

A FILM BY
SUZAN IRAVANIAN

LEAKAGE

(NASHT)

PRODUCED BY
MAJID BARZEGAR
KAVEH FARNAM

Armik Gharibian
Ziba Eslamloo
Hasti Khaledi
Saeed Saeedy
Mohammad Saleh Ghetmiri
Keyvan Gharaee Nezhad

SCREENPLAY SUZAN IRAVANIAN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RAMZI HIBRI SAJAD AVARAND EDITING MAJID BARZEGAR SUZAN IRAVANIAN SOUND RECORDER SASAN KAVEH SOROUSH ZAHEDI
SOUND DESIGNER AMIR HOSSEIN GHASEMI SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER KEYVAN GHARAEI NEZHAD MAKE-UP ARTIST LEILA NAGHDI PARI PRODUCTION MANAGERS MAHNAZ KHESHTI ZAHRA SHOWKAT
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR GABRIELA DANIELS PRODUCERS MAJID BARZEGAR KAVEH FARNAM

LEAKAGE

Nasht | Iran | 2018 | 104 min

Cast

Armik Gharibian	Foziye
Ziba Eslamlou	Jale
Hasti Khaledi	Leila
Saeed Saeedy	Saeed
Mohammad Saleh Ghetmiri	Mohammad
Keyvan Gharaee Nezhad	Ahmadshah

Crew

Director	Suzan Iravanian
Screenplay	Suzan Iravanian
Directors of Photography	Ramzi Hibri, Sajad Avarand
Editing	Majid Barzegar, Suzan Iravanian
Sound Recorders	Sasan Kaveh, Soroush Zahedi
Sound Mixer	Amir Hossein Ghasemi
Set & Costume Designer	Keyvan Gharaee Nezhad
Make-up Artist	Leila Naghdi Pari
Production Coordinator	Gabriela Daniels
Production Managers	Mahnaz Kheshti, Zahra Showkat
Producers	Majid Barzegar (Rainy Pictures Production), Kaveh Farnam (Europe Media Nest s.r.o)

Technical details

Shooting format	2K
Screening format	DCP
Sound	5.1 Surround
Ratio	16:9
Framerate	25
Original version	Persian – Pashayi
Subtitled in	English

Festivals

2019 | **Berlin International Film Festival** | Forum
2018 | **Karlovy Vary International Film Festival** | Works in Progress

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Synopsis

Crude oil coming out of a middle-aged woman's body empowers her on one hand, but it also introduces uncertainty and paranoia into her life. When male paranoia is built up against

her body's malfunction, oil being gradually trivialized and just there to solve small family and immigration issues, the condition gets exacerbated, Foziye's body stops producing it.



Director's Statement

"All circumstances are destined to entropy and when it comes to entropic endings, scattered events and insignificant characters take the lead," says an anonymous character in Leakage to his friend to end the journey we have been taken on. Leakage is the exploration of ambiguity that is caused by the reality of our everyday life in Iran. For us oil and the currents of petro dynamics are something that lurks behind all narratives.

Oil poisons and metamorphosizes our expectation of reality. Leakage is the examination of a type of new realism that is aimed at obscurity and surrealism as the basis of ambiguous realism – the narrative is not committed to reveal the result of every single encounter of characters, which is to say that the sequences and the film can end on the threshold of ending, not the ending itself."

Suzan Iravanian

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About the film

Suzan Iravanian's feature directorial debut manages to touch on big subjects while remaining a refreshingly civil piece of cinema. The 104 minutes long play on language (Farsi, for the most part), music, sound and stunning visuals borders on dark comedy while delivering a powerful message, and builds on outstanding acting performances.

Having first introduced the idea in a short story during her studies at Oxford, Iravanian decided to expand it into a script – a pursuit she describes as the easiest part of the whole filmmaking process. It was in 2015 she began to explore ways to translate the metaphorical narrative to film; in 2018, the feature film was finally brought to completion.



“This is a high-concept arthouse genre film playing on a number of contemporary social issues such as immigration, the world’s oil obsession, and female exploitation.”

