

SAMIR



Born in 1955 in Baghdad, Iraq, Samir moved to Switzerland as a child with his parents at the beginning of the 1960s. In the early 1970s he attended the Zurich School of Design and then completed an apprenticeship as a typographer. After training as a cameraman, he began to make his own films in the mid 1980s and co-founded the Megaherz, Videoladen and Dschoint Ventschr video collectives in Zurich. In the 1990s he worked for various German broadcasters as a director for series and tv films. Together with the documentary filmmaker Werner Schweizer, he restructured the production company Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion in 1994, specializing in innovative works and new directors. In 1997 the two received the Zurich Film Prize for their support of young talent. Alongside his work as filmmaker and producer, Samir is also active in theatre and installation arts.

MULTIMEDIA AND MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

by Marcy Goldberg

In a far-sighted 1993 interview with the journalist Michael Sennhauser, Samir made a statement that would prove significant for his career ever since: "I hope that my knowledge of Europe and the Middle East will prove fruitful for my future as a filmmaker. This knowledge cannot be divided into two – even if that's precisely what certain quarters seem to believe." If anyone knows that things cannot simply be divided into two opposing categories, it is Samir. The son of a Swiss-German mother and an Iraqi Communist father has spent his life bringing together elements that others might have thought could not be mixed: Arab and European culture, fiction and documentary, film and video, semiotic theory and police thrillers, the role of the auteur filmmaker and that of the producer.

Samir is one of the most versatile personalities active on the Swiss film scene today. His work ranges from experimental video, through documentary and feature films, to television programmes and museum installations. He is equally at home as a TV talk-show host or a lecturer in media theory. Alongside his own filmmaking pursuits, he has long been active as a producer and talent-spotter, helping many young filmmakers launch their own careers. And he has also been a vocal participant in local politics and Swiss cultural policy debates.

Navigating between places, identities and cultures has always been a crucial theme in his films. From the multicultural character Max alias Massimo Huber in his early fiction feature **Filou** (1988), to the real-life Karma Lobsang – the daughter of Tibetan immigrants who became a scholar of the ancient Swiss language Rhaeto-Romanic – in **Tibet in The Engadine** (1998) and, most recently, the tangled tale of his own family's emigration in **Iraqi Odyssey** (2014), Samir's protagonists live out their multiple identities in ways that defy clichés and pre-conceived ideas.

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Samir's unconventional approach is also evident in his use of film form. Over the years he has combined cinema, video and computer technology in various ways, always remaining on the cutting edge of new technical developments in the field. Unlike other filmmakers of his generation, who often turned to video simply as a low-budget alternative to celluloid, Samir understood early on that the aesthetic potential of video – and later of digital media – would allow him to create multilayered sound and image compositions that would perfectly parallel the theme of hybridity in his work. His 1993 documentary **Babylon 2** introduced the device of the layered and subdivided frame to portray the realities of being a "Secondo" (second-generation immigrant) in Switzerland in the electronic age. In its development of a new visual style and its treatment of a highly relevant – but up to that time largely neglected – topic, **Babylon 2** remains one of the most influential documentaries of contemporary Swiss film history.

- 2014** **Iraqi Odyssey** documentary
Abu Dhabi Film Festival: Best Asian Film Award 2014
- 2010** **Der Engel und die Fibonacci-Zahlen** TV documentary
- 2005** **Snow White** fiction
Swiss Film Award: Best Performance in a Leading Role (Carlos Leal); Award for Best Setting, Hofer Filmtage
- 2002** **Forget Baghdad** documentary
Best Film, Semaine de la critique, Locarno Film Festival; Zurich Film Prize
- 1999** **Die Jagd nach dem Tod**
TV thriller (PRO7)
- 1998** **Projecziuns tibetanas**
(Tibet In The Engadine)
TV documentary
- 1997** **La eta knabino** (The Little Girl)
short experimental film
Angelique, short fiction
(for the "Blind Date" TV series)
Swiss Film Prize for best short 1998
- 1996** **Tödliche Schwesternliebe**
TV drama (PRO7)
Die Metzger
TV comedy (ZDF)
- 1995** **Die Partner**
TV crime series (ARD)
- 1994** **Eurocops**
TV series (ZDF, SF DRS, ORF)
- 1993** **Babylon 2** documentary
Zurich Film Prize; Quality Award, Swiss Federal Office of Culture
- 1991** **immer & ewig** (always & forever) experimental fiction
Award for innovative film, Solothurn; Quality Award, Swiss Federal Office of Culture; Best Script, Sitges Int. Fantasy Film Festival; Grand Prix Film Etranger, Entre Vue Film Festival, Belfort
- 1988** **Filou** fiction
Quality Award, Swiss Federal Office of Culture
- 1987** **Martin Disler**
short TV documentary
- 1986** **Morlove**
experimental feature
Quality Award, Swiss Federal Office of Culture
- 1985** **Schiefkörper**
short experimental video
- 1983** **Stummfilm**
short fiction
- 1981** **Semiotik einer Heimat**
(Semiotics of a Native Land)
documentary video

