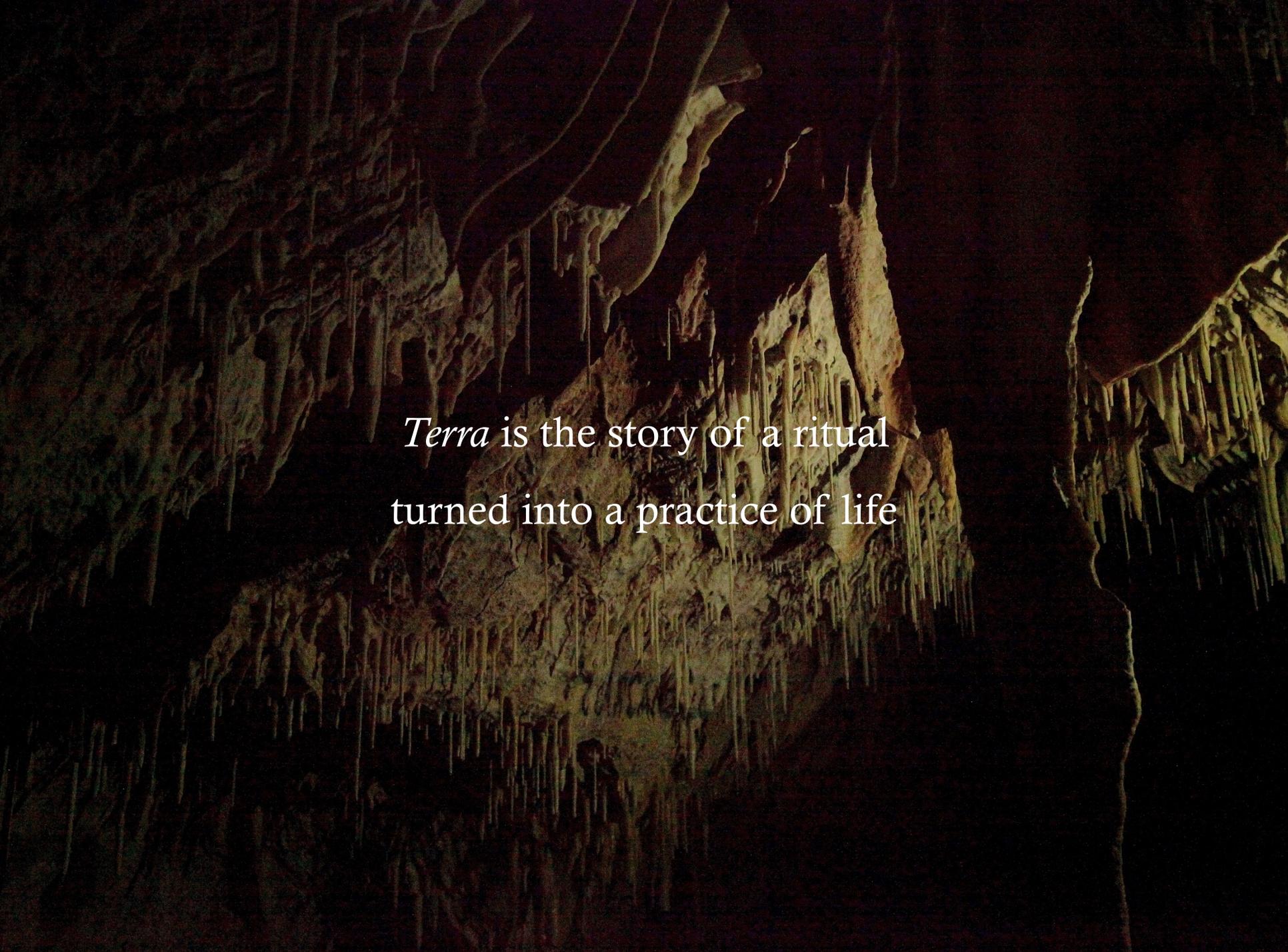


# TERRA

DIRECTED BY RAHA SHIRAZI WRITTEN BY RAHA SHIRAZI & GIOVANNA GIULIANI  
PRODUCERS MARCO SERRECCHIA AGATA SMOLUCH DEL SORBO FRANCESCA FEDER



A photograph of a cave interior, likely a stalactite cave. The ceiling is covered in numerous long, thin stalactites hanging down. The walls and floor are also covered in similar formations. The lighting is dim, creating a dark and mysterious atmosphere. A person is visible in the distance, standing on the floor of the cave.

