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JULY AUGUST PRODUCTIONS & WINDEL OV/LASSEN PRESENT

MOUNTAIN

A FILM BY
YAELE KAYAM

SHANI KLEIN AVSHALOM POLLAK HAITAM OMARI

CASTING BY MICHAL KOREN COSTUME DESIGNER HILA GLICK PRODUCTION DESIGNER NETA DROR SOUND DESIGN PETER ALBRECHTSEN ITZIK COHEN MUSIC BY OPHIR LEIBOVITCH
EDITED BY OR BEN DAVID DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ITAY MAROM CO-PRODUCERS RIINA SPOERRING ZACHARIASSEN VIBEKE WINDEL OV STINNA LASSEN
PRODUCED BY EILON RATZKOVSKY YOSSI UZRAD YOCHANAN KREDO LISA SHILOACH UZRAD GUY JACOEEL WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY YAELE KAYAM

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WINDEL OV/LASSEN



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July August Productions and Windelov/Lassen present

MOUNTAIN

a film by YAELE KAYAM

Israel-Denmark – 2015 – 83 min – Scope

International Press

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SYNOPSIS

A devout woman is living with her family in the Jewish cemetery on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives. During the day, while her husband and children are at school, she is left alone in the mountain. She goes for walks in the cemetery, trying to escape the endless house work.

One night, out of frustration, she storms out of the house climbing the cemetery, running wherever her feet will carry her. To her surprise, she is exposed to an unsettling sexual scene. Stirred by this image, she starts exploring this new realm of the mountain, while trying to keep a normal face during her day-time routine. Until she can't anymore.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

My work begins with cultural landscapes. Places that evoke my imagination and inspire me to spend time in them, research their history and mythologies as well as present day feelings, and create a film that takes place within their midst.

I was always drawn to the Mount of Olives – a massive mountain covered with tombstones holding the Oldest active Jewish cemetery in the world, two churches and a mosque. Walking around the mountain and spending time in it, I was exposed to the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions that surround it. It seems to me that many of them are engraved in our collective unconscious.

I am interested in exploring characters through the use of landscape, and placing them in extreme settings that both limit them and enable their transformation.

In «Mountain,» I'm exploring the physical and spiritual predicament of a woman who is a wife and a mother. A woman who is no longer desired by her husband but still desires him, in a tremendously charged location at the crossroads of the world's three monotheist religions.

The film is constructed from small events and everyday nuances that collide in an emotional peak. In a sense, like a mountain, it is formed slowly by inner tectonic forces.



THE ORIGINS OF THE FILM PROJECT

From the Mount of Olives there is a clear view to the Temple Mount. It is believed that the era of redemption will originate there and the first people to be resurrected will be those who are buried on the Mount of Olives. The tension between a mountain that is a graveyard and a mountain that symbolizes salvation is what inspired the story of the film. I started spending time on the mountain, walking up and down it, and conversing with the different people that I met there: visitors, mourners, rabbis and also Abed, the Palestinian caretaker of the cemetery. Another source of inspiration was a tale from the «Talmud» (contains the teachings and opinions of thousands of pre-Christian era rabbis), a short story about Rabbi Hiyya who no longer desires his wife and the struggle she goes through in her attempts to regain his affection.

