

BOUCHRA

A FILM BY ORIAN BARKI & MERIEM BENNANI

2 LIZARDS PRODUCTION



BOUCHRA

GENRE : DRAMA, COMEDY

FORMAT : 3D ANIMATION

RUNNING TIME : 82 MIN

PRODUCTION YEAR : 2025

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE : MOROCCAN ARABIC, FRENCH, ENGLISH

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN : ITALY

COUNTRIES OF PRODUCTION : ITALY, MOROCCO, USA

1.85 - COLOR - 5.1 - DCP

US AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS

TAKA PR

press@takapr.com

WORLD SALES

Lucky Number

hello@luckynumber.fr



LOGLINE

Juggling her life in New York and her family in Morocco, 35-year-old queer artist Bouchra finishes the script for her autobiographical film, unearthing unreconciled conflicts and pursuing new romances in the process.

SYNOPSIS

Bouchra (35), a Moroccan filmmaker in New York, is paralyzed by the fear of the blank page. A phone call with her mother in Casablanca will have memories resurfacing. Their tender yet complex exchange sparks a creative breakthrough, opening a journey through family bonds, daughterhood, and the thrill of love.



CREW

PRODUCED BY Fondazione **Prada**

DIRECTED BY Orian **Barki** & Meriem **Bennani**

CINEMATOGRAPHY John Michael **Boling**

HEAD OF ANIMATION Jason **Coombs**

ORIGINAL SCRIPT Orian **Barki** & Meriem **Bennani**
Ayla **Mrabet**

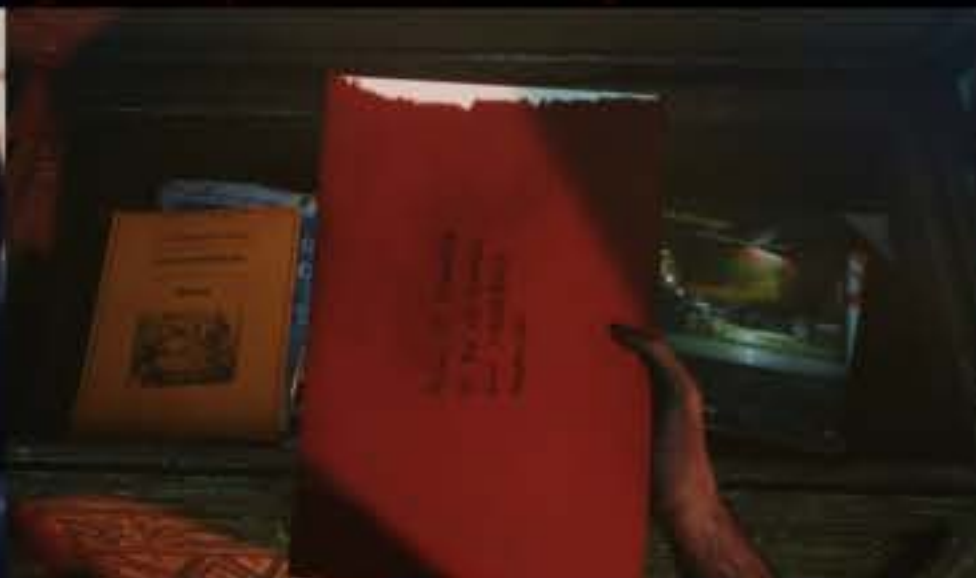
CREATIVE PRODUCED John Michael **Boling**
Jason **Coombs**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS Orian **Barki** & Meriem **Bennani**
Hi Production
Cecile **Winckler**
Octavia **Peissel**
Ella **Bishop**
Pau **Suris**

SCORE Flavien **Berger**

ORIGINAL SONG **ZSELA** & Flavien **Berger**

MUSIC SUPERVISION Randall **Poster** & Milena **Erke**





Q&A with Orian Barki & Meriem Bennani

How does BOUCHRA relate to your previous works together, especially 2 LIZARDS?

Meriem: BOUCHRA uses a similar principle as 2 LIZARDS: 3D anthropomorphic animals with live action backgrounds. The production value of BOUCHRA is significantly higher thanks to the incredible work of cinematographer John Michael Boling and head of animation Jason Coombs. Working with them allowed us to develop a look that had some of the things we liked from our previous work, but with a more cinematic approach that can sustain a longer narrative.

