



cinemini
europe



How to create a meaningful
film experience with
WHEN CITIES FLY



A project on film education for 3-6 year old's

From a very young age, children are open to many different forms of art. Film, as an audiovisual medium, is particularly attractive and accessible for almost all children. Children not only enjoy moving image and easily engage with narrative films and documentaries, but also actively respond to abstract and experimental films, which give them a lot of room for imagination.

Children see movies on a daily basis. How can we make film watching a meaningful experience? How and what can we teach children in a very early age about film and media, since the early years are the most formative? We try to answer these questions on a practical way in Cinemini Europe, a film education project with films, activities and teaching materials for children between 3-6 years old.

With Cinemini Europe we want to give children and care takers the opportunity to discover the diverse world of moving image in a meaningful and fun way. We believe it is not primarily about understanding film, but rather experiencing it. By watching, playing and reflecting on moving image, we want to stimulate the development of creativity and critical thinking and spark a love for film.

Cinemini Europe is an European project by Das Österreichische Filmmuseum, Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum, Eye Filmmuseum, Kinodvor Cinema Ljubljana, Taartrovers and is supported by Creative Europe.

This material is created to support the creation of meaningful film educational activities.

WHEN CITIES FLY

Director Khaled Mzher
Country Germany
Year 2017
Prod. by Bildersturm Film-
produktion GmbH Academy
of Media Arts Cologne WDR -
Westdeutscher Rundfunk
Goethe Institut
Length 4 minutes
Image colour
Sound sound



Synopsis

High above the roofs of Amman, the capital of Jordan, the camera follows objects that fly: People standing on the roofs of their houses guide their kites into the air, small flocks of birds circle the sky. Towards the second half of the film the camera finds a group of young children playing in the remains of a torn down building. Instead of kites they only have empty plastic bags which they try to get up into the air. The camera comes closer and begins to interact with the children.

Film aesthetic

When Cities Fly is shot with a 16mm camera and could seem to show random shots of Jordan at a first glance. It is only by looking very thoroughly that one can detect certain aesthetic and narrative cues to follow while watching the film. First of all there is the element of flying which the film opens up through images of people trying to fly their kites, of birds and – later in the film – of the young children who use shopping bags instead of kites. The camera takes up the motif of flying in its movements which are performed in a floating manner. Also the film takes up the ideas of being on top and being on the ground which are part of the act of flying by contrasting the kites and birds in the air to the children who are on the ground. This is emphasized by the first shot which is looking down at the children playing in the remains of a torn down building – a bleak contrast to the flying objects but also to the other inhabitants of the city who are standing on rooftops and balconies.

Repeatedly, the image itself begins to flicker and light up, a phenomenon caused by the filmstrip running out in the camera. This in combination with the

light, repetitive, floating music of a string instrument creates the impression of a light, ephemeral film which manages to speak of a relevant, pressing issue nevertheless.

Filmmaker(s)

Khaled Jamal Mzher (Khaled Nawal) was born in Damascus in May 1984. He graduated from the Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus in 2007 and was in the directing department of the the National Polish Film, Television and Theatre School in Lodz between 2009 and 2011. In 2012 he continued his studies at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin (dfffb). In May 2015 he became a recipient of The German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes).

Creating a meaningful film experience

General suggestions on how to work with this film:

- 1 Prepare a meaningful screening for the children, in cinema, at school or kindergarten (ideal setting: large screen, a bit of darkness, clear but not too loud sound, space for playing – potentially with an installation or else with a simple set up like table and drawing paper or light and shadow).
- 2 Have an introductory dialogue with the children on film in general and the project: ask about their personal experiences with film, ask if they've seen a film in a cinema before, tell them about the project and the visit, and discuss the rules.
- 3 Introduce the film(s) and watch the film.
- 4 Allow the children to bodily articulate reactions and to share emotions, thoughts and notifications about their experience.
- 5 Create a safe surrounding for a discussion and encourage a dialogue. Try to let the kids talk and collect what they have to say, draw connections between what they have seen, articulate similarities and follow up on differences (why have different kids seen things differently although they have seen the same film?).
- 6 Let the children process the films by playing freely (with one of the installations or a simple alternative).
- 7 Hand out the activity cards, and let the children play in groups or individually.
- 8 Repeated viewing: watch films again (and again, and again: children love repetition and learn from it).

Talking & Activity suggestions

- 1 Start a discussion on what the children have seen, be prepared for all sorts of leads to follow, due to the openness of film. Slowly lead the discussion towards the aspect of flying and how it might connect the first part of the film to the second.
- 2 Ask the children what they think who the children are. Start by pointing out the fact that they are the only people in the film which the camera decides to

show up close. Collect all statements made about the children and put them together to see what the conclusion might be.

- 3 Prepare some stills of the children's faces at the end and show them one after the other. Let the children say what they think when they see these images.

The activity cards

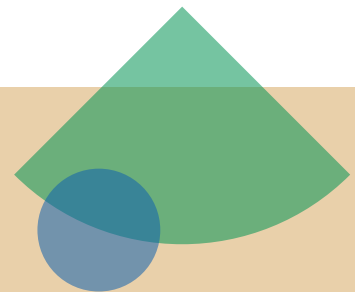
For each film of the Cinemini Europe project two or more activity cards have been created. The activity cards are nice treasures for the children, a remembrance of what they've seen. The assignment on each card invites to reflect and elaborate a bit more on the film. With simple and playful activities like drawing, dancing, acting or imagining children can work on the development of various skills, such as fine motor skills, speaking and listening skills and social and emotional skills. The activity cards can be done in groups, individually, in class or at home.

Further watching or viewing

The following films from the cinemini Europe project might be a good addition to *When Cities Fly*:

Tér – This film could be a good addition if wanting to talk more about the documentary aspect of cinema. As *When Cities Fly* it is a film that does not really tell a story and explains nothing and basically just decides to look at the world.

La petite fille et son chat – To follow up on the idea that a simple image of a child reveals a lot about how it lives this film might work as a stark contrast, making visible a child in a bourgeois surrounding, with a pet, in a safe environment.



Colophon

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