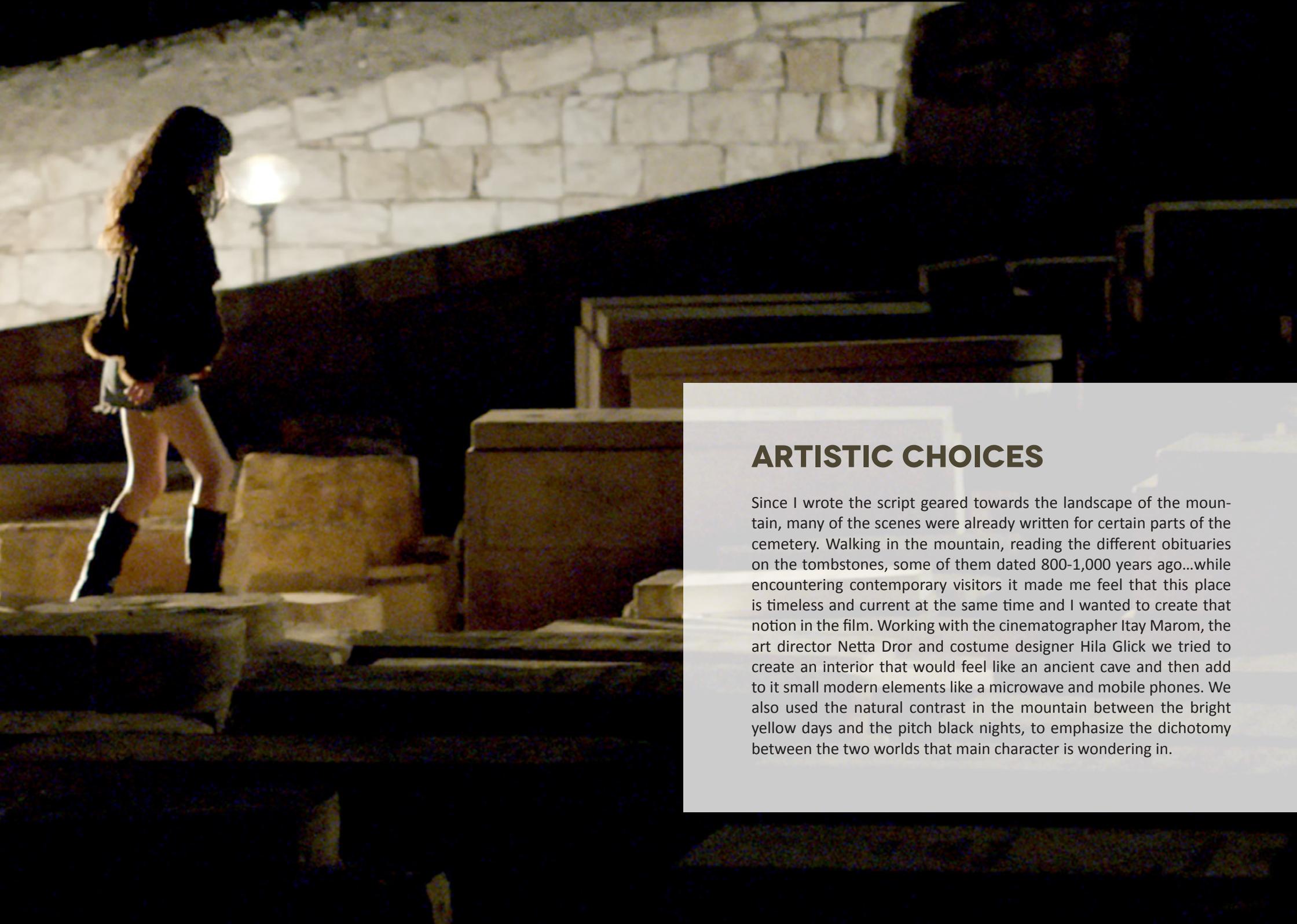
SOCIAL AND COMMUNITIES ARCHETYPES

Over the years I have lived in different societies and communities. I have close friends who were secular and became ultra orthodox, I have friends that grew up in orthodox families and are now secular and friends that refuse to define themselves and who object to a clear dichotomy between religious and secular, between «modern» and «traditional». One thing I came to realize over the years is that the challenges that women face in different societies and communities are very similar, and only the external expression of the same issues differs. The split in the character of the woman into opposing archetypes of the «righteous woman» and «the whore» still echoes and affects how many women perceive themselves today, myself included. The film does not try to depict the lives of a current religious community or merely the role of women within a traditional society. I isolated the family and the story from every current community in order to create the atmosphere of a tale, an allegory, with the exception of a few scenes (those with Abed and her visit to the city center) that connects us with the here and now of Jerusalem.