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Samir further developed this aesthetic in his 2002 documentary **Forget Baghdad**, which explored the paradoxical situation of Iraqi Jews in Israel: forced to emigrate from Iraq in the 1950s because they were Jews, but treated with suspicion in Israel because of their Arabic culture and political sensibilities. The impossibility of easily reconciling these various aspects of their identities is mirrored by the composition of the images, in which – thanks to split-screen and digital image layering – there are always several different things happening at once. For **Iraqi Odyssey** he took technical innovation one step further, integrating the latest 3D technologies into his investigation of family history as a microcosm of geopolitical tensions. In his most personal and most far-ranging political film to date, the use of 3D is not simply a playful device, but a means of literally and figuratively embedding his interviews with family members in the history that shaped their own life stories.

In Samir's work, the serious and the playful, the utopian and the ironic exist side by side. Perhaps the most telling example is **La Eta Knabino** (1997), a 6-minute so-called "digital silent film fable" shot and edited in the style of early cinema, but using late-1990s computer technology to process the images. The film's exaggerated comic style contains a serious message: the importance of solidarity. And fittingly, the intertitles are in Esperanto, the hybrid language invented in the late 19th century for the utopian purpose of creating universal understanding. In his 2005 feature film **Snow White**, he combined a satirical portrayal of a "poor little rich girl" from Zurich's glittering Gold Coast with an earnest message about friendship, love, and staying true to oneself. As a citizen of the 21st century, Samir knows that utopian dreams must be viewed today with a certain irony. But he also knows that they must not be forgotten.

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When Samir burst onto the then-staid Swiss filmmaking scene with works like **Filou** and **Babylon 2**, there were few films tackling the subjects of migration and racism in Switzerland, and virtually none made by immigrants themselves. If things look different today, this is due at least partly to Samir's influence: not only through his work as a filmmaker, but also thanks to his tireless efforts as a producer, together with his partners Werner 'Swiss' Schweizer and Karin Koch. Their Zurich-based production company Dschoint Ventschr has earned a reputation for discovering and promoting new talents, and for tackling controversial aspects of Swiss history and politics in formally innovative ways. With films like Nadia Farès's **Miel et Cendres** (1996), Stina Werenfels' **Going Private** (Nachbeben) and Andrea Štaka's **Fraulein** (Das Fräulein, both 2006), and Nicolas Wadimoff's **Opération Libertad** (2012), Dschoint Ventschr has been one of the most internationally-visible Swiss production companies for several decades, and remains one of the country's most sought-after co-production partners. In 2012 Samir was honoured with an "Atelier" (master class)

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY AS PRODUCER

2014	Dawn by Romed Wyder
2013	Mon père, la révolution et moi by Ufuk Emiroglu
2012	Dans un jardin je suis entré by Avi Mograbi
2012	Opération Libertad by Nicolas Wadimoff
2009	Räuberinnen by Carla Lia Monti
2006	Das Fräulein by Andrea Štaka
2006	Nachbeben by Stina Werenfels
2005	White Terror by Daniel Schweizer
2004	Strähl by Manuel Flurin Hendry
2003	Little Girl Blue by Anna Luif
2003	Meier Marilyn by Stina Werenfels
2003	Skinhead Attitude by Daniel Schweizer
1999	ID Swiss by Fulvio Bernasconi, Christian Davi, Nadia Fares, Wageh George, Kamal Musale, Thomas Thümena, Stina Werenfels
1996	Miel et Cendres by Nadia Fares

THEATRE AND INSTALLATION WORKS

2003	White Elephant on a Flying Carpet , 4-channel video installation for the "Ex-Oriente" exhibition, Aachen
2000	Norman Plays Golf Multimedia play, Theaterhaus Gessnerallee, Zurich
1999	(It was) just a job , 4-channel video installation, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe
1996	The Social Life of Roses Video installation (with Pipilotti Rist), Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Kunstmuseum Solothurn
1992	Still Motion , Video/computer installation, Zurich
1983	Majakowski kommt , performance with music, Zurich

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and a retrospective at the international film festival Visions du réel in Nyon, Switzerland, featuring both his own documentaries and works he produced.

