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The challenges faced by the Arab animation cinema

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Arab filmmakers attempt to export their animated films to an international market, and try to speak to other global cultures. They seek to build a bridge between the Arab world and the West through animated films which have been adapted from Arab and Islamic sources, but speak to the universal human condition. The relationship between Islam and the West, though, remains very complicated; the West looks at these projects and already has a perspective about them as religious and ideological propaganda, especially after 9/11, 2001. Thus, the majority of these Arabic animated films are rejected by the West because of concerns that these films represent the unwelcome principles of foreign cultures. Inherently, there is an Islamophobia about Islamic cultural products as soon as they come to the West; there is suspicion of them and extensive interrogation of them. Ironically, when Western artefacts are exported to Arab countries, though almost inherently at odds with Muslim ideology and Muslim politics, they sometimes find distribution and audiences. The consequences of this relationship between Arab countries and the West is not only ideological, however, and is also concerned with the fact that Arab filmmakers and producers face economic challenges, and a number of Arab animation studios went out of business or stopped making more feature animated films due to the difficulties of reaching international marketplaces. Thus, the focus of contemporary Arab animation is mostly low budget projects distributed through YouTube and social media, which became the main platform for Arab animation artists to distribute their political works during the 'Arab Spring' in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East since 2011.

Biography

Tariq Alrimawi is a Jordanian Animated Film Director. His first degree, which was obtained in 2006 from the University of Petra, Jordan, was in Graphic Design. In 2010, he graduated with a Master's degree in Animation from Newport Film School in the United Kingdom. His graduation stop-motion film entitled "Missing" was screened at more than 100 international film festivals including the Academy Award Qualifying Festivals, the Tokyo Short Shorts International Film Festival and the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. The film has also received 12 awards domestically and internationally. He completed his PhD studies about Arab Animation Cinema at The Animation Academy at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor at the Graphic Design Department at the University of Petra.

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