*Terra* is the story of a ritual  
turned into a practice of life

Fantasy, 90 min

*In a distant future, children are grown underground. At the age of 16, they must claw through soil and roots to the outside world to lead a life of synchronicity with the Earth. But two will struggle to adapt to surface life, their fate uncertain, in this remarkable ecological fable.*

## SYNOPSIS

**H**uman life as we know it has failed. The world has fallen still. We are transported to a distant future where the Earth herself has become the caretaker of a new generation. Children are born directly into her underground sanctuary, where they learn to survive by blending with the rock, their bodies nourished by the minerals they wear like a second skin. In this subterranean world, they are only visible through the luminescent sparks that light up when they touch the cavern walls. The chiaroscuro of underground life sharpens their senses.

No adults exist here - only children, who, upon reaching 16 years old, must embark on a treacherous journey to the surface, facing the unknown of the outside world. This journey symbolizes their "second birth," as they transition from the sheltered life below to the uncharted world above.

When they reach the surface, their eyes and nostrils, acquainted only with a dayless perennial night, struggle to adapt to the light exposure and newfound air density. The outer world is a feast for the senses, overwhelmed by discovery: the wind, the sunlight, the sound of bugs buzzing in the air. After several days, they encounter other humans: older members of their tribe, former underground children. This is the first time the 16-year-olds have met anyone older than them.

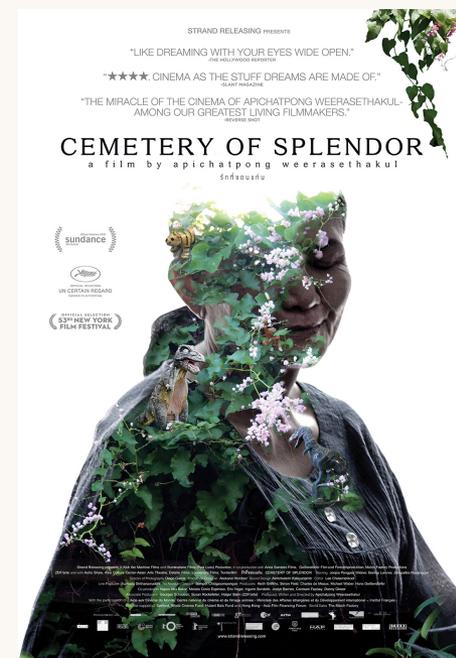
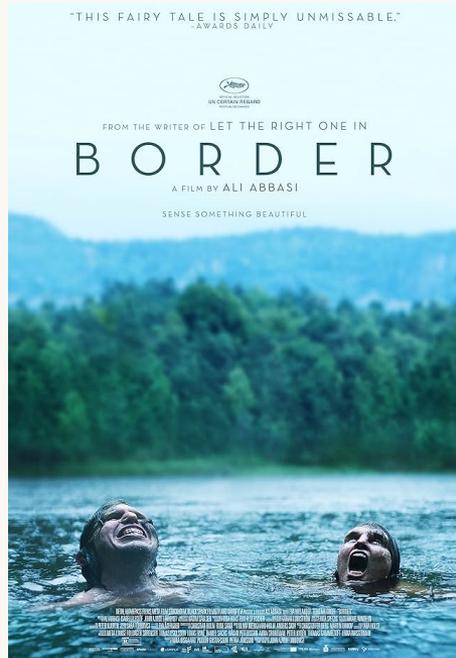
They are absorbed into this community and learn how to live during the day and sleep at night. Life on the surface of Earth takes hold for these children. *Terra* is a place of MAGIC where humans and Earth are completely synchronized. Plants sprout from the roots of heads. Moss, pine needles and chestnut shells attach themselves to bodies like clothing.

