

LITTLE MAGNET  
FILMS

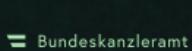
Locarno Festival  
Official selection

# CHAOS

a film by  
**SARA FATTABI**

LITTLE MAGNET FILMS presents CHAOS a film by SARA FATTABI

With RAJA, HEBA • Produced by PAOLO CALAMITA • Edited by RAYA YAMISHA • Cinematography by SARA FATTABI • Camera LUKAS SCHALLER • Underwater Camera TALAL KHOURY  
Steadicam Operator THOMAS MAIER • Sound BRUNO PISEK • Sound Editing RAYA YAMISHA • Sound Mixing ALEXANDER KOLLER • Sound Design LENJA GATHMANN  
Sound Design Assistant ADAM SHADID • Sound Postprod Supervisor MARCO ZINZ • Colorist SHIRINE SINNO • Conforming JOELLE ISHAK, LEA ZOUEN • Image Postprod Coordination &  
Administration SOURAYA LIANE, MOUNIR EL MAHMOUD, GAHDA OUEIDAT • Image Postprod Supervisor MAHMoud KOREK • Production Manager PAOLO CALAMITA  
Assistants LEEN FATTABI, KATRIN FÜRKNRANZ • Closing Credits Music NADIM HUSNI • Title Design RAINER DEMPF • Translations and Subtitles STEFAN TARNOWSKI  
Actress JASCHKA LÄMMERT • Written and directed by SARA FATTABI



**Stadtkino Filmverleih**

# **CHAOS**

**Ein Film von Sara Fattahi**

## **PRESSEHEFT**

**Kinostart Österreich:** 4. Oktober 2019

**Pressematerial unter**  
<http://stadtkinowien.at/film/1090/>

### **PRESSEBETREUUNG**

vielseitig ||| kommunikation  
Valerie Besl  
Seidengasse 25/2a  
A 1070 Wien  
t: +43 1 522 4459 10  
m: +43 664 8339266  
valerie.besl@vielseitig.co.at  
www.vielseitig.co.at

### **VERLEIH ÖSTERREICH**

Stadtkino Filmverleih &  
Kinobetriebsges.m.b.H.  
Siebensterngasse 2  
1070 Wien  
t: +43 1 361 81 81  
office@stadtkinowien.at  
www.stadtkinowien.at

### **PRODUKTION**

Little Magnet Films  
Paolo Calamita  
Wildpretmarkt 1  
1010 Wien  
T +43 1 581 29 27  
office@littlemagnetfilms.com  
www.littlemagnetfilms.com

## FESTIVALS (Auswahl)

Diagonale Festival des österreichischen Films 2019

*Großer Diagonale-Preis des Landes Steiermark als bester österreichischer Kinospieldfilm 2019*

Doc Fortnight – MoMA's Festival of International Nonfiction Film and Media 2019

Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata 2018

*Bester Spielfilm Altered States competition*

IDFA – International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam 2018

Viennale Vienna International Film Festival 2018 – Österreichpremiere

*Erste Bank MehrWERT-Filmpreis*

Filmfestival Locarno 2018 – Weltpremiere

*Goldener Leopard in der Sektion „Cineasti del Presente“*

„Nach ihrem Film ‚Coma‘ im Jahr 2016, der das alltägliche Leben ihrer Familie während der Bombardierung von Damaskus dokumentierte, verließ Sara Fattahi ihr Heimatland – der Krieg jedoch blieb bei ihr. ‚Chaos‘ zeigt in experimentell anmutenden Momentaufnahmen das Leben dreier syrischer Frauen an unterschiedlichen Orten der Welt und ihren Umgang mit der täglichen, unerbittlichen Angst und mit der Gewalt, der sie ausgeliefert waren. Fattahi entscheidet sich bewusst gegen eine explizite Darstellung des Krieges und schafft es dennoch, die offenen Wunden ihrer Protagonistinnen filmisch zu vermitteln. Mehr noch als auf den Erzählungen der Vertriebenen basiert der Film auf deren Schweigen und vermittelt dadurch in gleichermaßen poetischer wie intensiver Weise, dass auch fernab vom Schlachtfeld kein Friede zu finden ist. Die schmerzhaften Erinnerungen bleiben bestehen, unabhängig der sprachlichen und geographischen Distanz zur Heimat.“