Orian: 2 LIZARDS was a diaristic film and so is BOUCHRA. It has our tone, which I would describe as romantic and witty, but BOUCHRA is darker and more melancholic. 2 LIZARDS was one of the most fun projects I ever worked on. We felt so inspired, free, and playful. Making BOUCHRA, on the other hand, was a lot more delicate because we were working with a very precious and personal subject. We wanted to make sure we got it right. Our way of getting it right was by sticking to the nuances.

What perspective does your practice as visual artists give you when working with cinema, particularly animation?

Meriem: I think not working within the traditional “film industry” got us used to producing videos quickly and making up our own rules. Orian is a documentary filmmaker who does everything from the filming to the editing, while I’m an artist working across very different formats and mediums. This freedom is particularly unique in the field of animation, which is so labor intensive and expensive that it often requires super rigid pipelines and methodologies. Of course, we had to follow some rules to complete a narrative feature with a small team and survive the mountains of work, but we also were able to continuously rewrite the story and make major changes until we felt the film found its tone. These changes would have been impossible within a traditional animation pipeline.

Orian: My perspective was: how do we bring spontaneity to this rigid medium of animation? How do we keep it flexible? With conversational dialog? How can we decide on things as we go? When we made 2 LIZARDS, we could work spontaneously because it was just the two of us and the episodes were short, about two to five minutes long. With BOUCHRA, we maintain this spontaneity by keeping the team small and all being in charge of multiple pipelines. For example, Meriem and I both edit, direct, and voice the characters, so we can record a scene, edit it with drawings as placeholders, and then re-record and develop the story as we went. This process doesn't require booking a recording studio, coordinating with actors, sending it to the editor, and all of that. And eventually even the drawings I made as placeholders ended up in the movie!

Q&A with Orian Barki & Meriem Bennani

Why did you choose to tell this story with this style of animation, with your characters as animals?

Meriem: We had the style of animation and the animals before the story, in a way. With 2 LIZARDS we realized that we found a tone and a style for telling stories: the raw and naturalistic dialogue of documentary contrasting with the instantly symbolic potency of speaking animals. We wanted to see how this would translate into a longer story; that was the starting point. Animation also happened to be a great medium to create both a closeness and a distance with Bouchra as she navigates multiple worlds, languages and situations. John Michael Boling and Jason Coombs also made the style and look what it is with their completely original take on animation and their hacking of Blender as an artistic tool.

Orian: Bouchra is a people pleaser, always contained, but she carries intense emotions and rage in her. So we thought a coyote would portray that tension well. It's a wild animal that looks domesticated. It was also a small shout out to Legoshi, the wolf from the anime series BEASTARS.

What are the biggest influences on your visual style?

Meriem: For me, it's things I see on a daily basis: early American cartoons, the world of Chaabi and Rai music, and lots of movies. I was also a huge fan of CULTURESPORT, John Michael and Jason's animation project.

Orian: When working on BOUCHRA, John Michael told me I should watch CHUNGKING EXPRESS. It became a visual inspiration for a lot of the shots.

What made you both want to turn your experiences into a film like BOUCHRA?

Meriem: We both have worked mostly on documentaries or with non-actors playing themselves, so bringing our lives into a film felt like a natural impulse. BOUCHRA started as scripted fiction. Only a year into production did we bring in the reality element of the phone calls with my mom as a meta-narrative. Nothing we had written felt as nuanced and strong as these conversations.

Orian: Since I've known Meriem she's been making work inspired by her family and her home. Her mom stars in a lot of her films, but never as herself. I had a feeling that one day she would want to make a film about their relationship. I'm honored that she trusted me with this story.

Q&A with Orian Barki & Meriem Bennani

What challenges did you encounter telling such a personal story, involving your own friends and families?

Meriem: Outside of the obvious sensitivities, I would say that the hardest part is being able to “work”. In many instances I wasn’t able to tell if some scenes were super interesting or super banal because of the lack of distance. This is where I would let Orian lead and trust her great story instincts.

Orian: Finding the balance between wanting to push the story and listening to Meriem’s boundaries was important. Even though I’ve known Meriem intimately for many years and am familiar with her relationship with her mom, I am an outsider to the culture and language of where the story takes place. I wanted to be mindful and learn a lot before suggesting my ideas about the story. For Meriem, the most important thing was to avoid creating binary characters who were “bad” or “good”. To avoid catering to Western audiences that would watch the film and think, “Oh, it’s so hard to be queer in Morocco”. Sometimes it felt to me like she was being very protective of all the characters and was avoiding conflict. Those were the moments where I wondered how much to push. Eventually, developing the story became about being creative about conflict. How can we tell an engaging story that carries tension without relying on conflict and resolution so much? How can we portray the love, tenderness, and care in these relationships alongside the distance and silence between them?