Yet, not all can adapt. Sixteen-year-old Pesare Moo Ferferi struggles to detach from their subterranean origins, while Khale Khaki, a mature woman with a strange birthmark, finds herself unable to keep pace with the others. Their inability to integrate leaves them dangerously isolated, living in the shadows of the surface world, and destined never to rejoin the group.

*Terra* is a sensory-rich, visually evocative exploration of humanity's ancient bond with the Earth. Drawing inspiration from Zoroastrian rituals, it unfolds as a powerful mythological and ecological fable, meditating on the cyclical relationship between humanity and the planet. *Terra* challenges the boundaries of traditional storytelling, immersing viewers in a bold cinematic experience that reimagines our connection to the Earth.



# COMPARATIVE FILMS



## TARGET AUDIENCES

- *Art cinema audiences*
- *Fantasy genre fans*
- *Youth aged 14 – 25*
- *Environmentally minded audiences*

# WRITER & DIRECTOR



## Raha Shirazi

Raha Shirazi is an Iranian-Canadian filmmaker and artist whose life story begins in Tehran, Iran. Her childhood there, in combination with her education in Canada, have been major sources of inspiration for her short films which have screened at international festivals worldwide. In particular, her award-winning film *Four Walls* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2007, and went on to show at over twenty festivals around the world. Her work has been described as "poetic, sophisticated, and insightful."

In 2008, Raha Shirazi was one of six Canadian filmmakers selected to participate in the Berlinale International Film Festival's Talent Campus, where she was invited to pitch her upcoming documentary project. In 2009, BravoFACT funded her short dance film, *Black Ice*, featuring the Toronto-based step-dance company of the same name; this film has screened at numerous dance festivals across North America. In that same year, Raha directed a feature-long documentary for OMNI Television, *The Way Must Be Tried*, celebrating York University's 50th anniversary. In addition to these individual film projects, Raha has explored inter-arts projects that aim to blend film, theater, and architecture through creative collaborations with artists from various disciplines.

In December of 2010, Raha was fortunate to participate in a workshop with award winning Italian film director Michelangelo Frammartino in Italy. This inspiring experience produced her short film *Acqua*, which premiered at TIFF in 2011. Her following short film project, *Fuoco*, a Canadian-Italian co-production, also had its world premiere at TIFF in 2014. Raha currently resides in Italy where she is working on her feature-length film *Terra*.

She holds an MFA in film production and screenwriting from York University, with a joint diploma from New York University and the Famue Film School in the Czech Republic, where she completed intensive training in the cinematic arts.

## PREVIOUS WORK

**Four Walls** 2007 (Short Drama) Link: <https://vimeo.com/35954351>

Official Selection: Toronto International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, Festival du nouveau cinema, Cinefest Sudbury International Film Festival, Singapore International Film Festival  
Awards: Honorable Mention, SFS Toronto International Film Festival

**Acqua** 2011 (Short Drama) Link: <https://vimeo.com/28165478>

Official Selection: Toronto International Film Festival, Stockholm International Film Festival, Yale University, International Environmental Film Festival, FilmAmbiente Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival, Lago Film Fest, International Film Festival of Short Films  
Awards: Winner Special Jury Prize Breakthrough Film Festival; Most Promising Filmmaker- Frame film Festival

**Fuoco** 2014 (Short Drama) Link: <https://vimeo.com/103249175> pw: fuococamminaconme

Official Selection: Toronto International Film Festival, CinèAsia International Film Festival, Stockholm International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival



# DIRECTOR'S VISION

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I want to share my personal background, which has deeply influenced this project. Born in Tehran, I lived in Iran until I was eleven, speaking Persian as my mother tongue. Due to political turmoil, my mother immigrated to Canada, where English took precedence in my life. Language shapes our culture, our rituals, and our identity. Growing up in the diaspora, I had two selves—the Iranian girl seeking connection through jokes and shared heritage, and the Canadian girl navigating a multicultural world. Later, settling in Italy, I found yet another home, drawn to its deep cultural roots and the connection it shared with my Persian heritage.