At the heart of the film there is a woman that just wants to be loved and desired by her husband and refuses to acknowledge the death of their intimacy

The main character stays nameless. In the film, no one calls her by her name: the children call her «mother», Abed calls her “Mrs.” and her husband does not call her at all. The only person that asks for her name is the prostitute in the film, but does she say her real name?





ARTISTIC CHOICES

Since I wrote the script geared towards the landscape of the mountain, many of the scenes were already written for certain parts of the cemetery. Walking in the mountain, reading the different obituaries on the tombstones, some of them dated 800-1,000 years ago...while encountering contemporary visitors it made me feel that this place is timeless and current at the same time and I wanted to create that notion in the film. Working with the cinematographer Itay Marom, the art director Netta Dror and costume designer Hila Glick we tried to create an interior that would feel like an ancient cave and then add to it small modern elements like a microwave and mobile phones. We also used the natural contrast in the mountain between the bright yellow days and the pitch black nights, to emphasize the dichotomy between the two worlds that main character is wondering in.

The background image is a photograph of a stone quarry or cemetery. In the foreground, there are numerous rectangular stone blocks stacked in neat rows. In the background, a stone building with a yellow door and a window is visible. A person wearing a white headscarf and a dark jacket is walking near the building. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

WORKING WITH THE ACTORS

Although in the film there is strong symbolism, when I worked with the actors it was important to me to create very earthly and rounded characters. I worked separately and differently with each one of them on their characters. It was important to me that the two older daughters of the family (those with speaking roles) would come from religious families. So they would know by heart the rituals and the prayers and would slip naturally into the family in the film. We eventually found them with the help of a great Facebook group that is called :»I am too a religious feminist with no sense of humor«- a hilarious group by the way- one of the members of that group is a documentary filmmaker and she helped us access mothers in order to audition the girls. When casting the roll of Abed I knew I wanted Hitham Omry. He is a photo journalist who has appeared a year earlier in the Israeli film «Beit Lechem» as a cruel Palestinian terrorist. He gave a strong dramatic performance. In Israeli cinema and television there are hardly any Palestinian characters, and the majority of these roles are those of “terrorists.” I wanted to take the «scary terrorist» and give him the role of gentle Abed, to make the breaking of taboo in the relation between Abed and the main character even stronger.



YAELE KAYAM

Yaelle Kayam is a filmmaker and a film lecturer at the «Sapir college» film department. She studied cinema at the Victorian College of the Arts (2004-2006) in Melbourne, Australia and at the Sam Spiegel film and Television school in Jerusalem (2006-2008).

Her graduate film «Diploma» (22 min) won third place at the Cinefondation, Cannes film festival 2009. «Diploma» was screened in over 70 festivals worldwide, won 14 international awards, was purchased for screening by the French television company Canal+, and screened at the Moma: Museum of Modern Art in NYC.

Her feature script «Sameria» (in development) has received the following development scholarships : Cinefondation- the Cannes Film Festival writing résidence, Berlin 24\7 Scholarship and Sundance Script Lab.

Mountain is her debut feature film.

CAST

Tzvia
Reuven
Abed

SHANI KLEIN
AVSHALOM POLLAK
HAITHAM IBRAHEM OMARI

CREW

Director	YAELE KAYAM
Screenwriter	YAELE KAYAM
Cinematography	ITAY MAROM
Production Design	NETA DROR
Editing	OR BEN DAVID
Music	OPHIR LEIBOVITCH
Casting Director	MICHAL KOREN
Costume Design	HILA GLICK
Make-up Artist	MICHAL LESMAN BEN TOVIM
Production Sound Mixer	TULLY CHEN
Sound Design & Mix	PETER ALBRECHTSEN, ITZIK COHEN
Line Producer	MATAN GAIDA
First Assistant Director	ADIN WEINER
Producers	EILON RATZKOVSKY YOCHANAN KREDO LISA & YOSSI UZRAD GUY JACOEL
Co-producers	RIINA SPØRRING ZACHARIASSEN VIBEKE WINDELØV STINNA LASSEN
Production	JULY AUGUST PRODUCTIONS
In co-production with	WINDELØV/LASSEN PRODUCTIONS
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