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BENEATH A MOTHER'S FEET

A SHORT FILM

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
ELIAS SUHAIL

2023 / 15m 31s / UK, MOROCCO / DARIJA ARABIC / DRAMA



INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS, *BENEATH A MOTHER'S FEET* TELLS THE STORY OF WEDAD, A SINGLE MOTHER IN MOROCCO, WHO FINDS HERSELF AT A DIFFICULT JUNCTURE IN HER LIFE. WEAVING CINEMA VERITÉ WITH SURREALISM, WE OBSERVE WEDAD'S INTERNAL STRUGGLE AS SHE FACES AN UNTHINKABLE DECISION: TO WALK AWAY FROM HER LIFE AND HER CHILDREN'S FUTURES.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As a young woman in her native Morocco, my mother found herself at an impasse. A divorcée raising two young children alone while living with her parents in their modest one room bungalow, she struggled to imagine a future for herself. In the midst of profound emotional turmoil, she secretly sold the gold bangles from her dowry, secured a passport, and took a fateful step away from everything she knew, including her children.

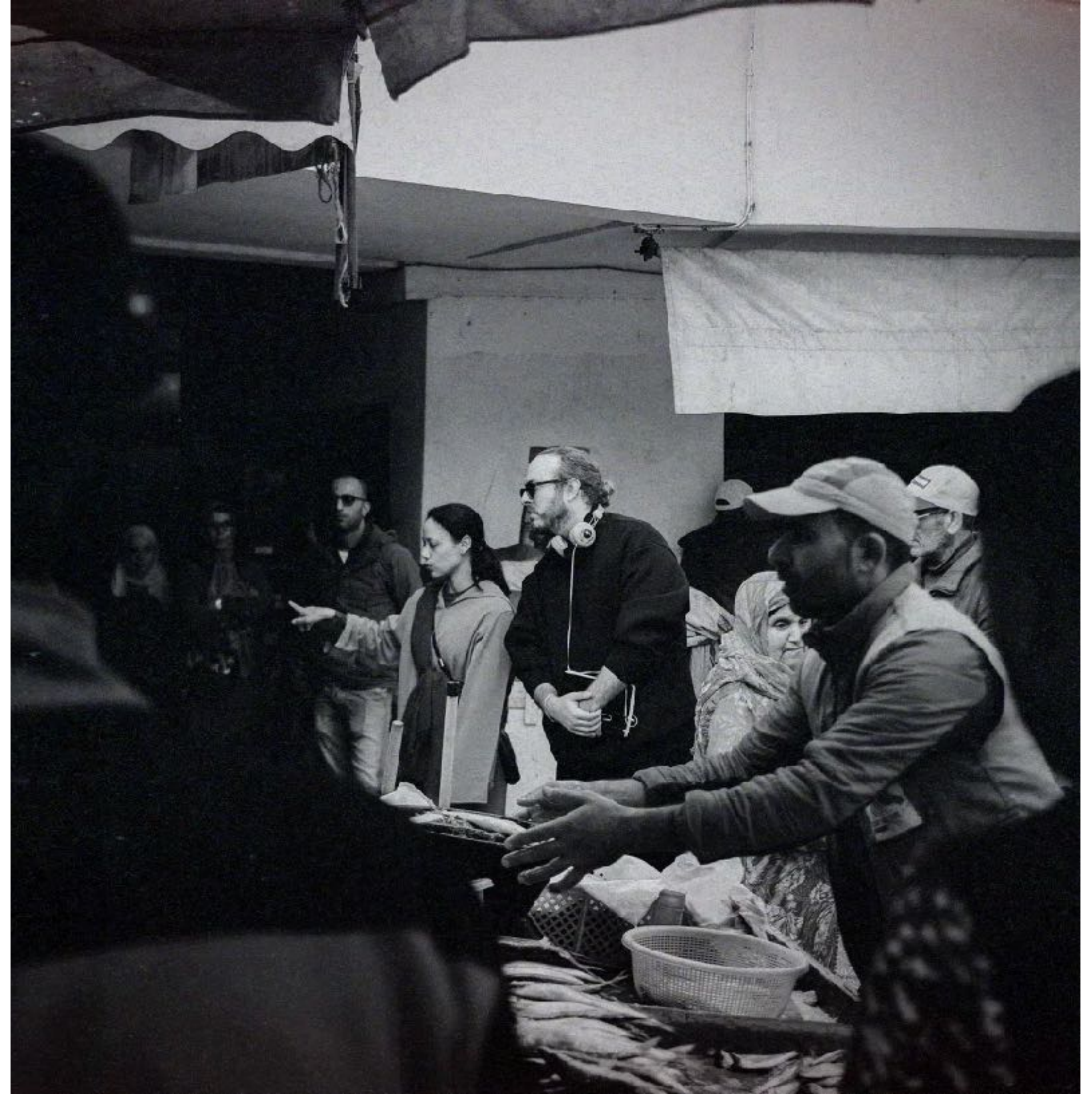
This film reconstructs the thirty six hours leading up to that moment of departure, seeking to unearth the tangled and often contradictory emotions she must have experienced.