This film reflects my journey. I do not belong solely to Iranian, Canadian, or European cinema—I exist between them. *Terra* is a fantasy film born from this perspective, weaving together themes of belonging, transformation, and ritual. Inspired by ancient Zoroastrian culture, the story places humans as objects within the narrative while the earth itself becomes the subject. This inversion allows for a new approach to storytelling, where landscape and nature dictate the rhythm of life.

At its core, *Terra* speaks to migration, adaptation, and the profound challenges of entering a new world. The experience of moving from one environment to another—whether physically or emotionally—is central to the film's themes. It also comments on our relationship with the Earth, reminding us of our deep connection to and dependence on it. In a time when climate change and displacement are pressing global issues, this film serves as both a reflection and a reminder of our ties to nature and the transformations we must undergo to survive.

Beyond this, *Terra* gives voice to the Earth itself, speaking for a planet that cannot advocate for itself. As our environment faces increasing destruction, this film serves as a reminder of our deep and often neglected bond with nature. It asks us to reconsider our relationship with the world around us, offering a poetic and urgent meditation on our responsibility toward the planet we call home. Additionally, the film aligns with the rise of displacement narratives in contemporary cinema, positioning itself within a broader conversation about migration and identity in the modern world.

The film is structured in two parts. In the first half, we follow the 16-year-olds who leave the underground world and must learn to adapt to the new environment above. Their journey is one of discovery and struggle as they encounter an unfamiliar existence. Midway through the film, the focus shifts to Khaleh Khaki and Pesare Moferferi. One struggles to adapt, while the other, in trying to save them, ultimately loses herself. The Earth is the protagonist, telling the story of the creatures that inhabit it. This shifting narrative perspective mirrors the fluidity of identity and change, reinforcing the film's deeper themes.

My cinematic influences span continents and genres. From Kiarostami, Béla Tarr, and Tarkovsky, I learned the power of observation and the depth within simple frames.

Cronenberg, Burton, and Iñárritu taught me to explore surrealism and the human psyche. The fantastical elements in *Terra* emerge from this synthesis—plants growing from human bodies, children sustained by the minerals of the earth, and a world where vision is secondary to other senses. Magic in this context is not an escape but a means of uncovering deeper truths. Dance is integral to the film, a language of movement that transcends words. Inspired by early cinema's relationship with choreography, I see dance as a cinematic tool to reshape narrative conventions. I have studied contemporary dance to better communicate my vision with the choreographer and actors. The dance sequences will express emotion and transformation, using movement as the primary mode of storytelling.

Visually, the film takes inspiration from *The Color of Pomegranates* by Sergei Parajanov, where meticulous imagery lingers in the viewer's mind. Pasolini's *The Canterbury Tales* and Julia Ducournau's *Raw* influence our approach to world-building—creating immersive, almost surreal realities through minimal yet impactful cinematic techniques. Similarly, *Border* by Ali Abbasi and the films of Yorgos Lanthimos (*Dogtooth*, *The Lobster*) guide the film's blend of dark humor and otherworldly storytelling. *The House* by Šarūnas Bartas exemplifies how an imagined world can still feel deeply personal and political, a quality I aspire to in *Terra*.

The film's cinematography will emphasize long, still frames, with movement occurring within the frame rather than through handheld techniques. Dolly tracks and Steadicam will ensure fluidity, and natural elements will play a key role in sound design. We plan to use bio-music, incorporating the sounds of wind, insects, and water to create an organic soundtrack. This soundscape will be developed in tandem with choreography to ensure harmony between movement and rhythm before filming begins.