In his 1998 essay "The Liberation of the Frame" (see below), Samir made some bold statements about the impact of digitization on filmmaking; in hindsight, these predictions were nothing less than prophetic. On the one hand, the methods for making documentary and fiction films are indeed merging ever closer together. On the other hand, the creative manipulation of images made possible by the digital toolbox may also serve to bring documentary filmmakers closer to – not farther away from – the realities they hope to represent, precisely because those means offer them more freedom in creating their representations. It's a paradoxical idea. But coming from Samir, that's no surprise. And it is a paradox he continues to explore, from film to film.

Marcy Goldberg, 2014 (expanded and revised from 2003)

Marcy Goldberg is Canadian and has been living in Zurich since 1996. She is a film historian, media consultant, university lecturer and translator. She is working on a doctoral dissertation at the University of Zurich on self-critical images of Switzerland in Swiss film.

LIBERATION OF THE FRAME

by Samir

From Sony to Panasonic, from Avid to Quantel – high-tech companies are turning somersaults to sing the praises of their latest programs and machines for digital image processing. Interestingly enough, no one speaks of the artistic possibilities offered by such technological innovations. But filmmakers sense that we stand on the threshold of a new age, one in which we will see a huge explosion in the formal aspects of cinematic language. Many of these formal innovations are already well-known, because they have roots in the cinematic past. But thanks to digitization, they will become directly available to a much broader group of auteurs and producers. Simpler access to equipment is the start of a cultural revolution in cinematography.

But for many filmmakers – in particular documentarists – the alteration of images by technical means is still anathema. To be sure, they acknowledge that the very presence of a camera changes the behaviour of the subject, and that the filmic reproduction therefore no longer corresponds “in full” to the original reality. Yet most of them reject the next step, the manipulation of the image by technical means.

In this connection it is important to recall that the idea of the real and above all “true” or “unmanipulated” image is a mere 150 years old, and can be dated from the early days of photography. Then, too, it is often forgotten that the history of film, as of photography, is nothing but an uninterrupted evolution of the possibilities of image manipulation. The clever forgeries of meetings between Russian and Chinese revolutionary leaders in the twenties and thirties by means of photo retouching are only one example of this.

Simpler access to equipment is the start of a cultural revolution in cinematography.

People became aware of the forgeries not because the retouching was clumsy, but because somebody remembered the original photos – or was present at the actual event.

In many Third World countries there are still artists calling themselves portrait photographers who are, in reality, rearrangers of reality: by means of light modelling, staging and plain hard work in scratching and painting away at the negatives.

People who have their pictures taken by these photographers are aware that they will be “enhanced”, that is, they accept that they are not going to get a “true” image of themselves. The portrait is put in a pretty gold frame and hung in the living room. Some day it would be interesting to have a talk about “truth” and “reality” in this context.

With regard to resolution and texture, the digital image today is no longer to be distinguished from the photomechanical image. Until now the simple photographic reproduction of reality was seen as “true”. If, now, such a belief is dispelled because of digitization, this means nothing less than the return to the origins of art: the free transformation of reality through subjective perception.

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Like the revolution in painting at the turn of the century, the further development of the cinematic idiom will naturally cause friction between innovative filmmakers and the public. This despite the fact that the formal resources have long since been available, indeed, were already developed in the first 20 years of cinematic history.

A good example of this is Méliés' "A Trip to the Moon", which constructs an independent filmic world using a marvellous combination of technical tricks like masks, mattes, scale models, stop-motion and superimposing. Contemporary audiences were enchanted. With the aid of such methods Méliés created a "true illusion" and made the viewers forget its artificiality.

Today most audiences are bored by the old silent films – usually because of the lack of sound, the black-and-white pictures and the slow-paced montage. Over the last hundred years, people's perceptions have undergone a drastic change.

What is really new in digitization is direct access to the various formal tricks.

Expectations with regard to the texture of the cinematic image now run very high – and this is precisely what ultimately led to the dissolution and reconstitution of the image using digital means. Paradoxically, the creation of an artificial world has only one purpose: to make the artifice look "true" and thus allow it to appear as "real" in one's subjective perception.

But the dialectical process of image perception and image production is another subject altogether.