Jamie Lang
and **Leo Baraclough**
Variety

Despite Tehran being the world-renowned hub for Iranian filmmaking industry, Iravanian decided to produce the whole picture in her hometown of Shiraz. Starting off with a low budget, she later met Majid Barzegar – an award-winning director, writer and producer – and Kaveh Farnam – an award winning producer and CEO of Prague-based production company Europe Media Nest.

Iravanian and the international crew, inclu-

“When the lead actress Armik Gharibian spoke as Fozie, I found myself lost in her world and her struggles.”

Suzan Iravanian
talking to Supriya Srinivas,
BroadcastPro Middle East

ding the talented Lebanese DoP Ramzi Hibri, were finally able to focus on telling the story of Fozie, an almost archetypical female figure fighting for her own independence. Her struggles include facing Iranian bureaucracy, complicated family relationships, the mysterious loss of her husband, as well as what she calls her “special condition”: her body producing crude oil in a surreal on-screen metaphor.



LEAKAGE

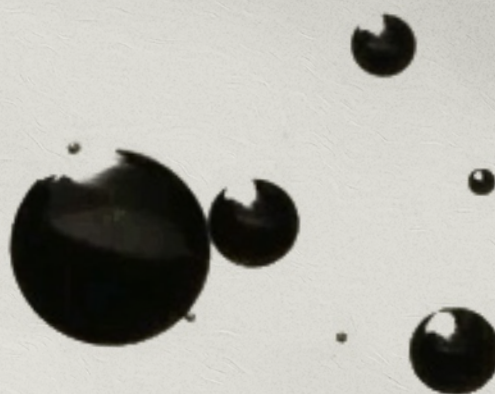
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From the very beginning, Suzan Iravanian was determined to cast her friend Armik Ghabirian in the lead role. Ghabirian entered the production with little theatrical experience and no experience in screen acting whatsoever, apart from three months of rehearsals for the actual film. However, Iravanian was convinced she was the right choice, and was as mesmerised by Ghabirian's understated yet strong performance as the public is bound to be.

While still in post-production, an excerpt from *Leakage* was presented in 2018 in the Czech Republic as part of the 'Works in Progress' category at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, allowing it to meet a European audience for the first time. Czech Republic was a natural choice since the film had been produced in cooperation with Czech (and also German) companies and professionals.

In 2019, the film was selected to take part in the Forum section of Berlinale where it would also see its world premiere. Apart from aspiring to be distributed worldwide, the most important market for *Leakage* is still the Iranian one. The producers are determined to try and get permission to screen from the country's authorities, being aware that this is not an easy task. Ideally, they would like to premiere the film in autumn 2019, during the time when universities open and the target public arrives to the bigger towns.



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Interviews

Suzan Iravanian Director & Writer



Suzan Iravanian

Leakage is your first feature film. What initiated the whole project?

The film's real motivation comes from a short story that I wrote for a competition arranged by my creative writing tutor at Oxford University. Originally, it was about identical twin sisters. I gradually commodified one of them by giving her a sudden physical ability: her body could produce oil.

At the time, the story didn't have any specific context and was very short while I had a lot to say. That's why I decided to turn it into a script which would take place under unspecified conditions in Iran.

In a broader sense, Leakage deals with a number of contemporary social issues. What inspired the symbolic approach that you used in the film?

In time I became sure that oil as an unreachable commodity was what poisoned and metamorphized our perception of reality. For me, Leakage is an exploration of such manipulated realities within an uncertain geography and a vulnerable community.

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The film is full of allusions and references. Among the key visuals are variously shaped windows, including a gap in the broken roof through which sunlight enters the building. Where did these details come from?

In the Middle East, anything can happen for some weird reason, things can leak into each other, and fenestration is the best element to define points of entry into new conditions, new spaces, and sometimes to effective and constructive possibilities. Contrary to [American artist] Gordon Matta-Clark's deliberate cuttings of abandoned spaces, which I referenced, we live in a context which is contaminated with unpredictability.