How has BOUCHRA changed the way you work together?

Meriem: The core of the collaboration didn’t change: we both know the other person’s strengths, where we should stop and let the other person take over. We’re maybe just better organized now.

Orian: BOUCHRA was our first feature, which in the film industry means that now you can make more features. We started a company called 2 Lizards Production and are already working on our next film!





ORIAN BARKI

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2 Lizards (2020), animated short
- Rico nasty (2019), documentary short
- Destiny (2016), documentary short
- Shooting days (2008), documentary short

MERIEM BENNANI

FILMOGRAPHY

- CURSED OBJECTS (2022), animated short
- LIFE ON THE CAPS: TRILOGY (2018-2022), 3 shorts
- 2 Lizards (2020), animated short
- Siham & Hafida (2017), short art film and installation
- Ghariba (2017), short art film and installation
- FLY (2016), short art film and installation
- Gradual Kingdom (2015-2016), short art film and installation

(b. 1985 in Tel Aviv, Israel) lives and works in New York. She has directed short documentaries and commercials featured on ESPN, PBS, Fader, Vogue, Nowness, Le Cinema Club, Dazed Magazine, and more.

(b. 1988 in Rabat, Morocco) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She has been developing a shape-shifting practice of films, sculptures and immersive installations shown at the Whitney Biennale, MoMA PS1, The Guggenheim museum, Art Dubai, The Vuitton Foundation in Paris, Public Art Fund, and Fondazione Prada in Milan. Her films have been shown at the New York Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, Metrograph in New York and on the Criterion Channel.

Meriem and Orian's animated series, 2 Lizards, premiered on Instagram during Spring 2020 and was described by The New York Times as "hypnotic... deploying a blend of documentary structure and animation surrealism... both poignantly grounded in actual events and also soothingly fantastical" and its animated protagonists "art stars." (Jon Caramanica, April 2020). The series was recently added to the permanent collection of the MoMA and the Whitney Museum.

JOHN MICHAEL BOLING

is an artist currently based in NY. He is the creator of the meta-fictional animated universe CULTURESPORT, co-founder of the creative research platform Are.na, creator of the infamous art website 53 o's (<https://www.google.com/>), and was a founding member of the foundational internet group blog, Nasty Nets.

