

Short Film by CIRS Researcher Premieres at Ajyal Festival

A new original film by Suzi Mirgani, a researcher from Georgetown University in Qatar's Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS), recently premiered at the Doha Film Institute's Ajyal Youth Film Festival. The short film, titled *There Be Dragons*, was one of 16 local productions showcased in the Made in Qatar program at the festival.

The three-minute film was conceived in a workshop organized by the University's student-run Film Society, where Mirgani is one of the mentors, along with Abdullah Al-Arian. A number of Georgetown students, including CIRS interns Mohammed Al Jaber (SFS '19) and Waleed Zahoor (SFS '18), and Film Society members, Rawan Al-Zaini (SFS '19) and Mehaira Mahgoub (SFS '19), also helped with its creation.

There Be Dragons' title comes from the term that was used to describe unexplored territory on historic maps, which suggested that the unknown spaces were filled with mystical monsters. The film explores how this mystery surrounding the unfamiliar is present in contemporary Doha.

"In this film, I play with the idea of the unknown in modern times, and create a kind of 'map of modernity.' In the age of digital technology, Google Maps, and omnipresent CCTV surveillance, is there anything left undiscovered? I argue that there is," explained Mirgani, managing editor for publications at CIRS. "Since most of the earth is explored, boxed, and bordered, perhaps the unknown now exists on an entirely different realm—the realm of technology."

To show this alternative, unexplored part of the city, Mirgani combined footage she had taken of scenes around Doha over a number of years. From flickering lights to the revolutions of a funhouse ride and self-playing pianos, the film suggests that the city lives a life of its own.

"I think one of the most interesting aspects of this film is that it is both experimental and documentary," said Mirgani. "Doha changes so quickly that it is often difficult to hold on to any specific memories of pace and place; new landscapes are brought to life, even as old landmarks are bulldozed and buried. It is both developing and super modern."

There Be Dragons is the latest of a number of short films Mirgani has produced, edited, and directed. Her short film *Caravan* premiered at the Ajyal Youth Film Festival last year, and her 2013 film *Doha Lullaby* won the Jury Award for the Doha Film Institute's 48-Hour Film Challenge.

The CIRS researcher, who has edited and written numerous publications on topics ranging from media and politics to food security in the Middle East, is also the director of 2014's *Hind's Dream*. That film, produced with a cast and crew of Georgetown students, won the jury award for artistic vision at the 2014 Ajyal Film Festival and has been screened at film festivals around the world.