Back to the triumphal march of digitization in film. It is based upon the preceding video revolution in the electronic processing of analog images, which was mainly used in television. Chromakey, split screen, captions and titles, colour manipulation down to the vector level – by now every viewer has grown accustomed to these formal tools. Simultaneously there arose a new generation of filmmakers who learned how to use them. Presumably most of them are not even aware that in the long history of film all the creative effects they use with video had already been employed in photomechanical processes.

So all that remains to digital image processing in the way of new creative tools is stretching and morphing: techniques for manipulating time and shape that were themselves adopted from camera technique (speed control) and cartoons (animation).

What is really new in digitization, therefore, is direct access to the various formal tricks. This ability to freely manipulate images really ought to inspire filmmakers to break the one remaining taboo: the rigid frame of the screen.

Babylon 2, my documentary film from 1994, was an attempt to do just that. It is a cinematic reflection on the topics of suburbs – mass emigration – identity – electronic communi-

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cations – music and much more. It is in the broadest sense a survey of the present from the standpoint of second-generation foreigners in Switzerland.

The subject matter having been set, the difficulty lay in mastering it, because it encompassed so many diverse fields. The question was how to do justice to the content in the formal realization. The visual material covered every possible medium of the last hundred years: from photocopies to Super 8, from video interviews to black-and-white archive material from the newsreels.

For the first time in a documentary, all these different media were read into a high-resolution digital editing system, cut, processed and finally transferred back to 35mm.

This allowed us to freely utilize the blank surface of the screen. The idea was to give each medium its own on-screen form. As the basic format we chose a screen size of 1:1.66. This format was used for all staged sequences with symbolic character, shot in Super 16. Interviews shot in Beta SP appeared on the right side of the image for reasons of better visibility – and thus of structural hierarchy. This rigid window was opened by flowing over into the black background. That gave us the option of allowing other images to appear in the background, providing additional information about the main image.

Along the time axis, little Super 8 vignettes structured the film and appeared as stop-motion scenes between the individual chapters on the left side of the screen.

The names of the actors, the subtitles and individual key words are treated as independent artistic elements.

The main difficulty was to synchronize the foreground rhythm with the background. Each additional creative element (title, image, sound, music) not only changed the relationship between the images within the projection frame, but also the perceptions along the time axis.

We wanted to prevent the audience from getting lost in a barrage of effects. It was our hope that, as in music, the audience would be able to pick out on screen those details that are most appealing, without losing sight of the wood for the trees.

The possibilities of digitized image processing helped us create a film that, hitherto, had not been possible in this form.

Samir, September 1998

Written by: Samir
Cinematography: Pierre Mennel, Lukas Strebel, Yuri Burak, John Kelleran, Kirill Gerra, Samir
Editing: Sophie Brunner, Ali Al Fatlawi, Wathiq Al Ameri, Kathrin Plüss

Sound: Reto Stamm, Al Seconi, Martin Wilson, Don Feigel, Roman Platonov, Maxim Malin
Music: Maciej Sledziecki
Animation/3D Animation: Wamidh Al Ameri
Compositing: Martin Sundara

Production: Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion AG, Zürich; Coin Film, Köln; Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen; WDR Westdeutscher Rundfunk; Sanad Fund, Abu Dhabi; Furat al Jamil, Baghdad

World Sales: Autlook Filmsales GmbH, Vienna
Original Version: German/English/French/Arabic
www.iraquiodyssey.ch

IRAQI ODYSSEY



| 2014 | colour | 163' | 3D, DCP | Switzerland / Germany / Iraq / United Arab Emirates

An impressive amount of archival material, nicely edited and accompanied by appropriate music tracks, acts as both family album and chronicle of a lost world.

Jay Weissberg, *Variety*, 01.12.2014

Samir's work is a personal, insightful and beautifully made film, a touching portrayal of the resilience of humanity and an ode to the power of holding on to one's culture, while also accepting each other.

E. Nina Rothe, *Huffington Post*, 13.11.2014

Iraqi Odyssey aims ambitiously high in its investigation of the effects of history on one large middle class family, and it succeeds in conveying a sense of impotent regret felt by family members forced into exile around the world.

Deborah Young, *The Hollywood*

Reporter, 08.10.2014

Bombs, war, angry bearded men, shrouded sobbing women, shattered cities: Iraq, as seen through the eyes of the western media these days. These images are juxtaposed with those from the fifties and seventies: films with frivolous music, unveiled women who study; elegantly dressed men in Baghdad, a modern city. How did it come to this? Film director Samir tells the story of his globalised middle-class Iraqi family, scattered between Auckland, Moscow, Paris, London and Buffalo, New York.

World Premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2014
Berlinale Panorama 2015

Written by: Samir
Cinematography: Simon Guy Fässler

Editing: Michael Hertig
Sound: Nicola Bellucci
Music: Peter Bräker

Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zürich;
Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen; RSI
Radiotelevisione svizzera

World Rights: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zürich
Original Version: German

DER ENGEL UND DIE FIBONACCI-ZAHLEN



| 2010 | colour | 58' | HD Cam | Switzerland

Originally part of a series about European railway stations never realised for the Arte television station, Samir worked up his research on the main railway station in Zurich to create a compact one-hour documentary film that, for even inveterate inhabitants of the city, sheds a different light on "their" main station.

Geri Krebs, *cineman.ch*

Two works of art form the starting point for a portrait of Zurich Main Station. Not only is the more than 160 year-old railway station a European junction, but also a shopping center and cultural event venue. What makes Zurich Main Station one of Europe's most interesting railway stations?

Every traveller who arrives in Zurich Main Station discovers on first sight in the vast arrival hall, hovering high in the air, Niki de Saint-Phalle's work of art: "L'Ange protecteur," a sculpture more than 10 meters in size. The travellers who marvel at the floating angel usually do not notice another work of art at their backs: "The philosophical egg" by Mario Merz. The Italian "arte-povera" artist created this installation in 1992 on the basis of his engagement with the Fibonacci numbers.

Written by: Michael Sauter, Samir
Cinematography: Andreas Hutter,
Michael Saxer, Hans Meier
Editing: Oliver Neumann
Sound: Max Vornehm

Music: Marnix Veenenbos, Walter
W. Cikan
Cast: Julie Fournier, Carlos Leal, Zoé
Miku, Stefan Gubser, Sunnyi Melles,
Benedict Freitag.

Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zürich; Filmhaus
Wien; Schweizer Radio und
Fernsehen; Praesens Film AG; Zürich;
Topicfilm Manufaktur, Zürich

World Sales: Telepool GmbH, Zürich;
Wide Management, Paris
Original Version: Swiss-German/
French (english/french subtitles)

SNOW WHITE



| 2005 | colour | 113' | 35 mm | Switzerland / Austria

Snow White is a veritable display of fireworks on film. All camera formats and styles of portrayal are utilised, ranging from candid video to raw Super-16 and brilliant 35-mm, depending on the narrative level.

Martin Walder, *NZZ am Sonntag*, 07.08.2005

The minor, deliberate perplexities in editing signify psychological disorder; the change in light from the brilliance of 35-mm film to sober, dusky video defines moods; straightforward scenes engender the most potent emotion, and unravelled visual dramatics bring forth the most astonishing harmonious intimacy. Christoph Schneider, *Tagess-Anzeiger*, 08.08.2005

Partying, sex and drugs are 21-year-old Nico's life. Being wealthy, Nico has always had whatever she wants growing up on Zurich's "Gold Coast". Since leaving school, however, she has been drifting, unsure of what to do with her life. That is until she meets Paco, a rapper from Geneva. Paco is fascinated by her carefree and spontaneous ways and they soon fall in love. Nico hopes to find direction by fitting in with his life but never thinks of the consequences of trying to be someone she is not.

The story contains all the clichés and melodrama of a popular film: two people from different social backgrounds fall in love, separate, find each other again. And, as always, there are people who stand in their way or difficult circumstances that pose obstacles to their relationship. But **Snow White** is also a film about the meaning of values like integrity, success, loyalty and love.