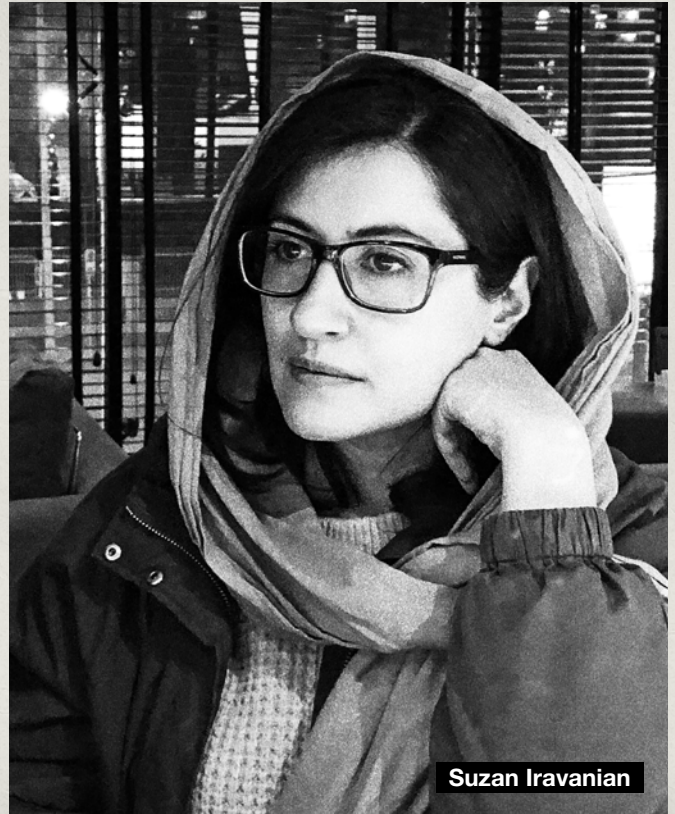
You like to work with long camera settings, a slow pace, and an extended focus on observation. How did you develop your visual concept?

Imagine a very quiet plain: nothing happens, nothing moves. A motionless landscape that requires a very still camera showing it from a long distance. Suddenly, years of remoteness turn into chaos. An oil well gushes out, changing the pace that all the elements of the landscape have gotten used to.

To show that feeling, it is a clear priority to keep a tight focus on that motionless plain, using long settings and a slow pace. Then when it came to the exacerbating chaos within the landscape, I had the urge to illustrate the alien presence by inserting dissonant scenes, and turning the narrative into a fragmented one. To distract the continuity of the narrative obsessed with petroleum-saturated subjects.

The film is Iranian but developed in co-operation with Czech companies. How come?

Parts of its post-production process took place in Prague because one of the production companies, Europe Media Nest, as well as the producer Kaveh Farnam are based there. Moreover, the VFX was done by Magiclab which is a Czech post-production studio.



Suzan Iravanian

“It seems that oil as a commodity comes from decaying conditions, from economic complexities, from complicated interactions and realities that require an older context. That’s why I decided to put a 50-something woman in the centre of the film.”

Suzan Iravanian

Interviews

Majid Barzegar + Kaveh Farnam Producers



Kaveh Farnam

What is the most important message of the film from your point of view?

KF: Iran is a female name and the lead role of Foziye represents our country, the mother of all of us. It's the motherland that gives us the oil we all live from. Although we still don't know if oil is our advantage or disadvantage. We do face a lot of trouble because of it, we are being attacked because of this treasure.

What happens if the oil runs out?

KF: We really don't know, because the whole country is dependent on oil.

Leakage is an independent feature debut. How did you recognize the film's potential at first?

KF: The script is filled with magical realism, something that basically attracts all of us. At

the same time, it is very powerful story with an overlap in the everyday life of the Iranians.

Did you have to customize the way you narrate the story in order to get closer to the audience abroad?

MB: I didn't only produce the film but edited it as well. I didn't change a single thing in the screenplay. I did some editing on the filmed material but mostly in terms of grading.

