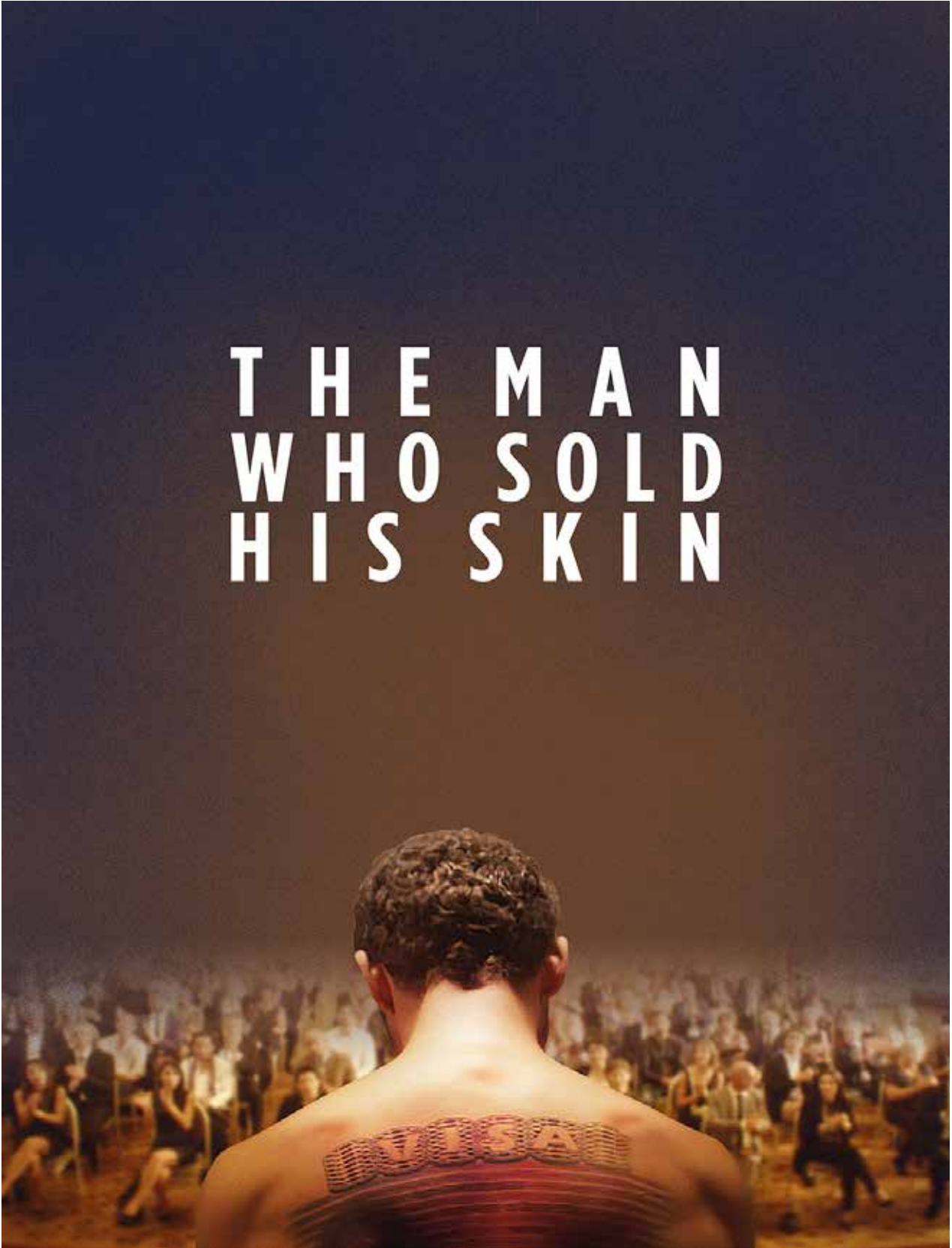


cinéart

PERSMAP

THE MAN
WHO SOLD
HIS SKIN



THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN

EEN FILM VAN KAOUTHER BEN HANIA



NOMINATIE
OSCARS
BESTE BUITENLANDSE FILM



Drama - 2020 - Tunesië - 104 minuten

Bioscooprelease: 14 oktober 2021

Meer over de film: Cineart.nl/films/the-man-who-sold-his-skin

Persmaterialen: Cineart.nl/pers/the-man-who-sold-his-skin

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SYNOPSIS

THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN is de nieuwe film van de Tunesische filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania (BEAUTY AND THE DOGS). De film wordt gedragen door Yahya Mahayni als Sam die zich laat inpalmen door een verraderlijke Monica Bellucci als PA van kunstenaar Godefroi (Koen De Bouw). 'Een prachtig, origineel verhaal over waardigheid, liefde en de ware aard van vrijheid' (Movies that Matter).

Sam Ali wordt van zijn grote liefde gescheiden en ontvlucht Syrië. Hij ontmoet de beroemde en provocerende kunstenaar Jeffrey Godefroi, die van ongebruikelijke objecten waardevolle kunst maakt. Hij biedt Sam de mogelijkheid naar Europa te kunnen reizen door zijn rug beschikbaar te stellen. Sam groeit uit tot een levend kunstwerk dat miljoenen waard is op de kunstmarkt. De vrijheid die hij dacht te vinden, blijkt schijn. Kan hij aan zijn eigen lichaam ontsnappen?

THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN werd genomineerd voor Beste Buitenlandse Film bij de Oscars en was de openingsfilm van het Movies that Matter Festival. Mahayni won op het filmfestival van Venetië de award voor Beste Acteur in het Orizzonti programma. De film is los geïnspireerd op een origineel kunstwerk van Wim Delvoye.



KAOUTHER BEN HANIA

DIRECTOR

A director and screenwriter, Kaouther Ben Hania was born in Sidi Bouzid (Tunisia).

Following film studies at the Ecole des Arts et du Cinéma in Tunis, she studied scriptwriting at La Fémis in Paris. She has a Research Masters in Film and Audiovisual Studies from the Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3.