**Jurybegründung Bester Spielfilm Altered States competition, Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata 2018**

„Erinnerungen suchen nach einer Stimme und finden sie in einem Film, der gleichzeitig Prozess und Wahrnehmung ist. Dieser Film zeigt sein Potenzial mit einer Offenheit, die uns im Fühlen und Verstehen tief berührt – das Chaos mit allen Sinnen erfahrbar macht.“

**Jurybegründung Großer Diagonale-Preis als Bester österreichischer Kinospieldfilm 2019**

(Jury: Patric Chiha (Filmmacher), Gesa Jäger (Filmeditorin) und Eva Sangiorgi (Direktorin Viennale))

## **AUSGEWÄHLTE PRESSESTIMMEN**

“Der eindringliche, intime Blick einer syrischen Filmemacherin auf das Exil ... Es ist ein Film der Konversation über Stille, ein visuell komplexer Film über Unsichtbarkeit, ein Film über die Möglichkeit, Krieg und das durch ihn Verlorene darzustellen.“

The New Yorker, Ricard Brody

„Ein filmischer Essay, der das Unsagbare bebildert und Unsichtbarem Klang gibt.“  
Kleine Zeitung, Ute Baumhackl

„Die Qualität des Films liegt in seiner Skepsis gegenüber der Darstellbarkeit, die aus Syrien stammende, in Wien lebende Filmemacherin fragt sich beständig, ob es für das erlittene Leid, die Traumata überhaupt eine filmische Form geben kann. Die Verzweiflung hemmt hier das Sprechen, das Exil erscheint nicht unbedingt als rettendes Heim. Die beiden Frauen Raja und Heba, die den Tod von Angehörigen erleiden mussten, filmt Fattah in intimen, obskuren Settings. Kleine Gesten wie die verkrümmte Hand einer der Frauen, mit der jene des Mörders wachgerufen wird, erzählen eindringlich von seelischen Wunden. Zitate aus einem Interview mit Ingeborg Bachmann, in dem die Autorin vom Kriegszustand im Frieden spricht, passen das Gesagte stimmig in einen kulturgeschichtlichen Rahmen ein.“

Der Standard, Dominik Kamalzadeh

„ein zerbrechlicher Filmessay ... Der Druck der schmerhaften Erinnerung produziert bei den Protagonistinnen ein inneres Chaos, das sich nur schwer in Worten ordnen lässt. Die Unmöglichkeit des Sagbaren findet sich in Fattahs stillen Bildern wieder. Sie lässt die Welt ihrer Protagonistinnen auf kleine, häusliche Details schrumpfen, auf Handgriffe wie das Falten der Kleidung des verstorbenen Sohnes.“

Kurier, Alexandra Seibel



## **REGIESTATEMENT**

Im Schatten eines endlosen Krieges – oder vielleicht endlosen Kriegen – sind wir angesichts einer unvorhersehbaren Zukunft, die wir kaum lesen oder gar verstehen können, blind geworden. Wie können sich Menschen vor Hass schützen, wenn sie nur von Verlust und Schmerz umgeben sind? Was treibt sie ins Unbekannte? Ist es das Unbekannte selbst?

Der Film bewegt sich vom Partikulären zum Universellen, vom Persönlichen hin zu den Fragen der Menschheit selbst. Er ähnelt einer fragmentarischen Biografie, deren Erzählung eher meiner eigenen Geschichte folgt als einem Versuch der Rekonstruktion. Er ist der Versuch, die Wahrheit einer Todesangst zu vermitteln und eine letzte Möglichkeit, sich mit der Katastrophe auseinanderzusetzen.



## SYNOPSIS

**CHAOS** ist die Geschichte von drei syrischen Frauen. Jede von ihnen lebt an einem anderen Ort, jede von ihnen musste ihr Leben aufgeben. Was sie voneinander trennt ist gleichzeitig das, was sie vereint – der Verlust und das Trauma. Behutsam erzählt Sara Fattahí in ihrem preisgekrönten Filmessay über die seelischen Wunden, die sich unsichtbar im Innersten eingenistet haben.

