

VIVO FILM and RAI CINEMA present



Flesh Out

a film by Michela Occhipinti



A VIVO FILM WITH RAI CINEMA PRODUCTION IN COLLABORATION WITH FILMS BOUTIQUE AND KMBO
SUPPORTED BY MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI - DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA
WITH THE SUPPORT OF REGIONE LAZIO ROMA LAZIO FILM COMMISSION DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME - MEDIA OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DIRECTED BY MICHELA OCCHIPINTI WITH VERIDA BEITTA AHMED DEICHE AMAL SAAB BOUH OUMAR AICHETOU ABDALLAH NAJIM SIDI MOHAMED CHIGHALY
STORY AND SCRIPT MICHELA OCCHIPINTI AND SIMONA COPPINI CINEMATOGRAPHY DARIA D'ANTONIO EDITING CRISTIANO TRAVAGLIOLI ORIGINAL MUSIC ALEX BRAGA LINE PRODUCER LIVIA BARBIERI
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FRANCESCA SCANU SOUND ENGINEERING LAVINIA BURCHERI SOUND EDITING SILVIA MORAES MIRKO PERRI MATTIA PERSICO SOUND MIXING MICHELE MAZZUCCO
PRODUCED BY MARTA DONZELLI AND GREGORIO PAONESSA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALEX BRAGA ALESSIO LAZZARESCHI DELEGATE PRODUCER SERENA ALFIERI





Flesh Out

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2019 - Drama - Italy - 1.85 - 94 min

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Synopsis

Verida is a modern girl. She works in a beauty salon, is addicted to social media and hangs out with her friends. Still, she is engaged to be married to a man chosen by her family, and like many girls her age, she is forced to gain a substantial amount of weight in a tradition called *gavage*, because in Mauritania having a voluptuous body is considered a sign of great beauty, charm, wealth and social status. The wedding is fast approaching and meal after meal Verida will end up challenging everything she always thought was normal, her loved ones, her life and not least her own body.

Director's Biography

Michela Occhipinti was born in Rome in 1968. After spending part of her life between Rome, Morocco, Hong Kong, Congo and Switzerland, in 1991 she moved to Milan and then to London, where she started working in documentary and advertising as a researcher and production assistant.



Since 1995 she has been living in Rome working in cinema, documentaries and advertising in various positions in Italy and abroad. In 2003 she traveled one year throughout South America producing and filming the documentary **"Viva la Pepa! (Give Us Back the Constitution)"** on Argentina's social crisis.

From 2005 to 2007 she cooperated with RAI 2 directing various reportages on immigration issues. In 2008 she filmed **"Sei Uno Nero"**, a non-profit documentary shot in Malawi on the opening of a radio station for Aids and malaria prevention.

In 2010 she produced and directed **"Letters from the Desert (eulogy to slowness)"**, her first feature documentary, which participated in over 80 Festivals worldwide receiving 21 awards, making it one of the most awarded documentaries of 2010.

In 2018 she directed her first feature film **"Flesh Out"** in Mauritania.



Director's **Filmography**

- ***Letters from the Desert*** (*eulogy to slowness*)
(feature-length documentary, 2010)
- ***Sei Uno Nero*** (www.seiunonero.it)
(non-profit documentary, 2008)
- ***Un Mondo a Colori***
(TV series, reportages 2005-2007)
- ***Viva la Pepa!*** (*give us back the Constitution*)
(documentary, 2004)



Director's Notes

A few years ago, while looking at myself in the mirror, I noticed all the lines on my face. I was getting old and I felt a sense of decay, of loss, of death ultimately. My youth belonged to the past and there was not a lot I could do about it, if not accepting it with a little wisdom and, possibly, some grace. From that moment I started observing women around me and realized that many chase youth at all costs, obsessed by crazy beauty models that are imposed and always relative, to the point that they stretch themselves, get swollen or super skinny. Instinctively, this is how the idea of the film was born: a film that would somehow narrate this paradox (one of the many) of the part of the world in which I live. Shortly after, I casually read an article on *gavage* (force-feeding) in Mauritania: women who have to get incredibly fat to be considered beautiful and be accepted by their future husband. I immediately understood that I had found what I was looking for, a



story that could tell the same Western paradox, but in reverse. Through the reference to the unique and whimsical story of a woman who has to get fat out of proportion to satisfy an imposed aesthetic standard, even to the extent of putting her own health at risk, *Flesh Out* reflects on the complex relationship between women and their bodies on a much wider scale. How do social models, often built to correspond to male desires, influence and condition women all over the world? How close are Mauritanian women to the many women from other parts of the world who go on unbearable diets or succumb to extreme plastic surgery?