IMAMS GO TO SCHOOL, her first documentary premiered at IDFA 2010. Her second documentary ZAINEB HATES THE SNOW premiered at Locarno Film Festival 2016 and won several awards.

CHALLAT OF TUNIS, her first feature, opened the ACID section at Cannes Film Festival 2014 and was widely distributed. Her next feature film was BEAUTY AND THE DOGS, which was selected for Un Certain Regard at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival.

She also directed several shorts, including Wooden Hand,(2013) and Sheikh's watermelons (2018) which had a long and successful run on the international festival circuit.

Her latest feature film THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN was selected for the Venice Film Festival in the Orizzonti section, where the lead actor was awarded Best Actor. THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2020 THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN
- 2017 BEAUTY AND THE DOGS
- 2016 ZAINEB HATES THE SNOW (documentary)
- 2014 CHALLAT OF TUNIS (documentary)
- 2013 PEAU DE COLLE (short)
- 2010 IMAMS GO TO SCHOOL (documentary)
- 2006 MOI, MA SOEUR ET LA CHOSE (short)



INTERVIEW: KAOUTHER BEN HANIA

What was the origin of THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN?

The idea for THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN began germinating in my head in 2012. I was at the Louvre in Paris which at the time was devoting a retrospective to Belgium artist Wim Delvoye. There I saw, in Napoleon III Apartments, Delvoye's Tim, (2006 -08) in which the artist had tattooed the back of Tim Steiner, who was sitting on an armchair with his shirt off displaying Delvoye's design.

From that moment, this singular and transgressive image has not left me. Little by little, other elements of my experience, the burning actuality and unforeseen encounters had added to and enriched this image. Once all of these elements came together, the story felt ready and compelled me to write it down. One day in 2014, when I was about to edit the nth version of the screenplay for my previous film BEAUTY AND THE DOGS, I found myself writing non-stop for five days, the story of THE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SKIN.