Eine Frau lebt noch immer in Damaskus, isoliert von der Außenwelt, in einer abgedunkelten Wohnung, und legt dem ermordeten Sohn Tag für Tag frische Kleidung aufs Bett. Eine andere verließ Syrien wegen des Krieges und zog nach Schweden. Dort sucht sie Zuflucht in ihrer Malerei und bannt manisch den erlittenen Schrecken in Collagen. Die Dritte hat es nach Wien verschlagen, dort lebt sie an der Grenze zum Verschwinden und blickt einer ungewissen Zukunft entgegen. Auf ihren Wegen im Exil wird sie von der Stimme Ingeborg Bachmanns begleitet, die ihrerseits nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg Österreich verlassen hatte: „Über den Krieg kann jeder etwas schreiben. Der Krieg ist immer schrecklich, aber über den Frieden etwas zu schreiben – über das, was wir Frieden nennen, denn das ist der Krieg. Der wirkliche Krieg ist nur die Explosion dieses Kriegs, der der Frieden ist.“ Sie bildet den zeitlos gültigen Rahmen dieser beklemmenden Geschichte von Krieg und Verlust.

Eine filmische Spurensuche jenseits des Sichtbaren und Sagbaren, zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, zwischen innerer und äußerer Welt: „Der Krieg schändet alles, selbst unsere Erinnerungen.“



## CHAOS

Ein Film von Sara Fattahi

(Österreich, Syrien, Libanon, Katar 2018, DCP, 95 Min, Arabisch, Deutsch – mit dt. UT)

Kinostart: 4. Oktober 2019

mit Raja und Heba, Schauspielerin: Jaschka Lämmert

Drehbuch, Regie, Kamera	Sara Fattahi
Camera Operator	Lukas Schaller
Unterwasserkamera	Talal Khoury
Steadicam Operator	Thomas Maier
Ton	Bruno Pisek
Schnitt	Raya Yamisha
Tomischung	Alexander Koller
Tongestaltung	Lenja Gathmann
Color Grading	Shirine Sinno
Übersetzung und Untertitel	Stefan Tarnowski
Produzent	Paolo Calamita
Produktion	Little Magnet Films
Verleih	Stadtkino Filmverleih

Förderer	Bundeskanzleramt Kunst Kultur Kulturbteilung der Stadt Wien AFAC – The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Doha Film Institute Bidayyat for Audiovisual Arts
----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



## BIOGRAFIE

### SARA FATTABI

geboren 1983 in Damaskus, lebt und arbeitet seit 2015 in Wien. Sie studierte Rechtswissenschaften an der Universität Damaskus und schloss ein Studium am Fine Art Institute Damascus ab. Sie arbeitete als Storyboard Artist und Animatorin für zahlreiche TV-Sender wie Al Jazeera Kids und SpaceToon, außerdem 2003 bis 2008 als Art Director diverser Soap Operas. Seit 2010 arbeitet Fattabi als unabhängige Filmemacherin und Produzentin. Seit 2014 Kollaborationen in Recherche und Drehbuch im Bereich Kurzfilm.

2013 mit „27 Meters“ erster Kurz-Dokumentarfilm. Fattabis erster Langfilm „Coma“ wurde 2015 mit dem Regard Neuf Award als Best First Feature Film bei Visions du Réel und dem FIPRESCI Award im Rahmen der Viennale ausgezeichnet und im Anschluss auf zahlreichen Festivals gezeigt, u. a. MoMA Doc fortnight 2016, Berlinale Critics' Week 2016, Mostra Internacional de Cinema de São Paulo 2016.



## A MOTHER AND A FRIEND – METAPHORS FOR DAMASCUS

Three Syrian women: one in Damascus, one in Sweden and one in Vienna. Each of them, in her own way, lives out her isolation from memories, from life, from herself. In her second full-length film **Chaos** Syrian filmmaker Sara Fattahi, who lives in Vienna, delves deep into the inner devastation which the war has inflicted upon her protagonists.

**CHAOS** is described as a film about three women living in different times and places. Can you give us some idea about the three characters who carry this film? And maybe also about the fourth one who is a guiding spirit?

