

A FILM BY DANIELE FERRERO & GABRIELLA ARCADU

SWEETER THAN DESSERT

It's terrible

It's beautiful

It's crucial

DIRECTED BY DANIELE FERRERO

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR WISSAM ANDRAOS | EDITOR ROBERTO RABITTI & DANIELE FERRERO | ORIGINAL MUSIC
TOMMASO FARINETTI | SOUND DESIGN FRANCESCO RABAGLIA | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER LAMIS CHKEIR



Synopsis



What remains of everyday life when people are forced to choose between resignation, escape, or the courage to stay and build a life that still holds meaning?

Sweeter than Dessert follows Wissam and his grandfather Tanios through a personal yet collective journey across the cycles of crisis that define contemporary Lebanon: the unhealed trauma of the civil war, the collapse of the economic system, political instability, popular uprisings, and the hidden weight of mental health. The film weaves intimate moments, expert insights, and fragments of daily life into a layered mosaic of stories, images, and reflections. The voices of Wissam and Tanios intertwine with those of friends, witnesses, and experts who help navigate the space between chaos and reflection. The film's only fixed structure comes from Tanios' poetry, whose verses frame its five chapters and give the documentary its title.

The journey begins with the Israeli bombings of November 2024. Through online conversations describing life under attack and archive footage showing devastation on the ground, the film places the viewer immediately in a country where crisis is a recurring landscape.

From the devastation of the present, the film turns to the older devastation of the civil war and the struggle to preserve memory in a nation that has, by political design, embraced forgetting. This erasure is mirrored by the theft of the photographic archive of Wissam's father, an absence that fuels Wissam's quest to reconstruct fragments of personal and national history by collecting discarded photographs and negatives from flea markets. The testimony of Sohad, filmed inside her apartment full of pictures, embodies the unhealed wound of Lebanon's 17,000 kidnapped and disappeared, possibly the most painful chapter of this erasure.

While driving through the streets of Beirut, Wissam describes the economic collapse of the country voicing his anger for losing all his savings to the banks. An expert describes the system that governs Lebanon as a surreal "crony capitalist mafia" that led to the financial implosion, and personal testimonies of survival shed further light on the scale of the disaster.

Wissam's anger is the same that fuelled the 2019 revolution when thousands took to the streets across Lebanon. Through conversations with his friends, the film revisits the hope and euphoria of those days, "the last attempt to make Lebanon a normal country," as one journalist puts it, and the painful disillusionment that followed. The darkness that engulfed Lebanon during the energy crisis becomes a metaphor for an inner darkness: a depression that touched an entire generation, including Wissam himself who describes the difficult steps of his own healing journey.

As the story unfolds, the mosaic widens. It remains incomplete, yet through its fractured composition a collective portrait emerges, one marked by loss and departure but also by strength and choice. Many of Wissam's friends have left the country; Wissam chooses to stay. His move to Beirut with his partner, Beatrice, becomes an act of quiet defiance and an attempt to build meaning amid uncertainty.

In the final moments, just before the credits roll, Tanios recites his entire poem. A graphic highlights the verses that title each chapter, weaving together the film's constellation of memories, crises, and hopes.

Accompanied by the glances of Wissam and his grandfather Tanios, the documentary weaves intimate moments, expert insights, personal dialogues, and glimpses of ordinary life into a personal and collective journey through the continuous cycle of crises that define contemporary Lebanon.



Director statement



When I first arrived in Lebanon, I felt the country suspended between worlds: still marked by the scars of the civil war, navigating recurring political and economic crises, yet pulsing with a surprising vitality. Contradictions were everywhere: fragile institutions alongside the strength of personal ties, everyday beauty persisting despite the weight of an unresolved past. What I encountered was a chaotic, layered reality that escaped any attempt at linear understanding.

The film took shape from this impression. Rather than presenting Lebanon as a single image, I sought to create a mosaic of fragments: voices, memories, images, silences. I let the camera move between rigor and abandon, between losing itself in the disorder and searching for moments of intimacy. The poetry of Tanios offered both rhythm and structure: his verses became chapter titles, framing and connecting the fragments.

I did not seek to interpret or explain, but to open a space for listening, where fragmentation itself becomes a language. In doing so, the film offers a partial yet authentic portrait of a wounded but resilient country, still capable of holding the possibility of beauty and meaning.

This possibility is reflected in the gaze of Wissam, who chooses to remain in Lebanon, with no "Elsewhere" to turn to. His presence, both fragile and stubborn, embodies the contradictions of a generation and leaves open the question of whether a future can still take root here, in the very midst of uncertainty.







DANIELE FERRERO



DIRECTOR

Daniele Ferrero is an Italian filmmaker, cinematographer, and editor based in Modena. His work spans from contemporary art installations, observational cinema, socially engaged visual storytelling, and commercial works. He often collaborates with cultural and academic institutions in northern Italy, such as the University of Bologna and the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, where he also teaches.

Ferrero's work explores themes of memory, migration, marginalisation, and the connection between people and place.

His film *Senza di loro* (Without Them) (2025) follows the story of a detainee who finds redemption through his bond with animals. *L'Amatore* (The Lover) (2021) offers an intimate portrait of a man in his late forties who looks for meaning in his life through preparation for a martial arts tournament. His video installations *Untitled* and *Looking Forward to Seeing You* (2016) immerse viewers in the migrant crisis on the Greek islands.

He recently co-founded Indelebili Productions, a platform dedicated to telling stories of marginalized individuals and communities.

Filmography

SENZA DI LORO - WITHOUT THEM (2025) - 53'15"

ATTRAVERSO I MURI - THOUGH THE WALLS, (2022) - 1H 55' 30"

L'AMATORE - THE LOVER, (2021) - 42'00"

MAGNITUDO - ON THE EARTHQUAKE IN CENTRAL ITALY, (2017) - 9' 31"

UNTITLED 12' 29" AND LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU 7' 27" - ON THE MIGRANT CRISIS ON THE GREEK ISLANDS, (2016)







They said, "Lebanon is sweeter than dessert."
I replied, "Don't exaggerate."
They kept insisting, "Yes, yes, it's so sweet."
I asked them, "Where is the dessert when the bread of our children evaporates in the flames of soaring prices?"
They scolded me, "No, no, you speak too much! Stay silent and pray! You'll see, God's blessings will descend upon you."
I answered, "Fine, but what about the cost of housing and electricity? What about all the suffering? What about the greedy merchant, crouching like a shark with its mouth wide open, ready to devour your morsel?"
And what about your child who, if they try to go to school without paying the fees, gets kicked out? And when the teacher welcomes the child of the dignitary with a thousand bows, seating them with flattery, you shower them with praise instead?"
Fight with me for your rights, let's keep struggling until we wear crowns of victory!
Not with prayers, nor fasting, nor burning incense, nor invoking God, nor lying idly on your back will you gain your rights.
You, my dear, without participation and determination, will never attain your rights.
Who, with a shred of reason, would accept to die of hunger?
And what stomach could be filled with countless prayers?"

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Presented by



A film by

Daniele Ferrero and Gabriella Arcadu

Directed by

Daniele Ferrero

Produced by



UNIMORE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA

•STUDIOZABALIK
VIDEO AND MOVIE PRODUCTION

INDELEBILI
produzioni

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PRODUCTIONS





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