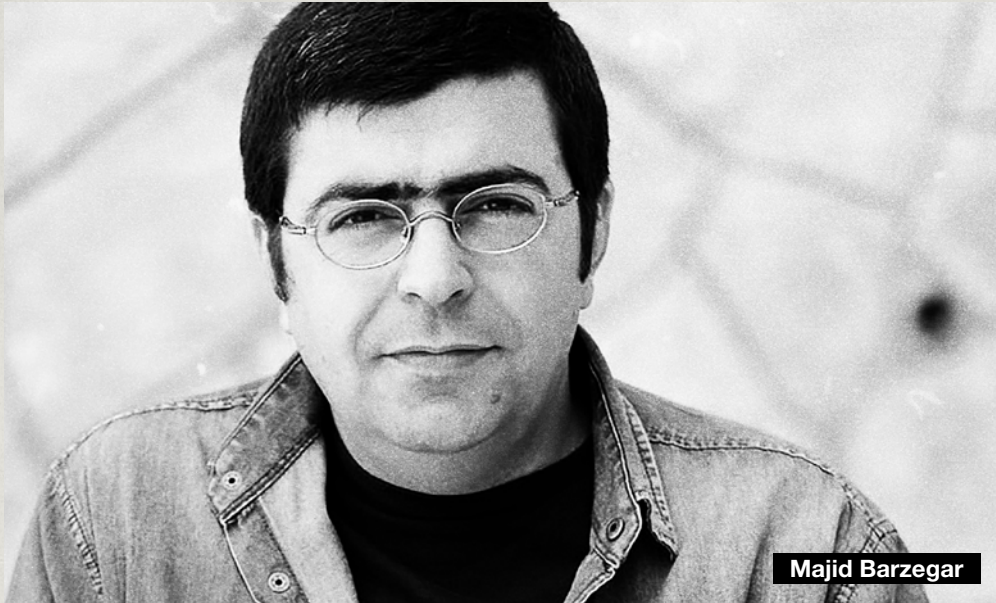
KF: Originally, we didn't plan on presenting the film to a wider audience. First of all, we wanted to get the film to the professional audience and eventually to film festivals, and the character of the film responds to it.

Did you manage to screen the picture in Iran?

KF: Not yet. It is our dream and our main target. However, to be able to show the film

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Majid Barzegar

“I love to work with young people, especially on their film debuts. It’s always very challenging, and the results can be amazing. And I’m especially happy to do this if the film tells the story of an Iranian woman.”

Majid Barzegar

in Iran we need to apply for a special permission. We plan on presenting it in autumn, hopefully it will be authorized by then.

Lebanese director of photography, Ramzi Hibri, traveled to Shiraz to work on Leakage. Wasn’t it difficult in terms of logistics and visa?

MB: Generally, there is no problem for foreigners to come and work in Iran. Especially when you come from the Arab world where all of us are used to travelling and working between the countries.

Have you encountered any difficulty while shooting the film in Shiraz?

KF: No, once you receive the shooting permission, there usually are no problems.

Who had the final word while shooting? You as the producers or Suzan Iravanian as the director and author of the script?

KF: During the shoot, Suzan definitely had the final word. But after the shoot it went to Mr. Majid.

MB: Our job is to help Suzan with the marketing and other activities after the shooting.

The film’s protagonist wants to emigrate to Germany. What would you say about emigration in Iran? Has it increased recently?

KF: Unfortunately, the trend increases every day. I cannot say whether this is right or not. The current conditions in Iran are such that a lot of people feel they will find hope outside the country.

MB: When we were shooting the film, it was not so obvious. Migration increased rapidly during the last 2 or 3 years because of the current political situation.

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The main role in Leakage is played by Armik Gharibian who had no previous experience as a film actress. How did you choose the actors?

KF: This actually applies to the whole cast. For each of them, it was their first time acting on camera.

MB: One of the main features of Iranian filmmaking is that there are no casting agencies. We know how to work with non-professional actors. Word of mouth still works in Iran, meaning you ask your family and friends, they ask their friends. We also searched for actors in small theaters in many different places.

KF: I personally think that too many casting agencies, too many people who recommend their “clients”, famous actors that should be on your film, that can be toxic for the cinema. I appreciate Suzan’s approach when working with non-professional actors.

Leakage opens the question of female emancipation in the traditional patriarchal world. What is the current situation in Iran?

KF: The story of Fozyie is not much related to the actual women’s situation in Iran. In any case, the story expresses the situation of a woman who is left alone. Her husband is no longer present in her life, she is desperate and she suffers a lot. These are conditions that many women all over the world have to face.

