

The Museum of Modern Art

Long unavailable and thought to be lost, this rediscovered landmark of Moroccan cinema is presented alongside MoMA's *Doc Fortnight 2021* festival, where it is the cornerstone of a new documentary by Ali Essafi (screening March 19–24).

Casablanca, 1974. Independent filmmaker Mostafa Derkaoui, who had studied at Łódź Film School before returning to Morocco in the early 1970s to heightened state repression, begins production with a group of collaborators. On the café-lined streets of a working-class neighborhood, they stop passersby and ask their countrymen what Moroccan filmmaking should be, prompting discussion about a postcolonial and socially engaged national cinema. When news that a disgruntled dockhand has killed his boss reaches the set, it ignites a sweeping debate over how to respond and represent the oppressed worker, all the while morphing their film into a low-key crime caper as the group keeps tabs on the incident.

About Some Meaningless Events is an audacious blend of drama, documentary, and improvisation, thriving in this ambiguous space (heightened by a free jazz score performed by a Polish band) to stage open-ended questions spurred by the burning social imagination of a new generation. The film-within-a-film, which both documents and results from an astonishing collective moment explored by Essafi, is an ultimate act of collaboration—embodying radical ideas about art, politics, and social relations that animated journals like *Souffles-Anfas*—and was funded by the sale of artwork by painter Mohamed Melehi and others. Censored after a single screening in 1975 in Paris and banned from import, it is thanks to the restoration efforts of Filmoteca de Catalunya and scholar Léa Morin that Derkaoui's film meets its audience five decades on, its resolve and fearless experimentation shining brightly as ever.

Organized by Sophie Cavoulacos, Assistant Curator, Department of Film.