SARA FATTABI: In 2015 I made a first feature documentary called **Coma** about three women from three generations living under one roof in Damascus during the war. **CHAOS**, the second part of a trilogy I'm working on, is about three women living in three cities; they are separated by different backgrounds, but they share the same traumas and the same fears. The guiding spirit of **CHAOS** is the ghost of Ingeborg Bachmann. We can hear her voice in a radio interview recorded in 1971 when she speaks about her novel *Malina* and also about the fire and how her hand got burnt. In a way, what she says in the interview summarizes the story of the three women. My film is about three Syrian women; since I am the third one and couldn't interview myself, I needed a voice, a bridge between me and the story, between me and Vienna, between me and the whole concept of different places and common fears. One woman is living in Damascus, the second one in a village in northern Sweden, and I am the third woman in Vienna, all of us connected somehow to the spirit of Ingeborg Bachmann.

Recently you showed a short film entitled **898 + 7** within a program called **Exiled Gaze**. It seems to me that **CHAOS** is an essay about the concept of exile in its most radical sense. It is about exile not as a geographical, cultural or linguistic notion; your film is about exile from memory, exile from oneself, exile from life.

SARA FATTABI: For this short film I had to do something very personal; **898 + 7** is about the perception of exile from my perspective. I am not able to say that I'm living "in exile", since I haven't found my definition of exile yet; I'm questioning things around me, questioning my feelings, the environment, the people, the language. Maybe this will take many years, and only then will I be able to call my status "exile". For the time being I still have deep inside me the hope that I will go somewhere else, or some day return to my country. I do not consider my current life as a life in exile.

But maybe “exile” starts with the detachment and separation with your loved ones. I describe my life between two cities as like gazing through a window. You’re isolated from the outside life and at the same time somehow part of it. I’m playing with the contradiction between being physically here and having left a huge part of myself there.

**Can you describe your encounter with the oeuvre of Ingeborg Bachmann?**

SARA FATTABI: One thing people here in Vienna find hard to believe is that the complete works of Ingeborg Bachmann are translated into Arabic. I came across her a long time ago through the correspondence between her and Paul Celan. Four years ago I started research for a project about poets who had committed suicide. I know there are theories that Ingeborg Bachmann died by accident. She wrote about herself dying in a fire in numerous poems, as if she predicted it. I found ten poets and then decided to focus on three of them. One was Ingeborg Bachmann, which was an interesting coincidence considering that I had arrived in Austria. As an author who wrote so much about Vienna she represented the perfect bridge for me. I needed her voice to proceed with my concept of being part of my own film. It made a lot of sense to me to use the writings of Bachmann, who had those memories of Vienna during the Second World War, to get a better idea of this city and to understand why I feel this way here.

**There are some Ingeborg Bachmann quotes in CHAOS; one of them reads: “I don’t want to write about war. It’s too simple for me. Everybody can write about war. War is always terrible. But to write something about peace, about what we call peace – because, in fact, that’s the war. The real war is just the explosion of this war which is peace.” Is this the key point about your film?**

SARA FATTABI: As much as it has to do with your inner war, yes. It has nothing to do with life in a war zone. Bachmann’s quote is very strongly related to the women in my film. The woman who now lives in Sweden is very outspoken and precise in articulating emotions. Bachmann’s quote puts the experience and feelings of all three of us in a very precise context. I completely excluded images that feature war as an event. We do have enough information on what is going on in Syria. But nobody will tell you how individuals, women in particular, are experiencing the war. I was interested in a documentary film about feelings and not about events.

**That leads to a second quote from Ingeborg Bachmann in your film: “And if it could be called an autobiography at all, then definitely not in a conventional sense, since there is no story told. In a manner of speaking, it’s an intellectual process that is taking place.” Is CHAOS trying to translate a mental process, an unspeakable pain, into images?**

SARA FATTABI: I was definitely interested in describing the inner world of each woman. That’s why I developed a concept that includes different sensual layers – the sound of the wind, the weather... Describing their environment helps to comprehend each woman’s isolation. It’s not about one young man who died in the war; it’s about the unspeakable mental process of mourning and pain.