*Terra* is an exploration of cinema's potential. By integrating magic, dance, and sound, we aim to push the boundaries of storytelling. The film is meant to be experienced in a theater—when the children in the story emerge from the underground world into the light, so will the audience, sharing in their revelation. In darkness, anticipation grows, and when light finally appears, its impact is visceral.

More than anything, I want *Terra* to shift perspectives—on how we view images, how we interact with our environment, and how we perceive cinema itself. This film is an invitation to engage with a new cinematic form, one that prioritizes sensory storytelling and an intimate dialogue between movement, sound, and myth. By challenging traditional narrative structures and focusing on a world where the Earth is the protagonist, my intention is to create an experience that lingers beyond the screen, prompting audiences to rethink their own relationship with nature, migration, and storytelling itself.

This project is a bold experiment in form, a sensory journey into a world that is both imagined and deeply real.

-Raha Shirazi



# CONFIRMED CAST



## Ondina Quadri

Ondina is a critically acclaimed actress, known for her roles in *Arianna* by Carlo Lavagna and *Piccolo Corpo* by Laura Samani. In 2015, she made her debut with *Arianna* at the Venice Film Festival where she won the Fedeora Award and Nuovo Immaie Talent Award for Best Actress in a debut film. She was awarded the prestigious Globo d'Oro award for Best Actress in 2016. Her ability to portray complex emotions with subtlety and authenticity will be essential in conveying the film's themes of unity and environmental responsibility.

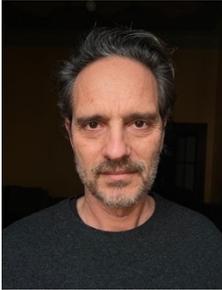


## Silvia Calderoni

Award-winning actress, renowned for her performances in *The Legend of Kaspar Hauser* (2012), *Last Words* (2020), and *Riccardo va all'inferno* (2017). She has received numerous accolades, including the UBU Award for Best Actress Under 30. Silvia is known for her powerful stage presence and versatility. Her extensive work in contemporary and experimental theatre with the Motus company has solidified her reputation as a leading figure in avant-garde performance art.

# PRODUCERS

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## Marco Serrecchia, Doppio Nodo Double Bind

ITALY

Doppio Nodo Double Bind is an auteur-driven Italian production company focused on feature films and documentaries with a European and cross-media outlook. Though recently established, its members bring over 20 years of international experience. Producer Marco Serrecchia has worked with celebrated directors including Martin Scorsese, Luca Guadagnino, Jonathan Nossiter, and Michelangelo Frammartino. His work spans fiction, documentary, and TV, with credits as line producer, executive producer, and producer. He consistently delivers high-quality productions on time and on budget. The company's debut feature, *Il Buco* by Frammartino, was shot in one of the world's deepest caves and won the Special Jury Prize at the 78th Venice Film Festival (2021). The film reflects the company's commitment to bold, artistically ambitious cinema in challenging environments. Current projects include *Terra* by Raha Shirazi, *Animal Resistance* written by Silvana Tamma and *Sacred Creatures* by Frieda Audrey Luk, an Italian-Canadian co-production now in post.



## Agata Smoluch Del Sorbo, Borrowed Light Films

CANADA

Borrowed Light Films is a Canadian production company founded by former TIFF programmer Agata Smoluch Del Sorbo in 2017. The company champions bold, story-driven films by underrepresented voices. Its recent feature, *The Young Arsonists* by Sheila Pye, premiered at TIFF (2022), screened globally at festivals such as Tallinn Black Nights, IFFI, Cairo, and Santa Barbara and was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. Agata also executive produced *Black Kite* by Afghan-Canadian director Tarique Qayumi, which premiered at TIFF (2017), played internationally, and won three Leo Awards, with a CSA nomination for Best Score. With over 20 years experience in the industry, Agata spent ten years at TIFF, where she helped launch the careers of filmmakers like Kazik Radwanski, Lindsay MacKay and Deborah Chow, and championed films like *Stories We Tell* and *Incendies*. She has served on numerous juries and published on filmmaker Patricia Rozema. Agata holds an MA in Film Studies from York University and is a TAP alumna.



