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Media Contact: Barbara Levitov
781-283-2034, blevitov@wellesley.edu
www.davismuseum.wellesley.edu

Visions of Struggle: Women's Filmmaking in the Mediterranean

**Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Collins Cinema
Wellesley College
November 2-3, 2007**

Wellesley, MA- *Visions of Struggle: Women's Filmmaking in the Mediterranean*, a two-day international symposium, will illustrate the hybrid expressions of modernity as manifested in the ways of being a woman in struggle in the Mediterranean area, paying special attention to women's cinema as a form of counter-cinema and reinterpretation of women's shifting roles. Organized around socio-political themes, the symposium hosts world renowned speakers who will examine films that denounce violence and abuse, expose hypocrisies, and address the consequences of cultural conflicts and changes in women's lives in Mediterranean countries today.

The symposium features eleven internationally distinguished film, media and women's studies scholars, and one independent director and producer. The presenters, coming from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States, will present their critical work in four panels chaired by Wellesley College faculty: Elena Gascon-Vera, Spanish; Frances Malino, Jewish Studies and History; Salem Mekuria, Art; and Winifred Wood, Writing Program.

Visions of Struggle is the enterprise of Flavia Laviosa, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Italian Studies at Wellesley College. She designed this symposium to use neighboring countries in the Mediterranean rim as the general unifying geo-cultural location for a contemporary discussion on women's human, civil and social rights, health and gender

issues. This event represents an effort to situate feminist arguments on questions of women's psychology, anthropology, and sexual politics. Such issues will be examined through the scholarly analysis of films by contemporary Mediterranean women directors including:

- Roberta Torre (Italy)
- Isabel Coixet and Iciar Bollain (Spain)
- Clare Denis, Virgine Despentes, Marina De Van, Coralie Trinh Thi (France)
- Antouanetta Angelici, Kleoni Flessa (Greece)
- Maja Weiss (Slovenia)
- Karin Jurschick (Bosnia-Herzegovina/ Germany)
- Mandy Jacobson, Karen Jelincic (Croatia)
- Julie Cohen-Gerstel (Israel)
- Randa Chahal Sabbag (Lebanon);
- Azza al-Hassan, Nassim Amouche, Nahed Awwad, Annmarie Jacir, Mona Hatoum, Mai Masri (Palestine/England)
- Jocelyne Saab (Egypt)
- Yamina Bachir-Chouik (Algeria)
- Selma Baccar, Nadia El Fani, Moufida Tlatli (Tunisia)
- Farida Benlyazid (Morocco).

“With *Visions of Struggle*, I am attempting to elaborate a multi-faceted and trans-cultural definition of being a woman today transcending geo-ethnic boundaries and bringing together shared life experiences. These films are expressions of cultural contestation, political advocacy, and artistic commitment for Mediterranean women's collective experience of struggle,” says Laviosa.

The symposium is opened to the public with the Welcoming Remarks by Wellesley College new President Kim Bottomly, on Friday evening, November 2. The event features keynote speaker Yosefa Loshitzky, Professor of Film and Media Studies in the School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of East London,

who will introduce the symposium with her paper *Veiling and Unveiling the Mediterranean: Palestine/Israel between East and West*.

“Although the Mediterranean, as a geopolitical entity and as an ideological concept, has rested on an historical process of absorbing, hybridising, and assimilating different people from diverse ethnic, religious and national groups, its hegemonic culture imagines, views and re-presents itself as the origin and cradle of ‘European civilisation’ at the expense of excluding its rich and diverse Arab, Muslim, Jewish, Levantine, African and Semitic cultures,” explains Loshitzky.

Following the keynote address, Palestinian independent director and producer Buthina Canaan Khoury, from Ramallah, will present her newly released documentary *Maria’s Grotto* (2007), in Arabic with English subtitles. A gripping portrait of four women, whose lives were dictated by a moral code, *Maria’s Grotto* is a painfully true film about the practice of honor killings in Palestine. “Honor killings are considered a taboo subject. The common conception is that if a woman commits adultery or any sexual act outside marriage, she brings dishonor to her family. This can only be purged by her death,” explains Khoury. The screening of *Maria’s Grotto* is co-presented by Boston Palestine Film Festival <http://bostonpalestinefilmfest.org/>.

Organized around clusters of countries, such as Italy and Greece, France and Spain; and geographical areas including Balkans, Middle East and Maghreb, presentations, scheduled on Saturday November 3, will explore women’s issues in relation to the following topics:

Organized crime by Àine O’Healy, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA.

Radical filmmaking by Maria Komninos, University of Athens, Greece.

Domestic violence by Belen Vidal, University of St Andrews, Scotland.

Body mutilation by Carrie Tarr, Kingston University, London, England.

Sex-trafficking by Marguerite Waller, University of California, Riverside, CA.

War crimes by Katarzyna Marciniak, Ohio University, Athens, OH, and B. Vidal.

Representations of lesbianism by Anik.: Imre, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

Veiling by Florence Martin, Goucher College, Baltimore, MD.

Filmmaking in occupied territories by Kay Dickinson, Goldsmiths College, University of London, England.

Social, sexual and political taboos by Lina Khatib, Royal Holloway, University of London, England.

Public Program

The opening reception on November 2, from 4:45-5:45pm, in the Davis Museum Lobby is open to the public which include the welcoming remarks of President Kim Bottomly, the keynote address by Professor Yosefa Loshitzky, and the screening of the documentary *Maria's Grotto* followed by discussion with director Buthina Khoury, from 5:45-9:30pm, in Collins Cinema.

Program of events

A complete program of activities of the symposium will be available on site.

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Co-sponsored by Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership and Amy Sommer '87, Treves Memorial Fund, Departments and Programs of Italian Studies, History, Jewish Studies, Writing, Art, Political Science, German, Newhouse Center, Middle Eastern Studies, French, Religion, Cinema and Media Studies, Media Arts and Sciences, Women's Studies, Peace and Justice, Theatre & Wellesley Summer Theatre Company, Africana Studies, Spanish, Sociology, Italian Student Society, and Boston Palestine Film Festival.

Funded by Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership and Amy Sommer '87, Treves Memorial Fund, and several departments and programs at Wellesley College, as well as Boston Palestine Film Festival,

Please note: Visions of Struggle gives voice to diverse points of view and contains challenging subject matters that some attendees may find controversial.

DAVIS MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER

The symposium also coincides with the international art exhibition *Global Feminisms* at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College. Through sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, video, installation, and performance, *Global Feminisms* explores the influence of feminist thought on art at the turn of the new millennium. Featuring work created since 1990 by women artists from around the world, this exhibition questions what it means to be a feminist artist today in how gravely that differs in varying cultural, political, and social contexts. Gender, sexuality, violence, power, politics, and ultimately identity, are among the sources and subjects of this momentous show. Building upon and transcending groundbreaking feminist scholarship of the 1970s, *Global Feminisms* presents cutting edge contemporary art that is international in scope and challenging in nature. *Global Feminisms* has been organized by the Brooklyn Museum.

Tour the **Davis Museum and Cultural Center** at Wellesley College and visit the exhibition *Global Feminisms* prior to Symposium reception.

Museum Hours:

Friday November 2, 2007 11am-5pm

Saturday November 3, 2007 11am-5pm

Free admission and parking. Open to the public.

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MEDIA NOTE: For more information or to set up an interview with coordinator Flavia Laviosa, contact: Barbara Levitov at 781-283-2034 or blevitov@wellesley.edu.