During my first trip to Mauritania back in 2012, I traveled to the main towns in search of girls and young women who could tell me their own personal experience. I was also looking for a girl who could play the main character and, just a few days before leaving, I met Verida. Her name means Unique, and indeed she is to me. She had that special and bright gaze I was looking for, and when she was very



young she had lived that same experience I wanted to tell in my film. Through my other travels in 2016 and 2018 we got to know each other and became close even though we don't speak the same language. Verida lives in Nouakchott, the capital of the country, that is a bridge between Maghreb and black Africa. It is a world of its own, different from any city I had visited in my many trips to that continent, with which I have a deep bond. My grandmother was born in Algeria, my father in Tunisia and my brother in Egypt and I also spent part of my childhood in Morocco and Congo.

Flesh Out has been written on the base of Verida's experiences and on the ones of the many girls I met. I wanted to make a film that could render the complexity of such a little known topic as *gavage* (from food to chemical *gavage*, fat farms, skin whitening, multiple divorces, etc....) and of a very diversified, stratified society, so difficult to penetrate, as Mauritania.



Mauritania in my film works as an “elsewhere”, opposed to the world from which I come from and where I live, and yet, in its paradoxical inversion of a series of relations, it transforms into a mirror showing the distorted way in which the female body is perceived in nearly all societies.

I hope the film arouses curiosity, that it may encourage the audience to reflect on the ways in which their own societies obstruct their own freedom, leading the spectators into Verida’s world little by little, magically, creating a deep emotional connection.

Vivo Film Profile

Vivo film, established in Rome at the beginning of 2004 by Gregorio Paonessa and Marta Donzelli, is an independent production company with a catalogue of over 40 films, presented and awarded at the most prestigious festivals worldwide.

In 2007 *Il mio paese* by Daniele Vicari won a David di Donatello Award as Best Documentary and Corso Salani's *Imatra* received the Golden Leopard – Special Jury Prize in the Cineasti del Presente Competition at the 60th Locarno Festival.

Vivo Film's credits include Michelangelo Frammartino's *Le Quattro Volte*, winner of the Europa Cinemas Label Award at Cannes' Directors' Fortnight in 2010; Emma Dante's *A Street in Palermo*, thanks to which Elena Cotta won the Coppa Volpi at the Venice Film Festival in 2013; *Sangue* by Pippo Del Bono which premiered in Competition at the Locarno Film Festival in 2013; *Sworn Virgin* by Laura Bispuri, which premiered in Competition at the Berlinale in 2015; Andrea De Sica's first feature film, *Children of the Night*, which premiered at the 2016 Torino Film Festival and won a Silver Ribbon Award for Best New Director; *Nico, 1988* by Susanna Nicchiarelli, Best Film of Orizzonti at the 2017 Venice Film Festival and winner of 4 David di Donatello awards, including Best Original Screenplay; *Lorello e Brunello* by Jacopo Quadri, winner of a Special Mention of the Jury and the Cipputi Award at the 2017 Torino Film Festival; *Daughter of Mine* by Laura Bispuri, the only Italian film presented in Competition at the 2018 Berlinale and winner of various awards in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Haifa Film Festivals.

Vivo film is presenting two films in the Panorama section of the 2019 Berlinale: *Dafne* by Federico Bondi and *Flesh Out* by Michela Occhipinti. It is also currently committed in the production of *I'm not an American actress!* by Chiara Malta and *Siberia* by Abel Ferrara and in the development of, among others, *Miss Marx* by Susanna Nicchiarelli and *Arturo's Voice* by Irene Dionisio, selected at Berlinale Talents and ScriptStation!.

Cast

Verida

Amal

Aichetou

Sidi

Verida Beitta Ahmed Deiche

Amal Saab Bouh Oumar

Aichetou Abdallahi Najim

Sidi Mohamed Chighaly

Grew

directed by

story and script

produced by

cinematography

editing

original music

sound engineering

line producer

executive producers

delegate producer

assistant director

sound design

sound mixing

a

with

in collaboration with

supported by

with the support of

developed with the support of

world sales

Italian distribution

French distribution

running time

Michela Occhipinti

Michela Occhipinti and Simona Coppini

Marta Donzelli and Gregorio Paonessa

Daria D'Antonio

Cristiano Travaglioli

Alex Braga

Lavinia Burcheri

Livia Barbieri

Alex Braga

Alessio Lazzareschi

Serena Alfieri

Francesca Scanu

Silvia Moraes

Mirko Perri

Mattia Persico

Michele Mazzucco

Vivo film production

Rai Cinema

Films Boutique

KMBO

Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali

Direzione Generale Cinema

Regione Lazio – Fondo Regionale per il Cinema e

l'Audiovisivo

Roma Lazio Film Commission

Creative Europe Programme – MEDIA of the

European Union

EWA Best Female Director Development Prize 2017

Films Boutique

Lucky Red

KMBO

94'

Flesh Out