Beneath a Mother's Feet is, in part, an inquiry into the stories that have been carried, reshaped, and retold across generations of my family. It recounts events that took place before I was born, yet whose consequences have rippled forward in time, shaping lives in enduring ways, including my own. What my mother lived through did not simply precede me. It set the course for everything that followed. More than fifty years later, I return to those events through film, attempting to render an incoherent past intelligible, and to use cinema as a means of exploring interior truths and, perhaps, moving toward healing and reconciliation.

The film is also a call to recentre the lives of the matriarchs in my family, women who were compelled into predetermined lives of domesticity and childrearing, often marked by hardship. Yet these lives were also defined by courage, endurance, and, in quieter forms, resistance to the expectations imposed upon them.

At its heart, this is a story about the limits of maternal ambivalence and self discovery, assembled from fragments of memory and imagination. It dwells in the uneasy space between love and leaving, between sacrifice and survival, offering both a mirror and a bridge between past and present, speech and silence, what is visible and what remains unseen.

As the writer and director, I did not want merely to recount a story. I wanted to create space for reflection. While the film stands as a tribute to my mother, it also confronts a painful and often unspoken crossroads where personal aspiration collides with familial and societal expectation. A mother leaving her children may appear unforgivable. It may also be an act of defiant bravery. This film seeks to honour the gravity, tension, and complexity of that decision.