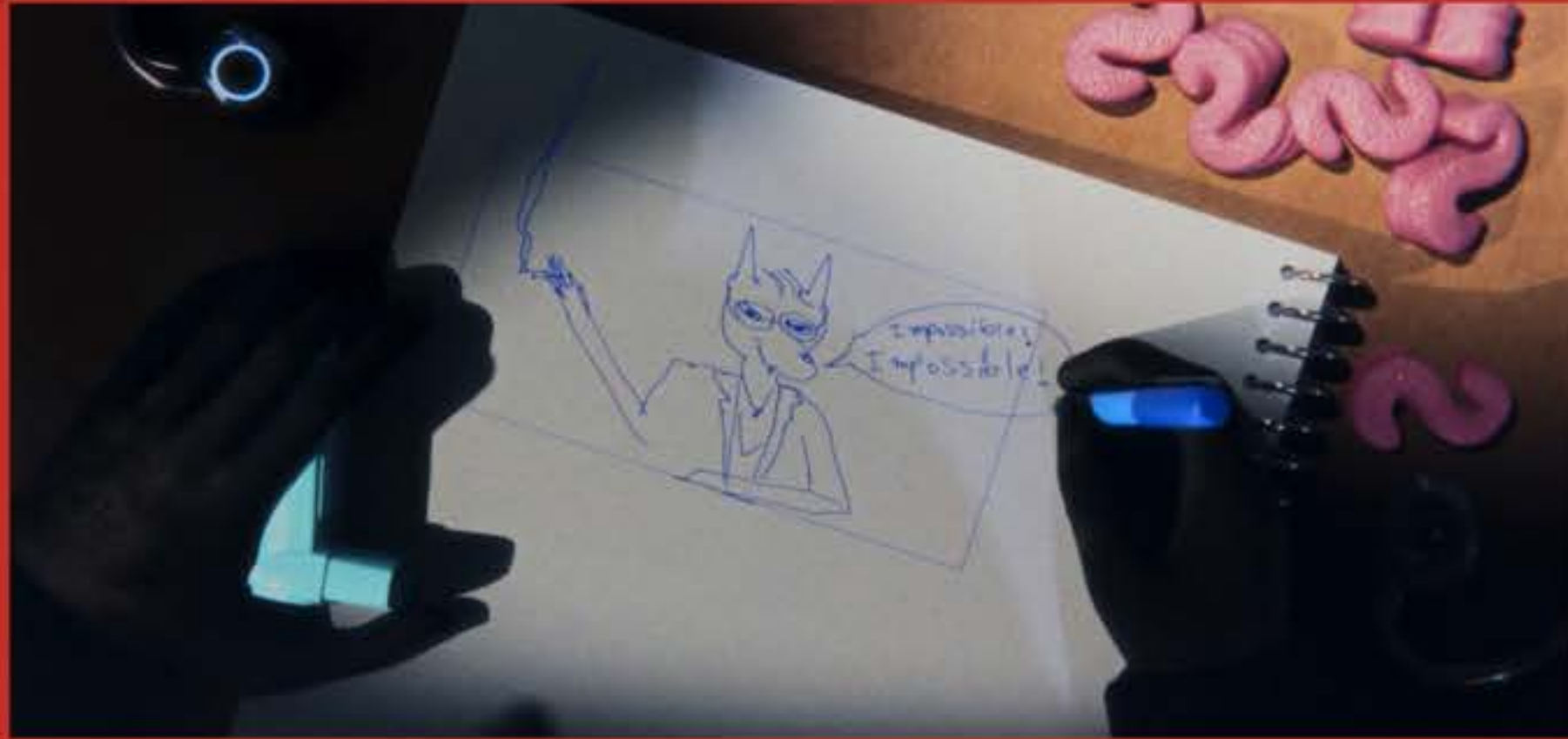
JASON MATTHEW COOMBS

is an artist currently living and working in New York. He graduated from The University of Georgia in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Biology. After several years pursuing a career in academic research, Jason embarked on a new path to pursue his artistic passions. In 2014, he began an ongoing creative relationship with John Michael Boling, helping to produce the animated short film Rotterdam 95. He has worked on many projects and collaborations, ranging from music videos and documentaries to fashion campaigns for brands such as Nike and MCM. In his free time, he enjoys watching movies in the theater, or being out in nature.

OCTAVIA PEISSEL

is a Franco-American producer based between Paris and London, known for her long-standing collaboration with director Wes Anderson. She served as associate producer on *Moonrise Kingdom* (2011), *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2013), and co-producer of *Isle of Dogs* (2018), *The French Dispatch* (2020), *Asteroid City* (2022), and *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar* (2023). After beginning her career at Sony Pictures Classics in New York in 2005, she moved to Paris to work with Celluloid Dreams in the international film market before transitioning to production. Through her company, Opal Films, she produces acclaimed and award-winning documentaries, features and animated and experimental shorts such as *Pulp* (2026) and *Madame* (2018) by Garth Jennings, *The Wild One* (2022) by Tessa Louise-Salomé, *Aline* (2021) by Wes Anderson, and *La Grande Sortie* (2015) by Alex Prager. She also consults independently on projects including *You Resemble Me* (2021) by Dina Amer and *Chaos* (2025) and *Wormwood* (2018) by Errol Morris, and has been a member of the Producers Guild of America since 2019.





ANIMATION

Our approach to animation is unconventional. Traditionally, animation follows a strict pipeline where the story is locked before generating the necessary footage, leaving little room for experimentation. We chose to embrace a documentary-style workflow, allowing us to find the story through the editing process. This method enables us to achieve a naturalistic and witty feel.

To accommodate this atypical workflow, we collaborated with John Michael Boling and Jason Coombs (CULTURESPORT) to build an animation studio tailored to our needs. This setup allows us to continuously play with and refine the footage, ensuring a dynamic and organic storytelling process.







CHARACTER DESIGN & MOVEMENT

Under the direction of Jason Coombs, our characters are designed to feel tangible, as if you could reach out and touch their soft, furry surfaces. They are capable of expressing complex emotions through subtle facial expressions, allowing us to approach animation as a medium for nuanced storytelling.





CINEMATOGRAPHY AND LIGHTING

The cinematography, directed by John Michael Boling, is dark and moody, creating an atmosphere that is both immersive and emotionally charged. We are passionate about bringing grainy cinematic textures into the otherwise cold and polished look of 3D animation.





2 Lizards

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