

# THE ORCHARD KEEPERS

a film by Bryony Dunne 2014

## PRESS PACK

Director and Producer: Bryony Dunne  
Edit: Julien Schmid and Tamer Ashry  
Original Sound Composition: Akram Al Sharif

Running time: 28 min  
Screening format: DCP  
Video/audio: Color/Stereo  
Language: Arabic, English  
Subtitles: English and Arabic version  
Sales and publicity: [info@theorchardkeepers.com](mailto:info@theorchardkeepers.com)  
EGY: +20 (0) 1060 141 063  
IRL: +353 (0) 86 407 9535

[www.theorchardkeepers.com](http://www.theorchardkeepers.com)



<https://www.facebook.com/theorchardkeepers/info>

*Press Kit - Last updated October ©2014 Bryony Dunne*



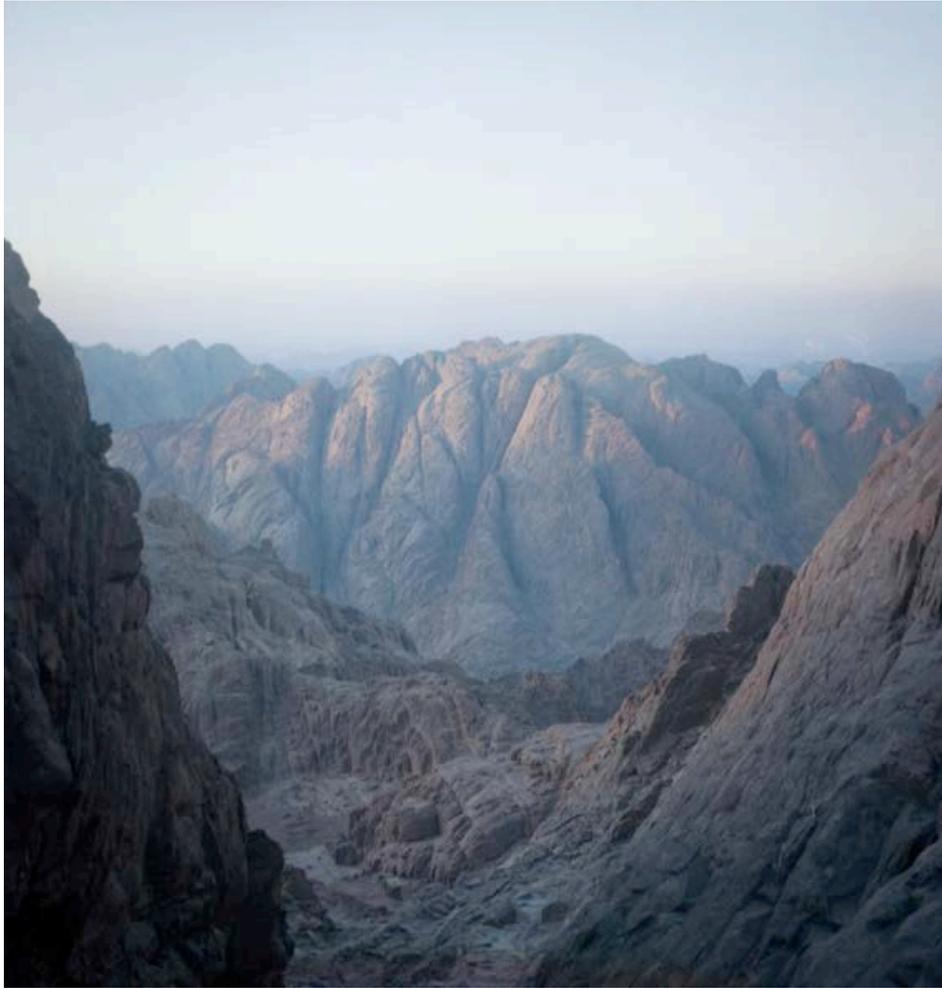
رعاة البستان

# THE ORCHARD KEEPERS

a film by Bryony Dunne

*To a backdrop of political upheaval, an island of green life floats in an arid desert; two Bedouin embark on a daily quest to keep their orchard alive.*  
[www.theorchardkeepers.com](http://www.theorchardkeepers.com)