MB: Most of the difficulties that we have in Iran, women and men experience almost equally. The freedom of speech for example.

Does recent Iranian cinematography reflect the state of its politics? Is it a frequent topic?

MB: Independent cinema doesn’t always target politics. But when we talk about society, people and human rights in countries like Iran, governments view it as politic talks.

KF: Through film, we strive to show our everyday life and the difficulties we face every day. The mission of independent cinema is to look at society in a way that shows the truth, it is the artists’ responsibility. In our definition, this is not politics.

How do you see the future of Iranian cinematography?

MB: Film production has dropped which is mainly due to the economic situation. To produce films in Iran, you either need to take part in the government propaganda or make films on a very cheap level. It is very difficult for independent cinema to survive. But in the last 60 years, there was always some kind of pressure, We’re lucky to have iconic filmmakers like Kiarostami, Panahi, Ghobadi and Rasoulouf who presented our films all around the world, and whose steps we can follow.

KF: I am very happy to see people like Suzan, a new generation of filmmakers who follow these icons. We managed to find our own international language that people are going to understand. Which means we will carry on.

“We have this joke in Iran that we have the freedom of speech but we don’t have the freedom after the speech. However, women deal with more problems than men mainly because of the deeply rooted societal norms.”

Kaveh Farnam

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Cast & Crew Profiles

Suzan Iravanian

Born in 1985 in Shiraz, Iran, Suzan Iravanian holds a BA in Art and Architecture and an MA in Cult Film from Brunel University as well as an MA in Filmmaking from the New York Film Academy. Since 2009, Iravanian has been involved in the production of short films and in 2015, she started working on her first feature film, **Leakage**, premiering at the 2019 Berlinale. She is also a writer, photographer and graphic designer.

Filmography:

The 4th Character, 2009, 4 min. Writer, director and editor. **The Floating Volume (Hajme shenavar)**, 2009, 10 min. Writer, director and editor. **Songs from the Layers of Language**, 2009, 20 min. Writer, director and editor. **Found Its Way (Sakhtarhaye napeyda)**, 2013, 60 min documentary. Lead editor. **Leakage (Nasht)**, 2018, 105 min. Writer, director and editor. **The Hybrids**, 2018, 60 min documentary. Director and editor.

Armik Gharibian

Born in 1960 in Tehran, Gharibian went to study Laboratory Sciences at the University of Isfahan. She has been living in Shiraz since 2005. Despite having some theatrical acting experience, the role of Foziye in **Leakage** was her acting debut.

Majid Barzegar

Writer, director and producer. His feature film **A Very Ordinary Citizen (Yek Shahrvand-e Kamelan Maamouli)**, 2015) was awarded the Sepanta award at the Iranian Film Festival – San Francisco. As a director, he also received the Jury's Special Award at the 2012 San Sebastian IFFI and the NETPAC Award at 2012 Asiatica Film Mediale in Rome for **Parviz** (2012). His directorial debut **Rainy Seasons (Fasle Baranhaye Mousemi)**, 2010) received the Jury's Special Mention Award at the 34th Sao Paulo IFF in Brazil.

As a producer, Barzegar celebrated international success with **A Minor Leap Down (Paridan az ertefa kam)**, 2015), which won the FIPRESCI prize in the Panorama section of Berlinale 2015, as well as **Valderrama** (2016) and **Immortal (Mamiroo)**, 2015).

Kaveh Farnam

Producer, film enthusiast and CEO of Dubai-based Advanced Media and **Prague-based** Europe Media Nest. Brought to Czech Republic by his passion for cinema but keeping an eye on Iran's filmmaking industry, he supports talented independent filmmakers, festivals and events which he hopes "will shed a light on the real and true image of current Iran".

Farnam co-produced **A Man of Integrity (Lerd)**, Mohammad Rasoulof's 2017 feature which was awarded Un Certain Regard at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival. In 2018, he produced Soodabeh Beiza'ee's documentary **Like My Name Pegah**, and in 2015 Majid's Barzegar's feature film **A Very Ordinary Citizen**, which was awarded the Sepanta award at the Iranian Film Festival – San Francisco.

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