After the release of Beauty and the Dogs in 2017, I looked at that first draft and started to rework it, to chisel it until I had a solid version. So, the script of The Man Who Sold His Skin was a long process that began with an image and resulted in a rich story.

Can you explain how you came up with the concept of bringing refugees into the art world?

This film is a meeting between two worlds that captivate me: the world of contemporary art and the world of refugees: two sealed worlds which are governed by entirely different codes. On the one hand, we have an established elitist world where freedom is the keyword, and on the other hand, we have a world of survival impacted by current events where the absence of choice is the daily concern of refugees.

The contrast between these two worlds in the film shows a reflection on freedom. When the refugee Sam meets the artist Jeffrey, he tells him, "You were born on the right side of the world."

The problem is we live in a world where people are not equal. Despite all the talk about equality and human rights, the increasingly complex historical and geopolitical contexts ensure there are inevitably two kinds of people: the privileged and the damned.

The film is a Faustian pact between the privileged and the damned. Sam Ali agrees to sell his back to the devil because he has no choice, and thus he enters the elitist and hyper-coded sphere of contemporary art through an unlikely door. His seemingly naive and uneducated gaze presents this world to us from a different angle than the one usually shown by the cultural establishment.

For someone as proud and upright as Sam, becoming an object can drive you crazy. He is exposed, sold, pushed from one side to another. Confronted with an exceptional fate, in the grip of a heartbreaking internal conflict, Sam Ali will try to regain his dignity and his freedom.

How did you choose your actors?

Sam Ali is a sensitive, impulsive, genuine and whole character, "rough on the edges" we might say. He is a lively, flayed man who defends himself with a strong sense of irony and dark humor. To play Sam, I needed a solid actor who had the art of moving from one register to another with ease — an actor with a wide emotional palette. The casting took a long time, but when I saw Yahya Mahayni's audition, I immediately recognized him as a rough diamond. An actor capable of carrying the film on his back!

The actress Dea Liane has appeared in a lot of theatre. She has this rigor and this capacity for work specific to high-level actresses. She stood out from the crowd. Playing Abeer was Dea's first movie role, and it was a real pleasure to direct her, to film her. Abeer is a young girl from a good family, a little bourgeois, who expresses the very kind side of a girl who obeys her parents,

and who doesn't want to take risks. A girl who needs a shake to get her out of her comfort zone.

I personally adore Monica Bellucci, and I wanted to work with her. I sent her the script, and she loved the role. Soraya is a woman who expresses that haughty and snobbish side that is sometimes seen in people who are settled in their jobs and are self-confident, people who master the codes.

Monica is not at all like Soraya in life. She is an extraordinarily humble and sensitive person, but she knows the art world well and she immediately understood the character of Soraya. I remember she called me during the preparation to tell me: "we need to see each other, I have a clear idea of what Soraya looks like". I went to the meeting with fear because I am always afraid of actors who unilaterally decide how their characters should appear. I had my own clear idea of what Soraya would look like and took some hairstyle and costume photos with me that that I had imagined for the character. Monica laid out her vision, and it exactly matched the images I had! We were on the same page from the beginning.

With the character of Jeffrey Godefroy, I wanted to shatter this romantic and has-been idea of the artist as a tortured, marginal being who suffers from his demons that we see a lot in cinema. He is a charismatic, self-confident character who knows the inner workings of the art market and goes as far as throwing a stone in the pond with a provocative work. He is the figure of the creative entrepreneur. Our Belgian co-producer sent me a demo of Koen de Bouw, and it was just Jeffrey! He is a formidable actor with unparalleled charisma.

When he declaims his lines, with the tone of his voice and the charisma he expresses, he puts everyone in his grip. He's got that bewitching thing that smart and powerful men have.

The film brings together many different genres: drama, tragedy, satire, romance, dark humor. How did you manage to mix these different elements?

For me, making a film is like creating a sheet of music. When you write a score, you can't have the same key or tone throughout the piece; otherwise, boredom is guaranteed.