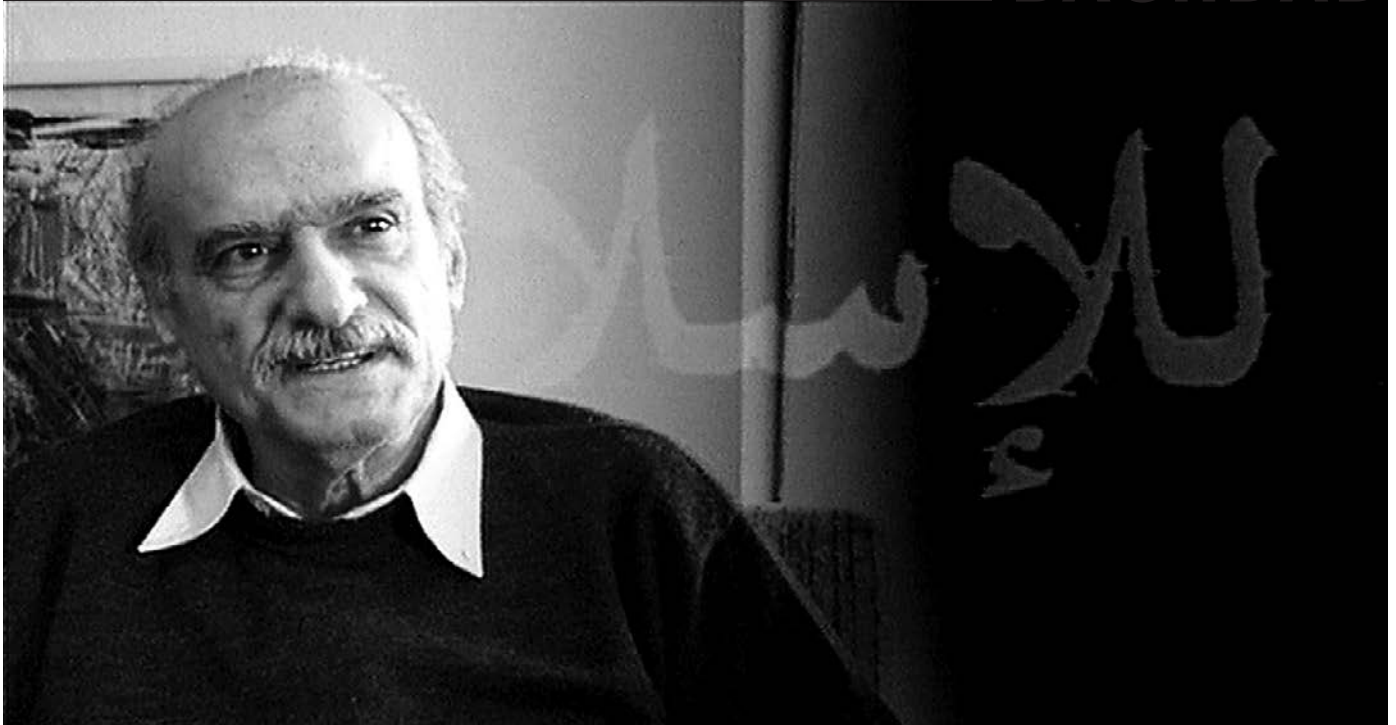
Written by: Samir
Camera: Nurith Aviv, Philippe Belaiche
Editing: Nina Schneider, Samir

Sound: Tully Chen, David Powers
Music: Rabih Abou-Khalil

Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zurich; Tag/
Traum Filmproduktion, Cologne; SRF;
Teleclub

World Rights: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zurich
Original version: Arabic/English/
Hebrew

FORGET BAGHDAD



| 2002 | colour | 110' | 35 mm | Switzerland / Germany

Timely and thought-provoking, if a bit rambling, *Forget Baghdad* takes a painfully ironic look at five Arab Jews caught up in a violent cultural identity clash. It casts a cold light on racial intolerance in Iraq, where four of the film's subjects were born, and Israel, where they now live. [...] This eye-opening doc is sure to provoke discussion.

Deborah Young, *Variety*, 26.08.2002

Jews and Arabs: the Iraqi connection. Sami Michael, Moussa Houry, Samir Naqqash and Shimon Ballas were all born in Iraq. They are all Jewish, and were all Communists. In the 1950s their political and religious backgrounds forced them to flee Iraq for Israel. But in their new country they were also suspect, both as Communists and as "Mizrahim," or Oriental Jews, who spoke and wrote in Arabic. Ella Shohat, professor of sociology and film at the City University of New York, was born in Israel as the daughter of Iraqi emigrés. She achieved notoriety in Israel with her critique of the negative image of Mizrahim in Israel culture and cinema.

In *Forget Baghdad* the five share their conflicted feelings about Iraq and Israel, nationality and politics. In a personal voiceover, filmmaker Samir frames their stories with his own: born in Baghdad to a Swiss mother and an Iraqi father, who was also a Communist and also forced to flee with his family – to Zurich. Using his trademark visual style, Samir interweaves these life stories with historical footage and ironically-cited excerpts from fiction films containing stereotypical images of Arabs and Jews.

Samir's fascination with the topic began during the first Gulf War, when Iraqi missiles fell on a Tel Aviv suburb inhabited mostly by former Iraqi Jews. The story of the Mizrahim in Israel allows him to demonstrate the true complexity and contradictions of Arab-Jewish relations.

