

Shahad Ameen - Director's Statement:

SCALES came from a very raw place. It came from my personal experience growing up, but more importantly, it was the outcome of me embracing who I am as a woman. Around the time I was eight, I started noticing that I didn't belong to the "A" gender in society. I understood that somehow we are lesser than our opposite sex, that we are only our bodies. I grew up resenting being a girl and I started by discarding everything that is feminine. Why would you embrace the feminine when it is a source of shame? When I stumbled upon the story of the goddess Atragatis, "the first mermaid," who is considered a symbol of fertility and life of the waters, I thought she would be a great metaphor for the untamed woman—for the woman who chose the road less beaten, for the woman who decided not to follow traditions even if she's going to be prosecuted for it. When I started writing about this primal underwater world, I was unlearning a lot of what I thought was the truth. I was accepting the feminine and the masculine aspects of who I am without judgment. When I finally decided to look at my life as an individual, it was simple to see the unjust, the wrong we tell ourselves is right. With SCALES, I wanted to build a world where femininity is repressed, and masculinity is celebrated. Through Hayat, I wanted to explore the effect of that on girls and society as a whole. I wanted to build a story world where I could utilize imagery rather than dialogue. I drew a lot of inspiration from the use of imagery in Arabic poetry as I wanted the narrative to be authentically Arabic in the way it's represented. For me, the symbolism was essential. I wanted the sea to be a mysterious and ambiguous element, yet you are unaware of its hidden powers that are equal and opposite to the masculine power on the land. The setting of this dry and harsh world was an allegory for repressed femininity—a universal theme I think will resonate with audiences around the world