**How was it that these two women became part of your project and agreed to be in front of the camera despite this isolation they are living in?**

SARA FATTABI: I started to write this film in 2014 during the post-production of Coma. On a short visit to my family in Damascus I got to know my mother’s best friend, who had lost her son and is now one of the protagonists in CHAOS. When I went to visit her later I discovered that she was in a totally different stage: she had shut herself away in complete silence, completely indifferent to what is going on outside. If she speaks, she only talks about what happened to her son. It’s a clear sign of a traumatic experience. She is a woman who chose silence, who decided to become mute and who transmits a deep sadness in her black gown. This accords precisely with my concept, and that’s why I asked her to participate. I felt her desire to be connected to somebody and to share her anger.

The second character is a friend of mine who moved to Sweden five years ago. I told her about my film project, and we found out how much we shared feelings and experiences. I travelled to Sweden with my camera and stayed for ten days. She translated her situation emotionally and visually for me, and I realized that I might have lost access to Damascus, but I still had the connection to these women – a mother and a friend – who are metaphors for Damascus.

**One of the women has isolated herself completely from the rest of the world, while the other talks about the fact that she feels absent. How did you find images to visually express this desire to be invisible?**

SARA FATTABI: I'm not sure whether I'm able to explain my work. When I'm working I follow my heart and my intuition. When I shot footage in Damascus, I realized that I needed a certain distance to protect myself and to see clearly why I was doing it. I didn't want to become traumatized by what had happened to her son, but at some point I became aware that I wasn't succeeding in maintaining that distance. The camera is not simply an object; it's part of your body, something you use to get closer to your character. I had a clear concept regarding the distance or the closeness of a take, regarding the fact that I'd rather film the hand than the face. When she spoke, she hardly opened her mouth, but you could perceive her expression through her hands. My friend in Sweden is a painter, which is why I have a focus on her eyes and her hands to connect to the first protagonist. As for myself, I wasn't able to take close-ups of myself, and I also realized how much I felt the urge to protect myself. That's why I decided to have an actress as a sort of a doppelganger. A double that I'm also trying to hide. You can hardly see her, as she is also a spirit of somebody. She doesn't really exist, and in this way it reflects my state of mind. The images I shot in Vienna are about living in a city but hearing a different one. I am trying to find a connection between the eye, the voice and the sound. Each movement leads to another part, to another character.

**You also use a lot of interiors – hallways, empty rooms, furnished rooms, staircases.**

SARA FATTABI: CHAOS is part of a trilogy with strong connections to the first film. In Coma I shot one hour and ten minutes in one single space; there's no way out of it, as if it were a prison. My characters in CHAOS are also imprisoned, even if Bachmann's character is moving around; she is still moving as if she were in a bubble. That's why I decided to shoot in the underground, which is the most suffocating place in Vienna for me. It prompts in me a fear of going down; we don't have this in Damascus. For me, living in a foreign country is visually very closely connected to images of a tunnel, the underground life and the craziness you sense as you see people moving fast to get to their destinations. In Coma the only space that opens up in the end of the film is the old cemetery in Damascus. In CHAOS my friend takes me to the forest at the end of filming. Interestingly, the forest is a space that is open and not open at the same time, since – as my friend put it – you can easily get lost in a forest.

**Were the talks with your protagonists a sort of therapy for you?**

SARA FATTABI: I wish making a film could heal. I tried to understand my feelings and to find out how other people were experiencing and describing what they were going through. But films are, after all, just films. Since I have many questions and no answers I try to use the answers of these women to understand my own feelings.

**How did you deal with the question of how to depict yourself?**

SARA FATTABI: That was easy and difficult at the same time. There is a strong division between the indoor and outdoor scenes. This corresponds to the difference between the familiar and the unfamiliar. In the indoor scenes I often re-shot images that I used in my first film. In the outdoor scenes I used the concept of the doppelganger to convey the idea of being an outsider in a foreign environment.

**You told us before that CHAOS is the second part of a trilogy that started with Coma. Are you already working on the third part?**

SARA FATTABI: I have started developing the script of the third part together with a Syrian writer. It will be about one woman with three different stories, three types of journey into the three parts of her character. It has to be fictional, since it is about a woman who decides to go back to her country, and each time she tries to do so, something stops her. The only way to return to my country is in my imagination, which is why I decided the third part of the trilogy will be fictional.

**Interview: Karin Schiefer, AFC, July 2018**