Making a movie is exactly the same. It's a series of emotional variations that we share with the audience. This variation on the theme comes mainly from the emotional journey of the main character. The psychological state of the protagonist dictates each scene. Sam Ali is in love, hence the romance, he undergoes a drama (that of becoming a refugee) and finds himself in a paradoxical world which is a satire, he responds and defends himself with a sense of irony from which black humor derives.

To create each scene, I ask myself this question: what does the character feel at this point in his life? Then I build the scene – its light, its decor, its costumes, its actions and dialogue, its music – to let this emotion shine through.

Moreover, the work that I did with my composer, even before the shooting, reflects this dynamic, accompanies it and supports it.

The film is visually vibrant and beautiful. How did you get this result?

Writing this film immersed me in the history of art and especially in the representation of the human body in painting. I collected an arsenal of images, photos and paintings that could nourish the visual universe of the film. I also storyboarded the majority of the scenes based on the sets selected. At the end of this design work, I met Christopher Aoun, my cinematographer, with whom I spent days and nights discussing every scene, every frame, every tone and the colors of the film. Nothing was left to chance. It was an enchanting brainstorming. With Christopher's creativity, his involvement and his sense of perfectionism, he was able to find technical solutions to magnify everything and go beyond my expectations. It was an enchanting brainstorming. With Christopher's creativity, his involvement and his sense of perfectionism, he was able to find technical solutions to magnify everything and go beyond my expectations.

After your 2014 documentary *Challat of Tunis* and let's not forget *BEAUTY AND THE DOGS* awarded at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 plus a huge success all over the world, what advice can you give to other female directors to try to obtain the same level of success? What is your secret?

There are no secrets! It's a very tough job, but yet oh-so-exciting. A film is like a high-level marathon, it takes years of your life and you can't prepare it the day before. It takes discipline and a lot of work. You have to research, read, learn and be deeply interested in the human soul, history, literature, philosophy and the current political context. You have to forge a vision of the world to then be able to say something interesting. This observation is valid for men as well as for women who want to do this job.

But I'm not naive about the expectations one can have of a director, a woman coming from the South like me. In fact, the first feedback I had on *The Man Who Sold His Skin* was just this sentence that kept coming back: "It's unexpected"!

Talking about the refugees in Europe or the contemporary art in a visual allegory full of colors was unusual for my Tunisian Director profile. Being a screenwriter, a director also means having the ability to think outside the box of your own identity. During the process of writing and directing this film, I myself had to become a Syrian refugee, a contemporary artist, an internationally renowned gallery owner, a young girl trapped in marriage.

Only this otherness, this desire to explore allowed me to go towards something unexpected.



CAST

Sam	ALIYAHYA MAHAYNI
Abeer	ABEER DEA LIANE
Jeffrey Godefroi	KOEN DE BOUW
Soraya Waldy	MONICA BELLUCCI
Ziad	SAAD LOSTAN
Sam's mother	DARINA AL JOUNDI
Hazem	JAN DAHDOUH
William	CHRISTIAN VADIM
Marc Sheen	MARC DE PANDA
Sam's Sister	NAJOUA ZOUHAIR
Adel Saadi	HUSAM CHADAT
Museum guard	NADIM CHEIKHROUHA
Syrian Policeman	RÉMI SARMINI
Syrian Policeman	MOULDI KRIDEN
Curator	RUPERT WYNNE-JAMES
Insurer	WIM DELVOYE

CREW

Writer & Director	KAOUTHER BEN HANIA
Music Composer	AMINE BOUHAFI
Director of Photography	CHRISTOPHER AOUN
Camera	NESTOR SALAZAR
1st assistant director	MARIE FISCHER
Set designer	SOPHIE ABDELKEFI
Editor	MARIE-HÉLÈNE DOZO
Sound designer	ANDERS BILLING VIVE
Re-recording mixer	LENY ANDRIEUX
Continuity	KHADIJA BABAI-BOUASSIDA
Costume designer	RANDA KHEDHER
Make up & Hairdresser	MARYLINE SCARSELLI
Make-up effects	FLORENCE DEPESTELE