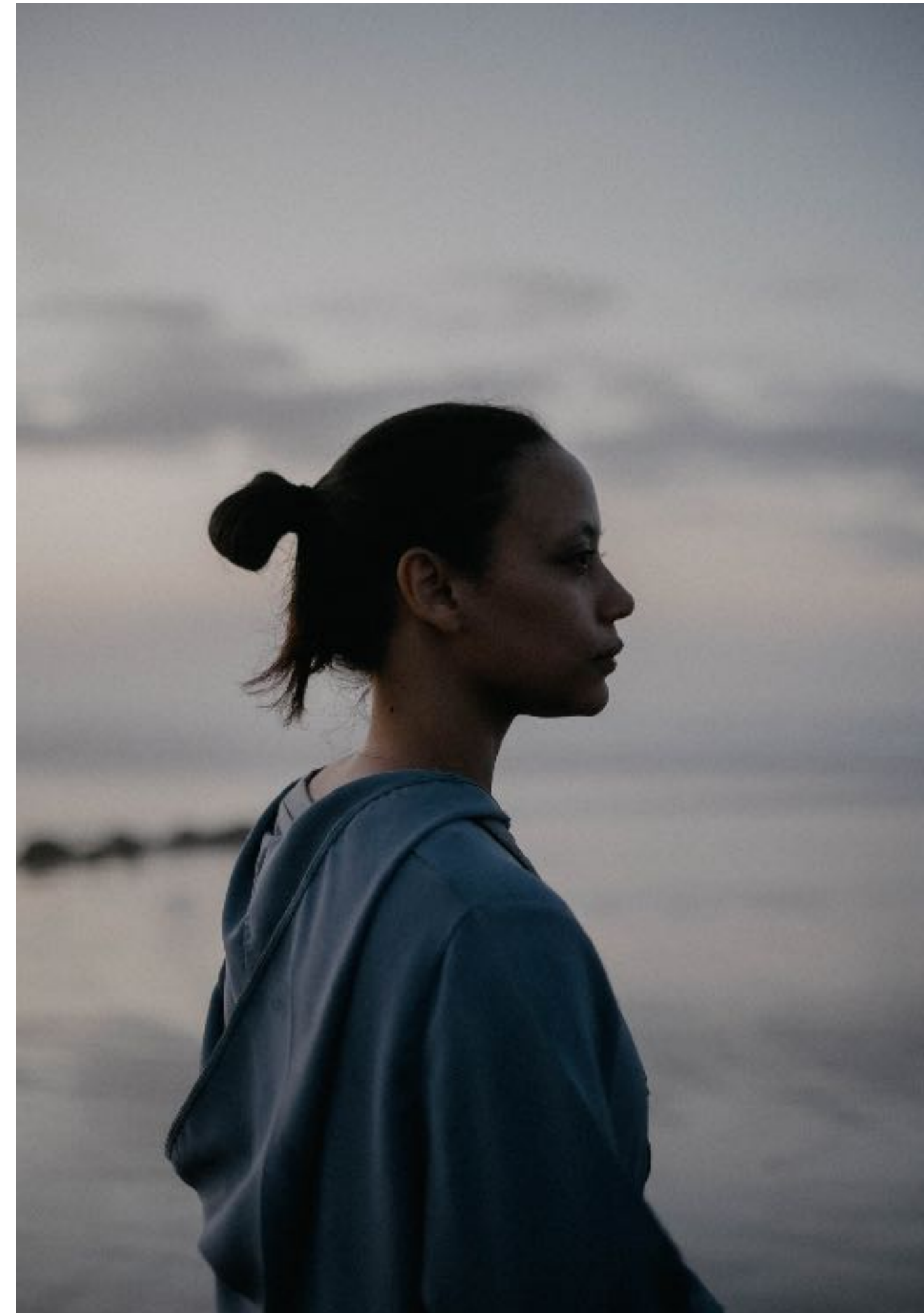




A P P R O A C H

ERASURE & RECONSTRUCTION

Beneath a Mother's Feet is not a straightforward retelling but a reconstruction of the past, shaped by memory, erasure, and imagination. Drawing on family stories, fragmented recollections, and dream imagery, the film uses subtle surreal elements to articulate interior states that resist direct expression. What emerges is a work shaped as much by absence as by what remains - dwelling in the spaces between memory and forgetting, silence and testimony.







KEY CAST & CREW



NISRINE ADAM - WEDAD (CAST)

A native of Casablanca, Morocco, Nisrine Adam is a rising star in the world of cinema. Nisrine graduated from the renowned Cours Florent drama school in Paris in 2016. She has since appeared in a number of dramas for both the big and small screens, notably No Man's Land, alongside Mélanie Thierry; the SAS Rogue Heroes TV drama series; Kidnapped, directed by Seong Hun Kim; and the acclaimed Netflix TV show Viking Valhalla, directed by Hannah Quinn.



ELIAS SUHAIL - WRITER/DIRECTOR

Elias is a British-Moroccan writer and filmmaker whose work explores the complexities of the human condition, liminalities and those who exist on the cultural margins. He has written work for the stage, as well as had his work featured on BBC Sounds and published in The New Statesman. Beneath a Mother's Feet is Elias's screenwriting and directorial debut.



ARIJ AL-SOLTAN - PRODUCER

Arij Al-Soltan is a British-Iraqi producer and documentary director whose films seek to offer alternative narratives and provoke a sense of self-introspection. Her credits include the critically acclaimed C4, Rose d'Or nominated drama series Baghdad Central, documentaries Korean Lovers in Baghdad and Safia, and a short fiction film Tabbouleh & Pie. Arij works with a number of emerging British, Middle Eastern and international talents to produce films that offer unexplored perspectives.



WILL HANKE - CINEMATOGRAPHER

Will Hanke's foundation of experience came from studying fine art and working in film labs early in his career. He has since directed his talents towards shaping the visual narratives of high-end television dramas, including Ghosts, Feel Good and Starstruck. His unique blend of experiences serves as the driving force behind his innovative and evocative approach to storytelling and he is passionate about working with filmmakers who have a passion for originality and pushing limits.





Q U O T E S

“A luminously flawless, gracefully assured piece of work.”

Michel Faber, Author of Under the Skin

“A masterfully crafted, thought-provoking and visually captivating work of art.”

MovieFest UK ★★★★★

“A strong and poignant film.”

Rebecca O’Brien, BAFTA-winning Producer

“A testament to the beauty and depth of Moroccan stories—a magnificent achievement.”

Youssef Kerkour, BAFTA-winning British-Moroccan Actor

“A bold, bare and daring film.”

UK Film Review ★★★★★

“A breath of fresh air. A story of many, yet unique in its sentiment and delivery.”

Souad Talsi MBE, Al-Hasaniya



SELECTED PRIZES

Tangier Film Festival

Winner: The Golden Cave Award for Best Fiction Short

Festival du Film PanAfricain Cannes

Winner: Dikalo Award for Best Short Film (Drama)

Bristol Independent Film Festival

Winner: Best Foreign Film

European Cinematography Awards (ECA)

Winner: Best Short Film

Toronto Arab Film Festival

Winner: Juthour Award for Most Promising Filmmaker

Lift-Off Season Awards 2023

Winner: Best First-Time Filmmaker

Winner: Audience Choice Award

Dumbo Film Festival

Winner: Best Short Narrative

A FULL LIST OF AWARDS & NOMINATIONS CAN BE FOUND AT [BENEATHAMOTHERSFEET.COM](https://www.beneathamothersfeet.com)



F I L M I N F O R M A T I O N

Film Title

Beneath a Mother's Feet

Logline

Inspired by true events, Beneath a Mother's Feet tells the story of Wedad, a single mother in Morocco, who finds herself at a difficult juncture in her life. Weaving cinema verité with surrealism, we observe Wedad's internal struggle as she faces an unthinkable decision: to walk away from her life and her children's futures.

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Distribution Status

The film has completed its festival run and is currently available for European online and broadcast distribution.

Technical Info

Running Time: 15:31

Exhibition Format: DCP; ProRes 422HQ

Country of Origin: UK/Morocco

Language: Darija Arabic

Subtitles: English, French

Camera: Sony Venice

Aspect Ratio: 2:39:1

Film Colour: Colour

www.beneathamothersfeet.com