THE LITTLE GIRL

1997 | 35 mm | colour | 6' | Original title: La eta knabino

A digital silent film fable in Esperanto. A young girl is looking for help. She meets the wolf in the woods and the bull on the meadow. But neither of them can help the girl; they cannot even help themselves. The three wander through the world until they meet the giant woman on the mountain, where they are surprised by a terrible storm. They just barely survive. Now they decide to stay together forever.

The film was made with the simplest possible means, using a 16mm camera with a manual winding mechanism. The images were then processed in an ordinary computer and transferred to 35mm.



Script: Samir, based on a story by Jürg Schubiger
Camera: Pierre Mennel
Editing: Ian Mathys
Sound: Sabine Boss

Cast: Tonia Maria Zindel, Andrea Zogg, Werner Lüdi, Alexandra Prusa
Production: Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion AG, Zurich
Original Version: Esperanto/English

TIBET IN THE ENGADINE

1998 | Beta SP | colour | 24' | Original title: Projecziuns Tibetanas

The Lobsangs, a Tibetan family living in exile in the Engadine for 35 years, consider their history and their presence in the media. As soon becomes clear, the "Tibetan projections" found in Western film and TV representations have little to do with life as lived by Tibetans in their own country or abroad. This short experimental documentary using Samir's trademark split-screen style was originally commissioned for Rhaeto-Romanic television, but has gone on to have a film festival and cinema career of its own.



Script: Samir
Camera: Jara Uricek, Samir
Editing: Samir, Ian Mathys
Music: Peter Bräker

Production: Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion AG, Zurich; SRF; Televisiun Rumantscha
Original Version: Rumantsch/Tibetan/Swiss-German

Written by: Samir
Camera: Samir, Pierre Mennel
Editing: Samir, Ronnie Wahli

Sound: Roman Küng
Music: Felix Haug

Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zurich; ARTE;
SRF; ZDF

World Rights: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zurich
Original Version: Swiss German /
French

BABYLON 2



| 1993 | colour | 90' | 35 mm blow-up | Switzerland

The approach to making this flickering group portrait is just as varied as the life stories themselves: different narrative levels – interviews, archival footage, dream sequences – are brought onto the same plane using split screens, allowing the multi-layered nature of identity to find expression, too. [...] *Babylon 2* offers the viewer a provisional home in this intermediate world and celebrates roots and wings. Jenny Billeter,

Catalogue Visions du Réel 2012

From the Swiss central plateau – the “great land of the middle” – an essay on emigration, suburbs, racism, language, identity and mass media. In the interminable suburban landscape everyone is a foreigner, whether they come from another continent, another country or another region. But the “Secondos” – the younger generation born of immigrant parents – are beginning, with the help of the media, to develop their own identity. With the documentary essay **Babylon 2** Samir, himself a member of the second generation, puts forward his own view: “It’s my theory that all these rare birds that have been growing up on our continent over the last twenty or so years without knowing exactly where they belong are predestined for the role of mediator.” Born in Jamaica, Tunisia or Turkey, carrying a Spanish or an Italian passport, speaking Swiss-German dialect or the slang of the Lausanne suburbs, the young people portrayed here assemble their own patchwork identities in a world shaped by globalized mass culture and media.

A multilayered montage of photos, films and video recordings, interviews and staged scenes, **Babylon 2** was an innovative example of computer-assisted editing when it was released in 1993, and it has lost none of its freshness or its relevance today.

Script: Samir, Martin Witz
Camera: Samir, René Baumann

Editing: Ronnie Wahli
Sound: Peter Singer

Music: The Young Gods
Cast: Oliver Broumis, Nicoole Ansari,
Roeland Wiesnekker

Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zurich; Videoladen,
Zurich
Original Version: German



| 1991 | colour | 91' | 35 mm blow-up | Switzerland | Original title: Immer & ewig

A modern adaptation of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, set in the collective housing scene of the late 1980s. Samir reworks his footage into dada-like collages, uses animation, incorporates characters' thoughts via electronic effects and superimposes close-ups of everyday objects in pop-art style. [...] Samir has broken new ground in the Swiss film landscape.

Pirmin Kennel, *Tagessanzeiger Magazin*, 1991

Mythology in the guise of politics. Claude, militant anarchist, and Dodo, the hairdresser who reads Kafka as well as cheap romances, are shot dead by a policeman. In the kingdom of the dead, they fall in love and are given twelve hours' grace on earth in which to prove that their love is true.

