 at Art Sawa gallery in Dubai.

Between 2011 and 2015 Khaled Abdulwahed directed and produced the three video artworks 'Bullet' (2011), 'Tuj' (2012) and 'Slot In Memory' (2013) which were screened in many art spaces, festivals, universities and TV channels over the world. For instance, Berlin Art Biennale, Centre Georges Pompidou and the Arab World Institute in Paris, Impakt Festival in Utrecht, Milano Film Festival, University of Chicago, University of Copenhagen and ARTE.

In 2015 Khaled was invited to Berlinale Talents / DOC Station for his first feature length experimental documentary film 'Jellyfish' about the war in Syria. Produced by pong film the film was finished in 2016. It was a.o. selected for Berlinale Forum but due to political reasons Khaled decided to not show it publicly till today.

In 2017 Khaled joined the curatorial team of Berlinale Forum Expanded. In the same year he participated with other artists and filmmakers in the SPOTS campaign for the 'Tribunal Unraveling the NSU complex' in Germany. In 2018, together with his co-director Amel Alzakout, he won the Film Prize for International Cooperation Germany/Arab World by the Robert Bosch Foundation with their new feature length film 'Purple Sea' which will be produced by pong film. In the same year he finished his short film 'backyard' (2018).