

CANNES: SPECIAL JURY PRIZE TO BLACKBOARDS

By Samira Makhmalbaf. Recognition of Benetton's longstanding commitment, through the Montecinemaverità Foundation, in support of the Iranian film industry

Ponzano, 22 May 2000. BLACKBOARDS, by the Iranian Samira Makhmalbaf, produced in Italy by Fabrica Cinema under the guidance of Marco Müller, has been awarded the Special Jury Prize at Cannes Film Festival. BLACKBOARDS is a primarily Italian production, but with significant international characteristics, directed by an Iranian, in Kurdish and with Kurdish actors.

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This prize also constitutes indirect recognition for Benetton, who for years, through the financing of the Montecinemaverità Foundation, has invested in the development of the Iranian cinema industry. One of the highlights of this activity was the support of the retrospective of Kiarostami's films, presented at the International Film Festival of Locarno in 1995.

Fabrica, the communications research centre, created from Benetton's cultural heritage, took its first steps in 1994 and is currently enjoying a period of flourishing activity, thanks, partly, to the completion of the large architectural complex which houses it, and which will be officially inaugurated in June. Located just outside Treviso and designed by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, Fabrica occupies a covered area of over 11,000 square metres. It comprises, amongst other things, a cinema, library, auditorium, laboratories and photographic studios.

In this multicultural centre, where young people from all over the world work on various disciplines (from publishing to cinema and video, from industrial design to music, from graphics to the web), important film productions have taken shape since 1998, under the stimulus of Marco Müller. These productions have brought important recognition to Fabrica, with all the films of the collection in competition at the principal European festivals.