However myth(ology)-free our times may appear to be, there's no denying that the ancient stories have lost none of their force. What's more, there are still people around - people with a love of storytelling - who know how to present these tales in such a way as to make them seem absolutely new while retaining all of their pure, timeless power. This gift for storytelling is evident in **always & forever**, a drama of love and Zurich politics - made with video cameras - that mingles two planes in virtuoso style: our own real world and the imagined "other" world. It relates the key elements of the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice with such immediacy as to create an indissoluble blend of timeless, archetypal mythology, and the social politics and personal concerns of the here and now.

With an obvious predilection for experimentation, Samir displays technical virtuosity in composing multiple images using windows, split-screens, colour inversion and various superimposed-image techniques. adapted from a text by Torbjörn Bergflödt

Script: Samir, Martin Witz
Camera: Lukas Strebl
Editing: Kathrin Plüss

Sound: Florian Eidenbenz
Cast: Werner Haltinner, Marianne Schmid, Stanislav Orišek, Hans-Ruedi

Twerenbold, Lorenz Wüthrich, Luc Schädler, Wolfram Berger, Helmi Sigg, Suzanne Zahnd

Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Filmproduktion AG, Zurich; Videoladen, Zurich
Original Version: Swiss German

FILOU



| 1988 | colour | 85' | 35 mm blow-up | Switzerland

A cinematic spit in the eye of conformity from that most conformist of countries, Switzerland, *Filou* uses a hot mix of film and video razzle-dazzle to relate the bizarre adventures of a young Swiss-Italian social outsider and his friends in Zurich. Decidedly uncommercial, *Filou* is alive with daredevil creativity and an off-center spirit that should make it a must for any program or festival of new wave cinema.

Variety, 05.10.1988

An underground adventure set in Zurich's Langstrasse neighbourhood, with its mix of workers, foreigners, artists and prostitutes. Max alias Massimo Huber lives in Zurich's Langstrasse neighbourhood, with its mix of workers, foreigners, artists and prostitutes. He shares an apartment with Lizzy, a hooker, and Jiri, a Czech emigré. A happy-go-lucky drifter, Max tries to get by with small-time dealing while waiting for his big break. He dreams of flying Zeppelins, has an affair with Lizzy, and gets entangled in a secret agent story just a little bit too big for him.

A breathless, charmingly chaotic montage of images and sounds, pop culture references and cheeky allusions to the classics of Swiss and world cinema, **Filou** conjures up the alternative scene in Zurich in the late 1980s. Samir and his co-scriptwriter Martin Witz deliberately conceived their first feature film as a proudly low-budget exercise in guerilla filmmaking: "small, quick and dirty!"

Script: Samir
Camera: Lukas Strebel
Editing: Christoph Schaub,
Kathrin Plüss

Sound: Florian Eidenbenz,
Ronnie Wahli
Music: Thomas Bächli, Andrea
Caprez, Franziska Strebel

Cast: Michel Hüttner, Anke Schubert,
Ingold Wildenauer
Production: Videoladen Zürich,
SF DRS

World Rights: Dschoint Ventschr AG
Original Version: German/ English/
Russian/ Arabic/ French
Awards: Quality Award, Swiss Federal
Office of Culture



1986 | colour | 71' | 35 mm | Original title: Morlove – eine Ode für Heisenberg | Original version: Swiss German/French

In a film – if the authors are so inclined – fish and billiard balls can talk, because they are “just” film fish and film billiard balls. [...] Film no longer simulates reality, it is put across as a reality in its own right, just as the private eye's interior world is portrayed as a world in itself. Tibor de Viragh, *Der Landbote*, 1987

Two billiard balls in a dispute, philosophizing animals, dead agents, beautiful women. A video comic. Two billiard balls – Einstein and Heisenberg – are discussing the theory of indeterminacy in connection with events in society. Suddenly, a murdered secret agent drops into the billard room. Dead! Detective Morlove (pronounced “morloff” rather than “more love”) is on the spot, as is his client, the mysterious Ms. Wunderlin, with whom he naturally falls in love. The detective chases around the world: Casablanca, Portofino, Moscow, London. On the Rigi mountain, amid existentialist cows, it's finally time for the big shootout with the archvillain Sir Blurt. Morlove is in trouble. But then she arrives...

A parody of the classic detective film using the devices of the comic strip and the potential of early video technology, **Morlove** soon achieved cult status. Originally made on U-matic HB video, this innovative work was in danger of being lost due to the deterioration of the original tapes. Thanks to the Memoriav foundation for the preservation of Swiss audio-visual culture, it has been digitally restored and transferred to 35mm.