## Francesca Feder, Aeternam Films

FRANCE

Aeternam Films is a Paris-based company founded by Francesca Feder, a member of ACE and EFA. A former distributor and international sales agent, she also launched one of France's first Sofica film funds. Since 1997, she has produced acclaimed films with directors such as Raphaël Nadjari, Santiago Loza, Andrea Segre, and Wang Bing. Co-producer Arnaud Louvet, who joined in 2007, was previously Commissioning Editor for ARTE Drama, overseeing works by Claire Denis, Arnaud Desplechin, and Abderrahmane Sissako. Aeternam has produced over ten internationally recognized features selected at major festivals including Cannes, Venice, Berlinale, and Rotterdam. Highlights include *He Fengming*, *Shun Li and the Poet*, *Ta'ang*, and *Long Live the Bride*. Executive Producer Astrig Chandèze-Avakian joined in 2020 after six years at Sister Productions, where she worked on acclaimed films such as *Demons in Paradise* and *Should the Wind Drop*. At Aeternam, she focuses on developing fiction and documentary projects with emerging voices.

# PRODUCERS' NOTE

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**T**erra is an innovative fantasy film project by Iranian-Canadian writer/director Raha Shirazi, and is profoundly relevant in its exploration of environmental and social themes. It tells a vividly captivating tale of a group of 16-year-olds in unusual and intensely challenging circumstances that will resonate with art cinema and teen/young adult audiences.

Today, as we face the escalating crisis of climate change, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation, *Terra* offers a timely reflection on our relationship with the Earth, the ancient wisdom we've lost, and the interconnectedness that binds us all. It is a narrative that speaks directly to the most pressing issues of our time. Raha brings her cultural background, her unique perspective on the fantasy genre, and her deep connection to cinema and the environment to this project. It will inspire and challenge audiences, especially youth who are deeply worried about climate crisis and are at the forefront of climate change activism.

*Terra* explores its themes within the familiar genre of fantasy, with magical world-building elements, incredible VFX and a highly crafted sound world and score. Yet it is a truly original project that confronts conventional cinematic forms. Raha blends fantasy with inspiration from ancient Zoroastrian rituals, central to her heritage. *Terra's* lack of traditional dialogue is one of its greatest strengths. The film's minimal dialogue and rich visual storytelling will allow viewers from all backgrounds to connect with its themes of identity, belonging, and the magical ties between humanity and nature. Today's audiences are increasingly sophisticated and curious with a growing appetite for films that challenge the norm. We've seen this with the success of cinematic boundary pushing films like *A Ghost Story* (David Lowery), *The Lighthouse* (Robert Eggers), *Flow* (Gints Zilbalodis), *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (Daniel Scheinert, Daniel Kwan), and *Border* (Ali Abbasi). *Terra* speaks to the evolving tastes and desires of contemporary audiences.

*Terra* can achieve both critical acclaim and commercial success by tapping into audiences' desire for transformative cinematic experiences, playing in the genre space, and exploring important environmental and social themes. We see the film having immense potential with prestige film festivals given its artistic originality. All three producers have had films premiere at top-tier festivals, including Cannes, Venice, TIFF and Berlin.

We believe enormously in Raha as a filmmaker. Her short films reveal her subtle, poetic directorial style - and that she has remarkable stories to tell. She is, without question, a great talent. But nothing could prepare us for reading the *Terra* script. We have never encountered a screenplay so unique, brave and singular in its vision. We are certain *Terra* will be an important, stunning, and ground breaking film.





DOPPIO NODO DOUBLE BIND

BORROWED LIGHT FILMS

AETERNAM FILMS