

**AFFORDABLE
RETIREMENT LIVING**

FOR SENIORS 62 YEARS & OLDER

ALBERTA SIMMONS PLAZA
6611 NE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.
PORTLAND, OREGON 97211
503-240-4198

- ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENTS WITH FULL SIZED KITCHENS AND LIVING AREAS
- AFFORDABLE RENT WITH FEDERAL RENT SUBSIDIES AVAILABLE
- PLANNED ACTIVITIES, LAUNDRY FACILITY, ELEVATOR, MEETING ROOM, AND LIBRARY
- CONVENIENTLY LOCATED TO SHOPPING, RESTAURANTS, PHARMACY, AND MEDICAL OFFICES

WWW.ALBERTASIMMONSPLAZA.COM

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Two Inspiring Documentary Films

Beauty and variety in places we don't think to look



Othmane Zolati on his journey through Africa in "Africa and I." Photo courtesy Showmax.

Two documentaries are especially worth a look in the current line-up for the Portland Film Festival (pdxff.com). Both offer opportunities to see beauty and variety in places we don't think to look, or don't know how to see.

"Africa and I" is born out of the youthful idealism, fierce curiosity, and unusual determination of one young Moroccan man. At age 20, Othmane Zolati had never left his home country. Growing up in a small coastal town south of Casablanca, he noticed the complicated relationship he and other Moroccans have with the African continent. "We always put Morocco as an Arab country and not Africa. But it's not." And something in him burned to travel the continent, all the way to its southernmost tip, Cape Agulhas in South Africa.

Perhaps only an idealistic and determined (and physically strong) 20-year-old man would ever undertake such a journey and live to tell the tale, let alone actually achieve his goal. Watching this film made me notice the lack of any other stories like this; traveling the whole continent of Africa presents many challenges. Zolati survived three bouts of malaria; got lost for five days in a desert without enough water; and was stopped in a desolate area by people with guns. Starting with just \$80 in his pocket, he walked, hitchhiked, cycled and skateboarded over 18,000 miles through 24 countries. And getting a visa to travel in South Africa required four attempts, from four different countries. Over four years, he supported himself with a range of jobs, working as a fisherman in Senegal, as a mechanic in Mali, as a photographer and tour guide in Zanzibar, and selling shoes in Cote d'Ivoire.

Fortunately for us, Zolati was determined to document his journey. The film is built from 100 hours of footage that he taught himself to shoot along the way. How he captured much of it I can't imagine -- he is credited as a director and executive producer, and then worked with a co-director, a composer, an editor, and a production company, all based in South Africa. What they have assembled is glorious for its beauty, variety and specificity, in part, due to Zolati's

delighted extroversion and his fearlessness. He found a professional music recording studio in a backyard next to some chickens; toured Ethiopia on a skateboard; boated through the Venice of Africa, in Benin; and traveled with a trucker for a time. The discovery of varied landscapes, cultures, languages, artistic expression and food is unparalleled -- and one could not wish for a more delightful contrast to the more typical explorations of small pieces of Africa by European or American outsiders. Zolati's curiosity and perseverance has yielded a rare feast.

A different kind of feast, equally rich, is on offer in "Street Heroines," an exploration of women graffiti artists. Filming over several years in the boroughs of New York and also in various parts of Latin America, director and producer Alexandra Henry aims to lift up work at the margins of the margins -- women who brave physical danger and legal jeopardy to produce remarkable feats of beauty, wit, and vision. Though their work may only live in physical reality for a short while and then only in photographs, these remarkable women pass along profound insights about what drives them to create, what it costs them, and what they mean to communicate.

If you realize that much of the deepest wisdom resides at the margins, you know to be grateful that Henry went to the effort to open space for these voices and their work. The film's feminist sensibility is especially inspiring -- several of the women recount stories of men not being able to compute that they created their art, even after watching them create it, or telling them they can't work in this medium because they are women. They climb bridges and rooftops and fend off street harassment and hostility in terrible neighborhoods, finding that "spray paint is a very, very good weapon." To the insistence that "you can't climb that ladder because you're a girl," one artist retorts, "What? You need a penis to climb that ladder? Does it help you hold on?"

The chance to glimpse parts of Latin America through the lens of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

WE'RE HIRING

BUS DRIVERS

Starting at \$21.36/hr!

Plus mechanics, IT and HR pros, and more!

Looking for a career with *miles* of opportunity? Join the TriMet team! We offer competitive wages and great benefits, with opportunities for growth, in a job that really makes a difference.

Learn more and apply today: trimet.org/hiring