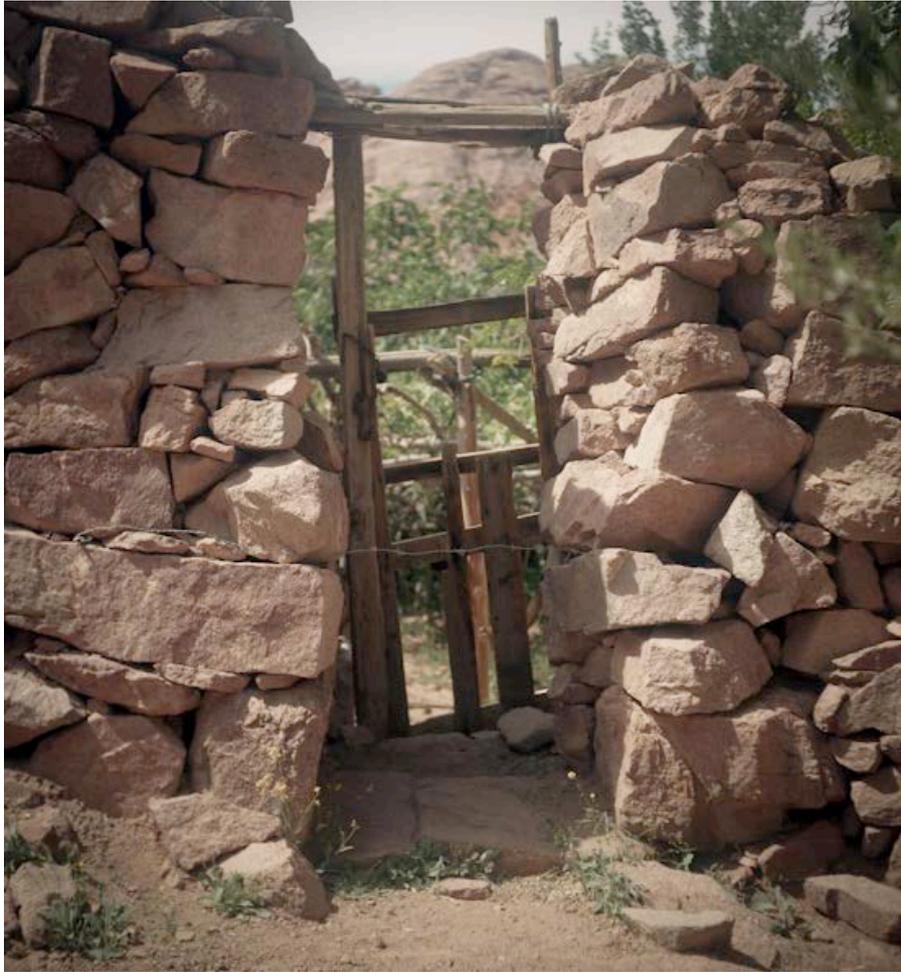
Mount Sinai, BryonyDunne©2012

## **SYNOPSIS**

*To a backdrop of political upheaval, an island of green life floats in an arid desert; two Bedouin embark on a daily quest to keep their orchard alive.*

*The Orchard Keepers* takes us on a journey into the rugged the Sinai desert. Behind intricate stonewalls we meet Dr. Ahmad, the last surviving herbalist trained in the ancient ways of desert healing. But it is Amariya – the resilient and exuberant naturalist whose scars and charms dominate the tale. Her relationship to the land has transformed her life in unlikely ways. *The Orchard Keepers* pays homage to her hypnotic freedom.

For filmmaker Bryony Dunne, what began as a short photography trip to focus on the few remaining orchards, evolved into a personal breakthrough. After living for a year with the Gabaliya tribe, she gained unique insight into the stratified tribal structures & layers of myth that enshroud the mountain region.



Entrance to Amariyas orchard, BryonyDunne©2012

## CHARACTERS

*Amariya*, at seventy years old and a mother of six has chosen to live an independent life away from the constraints of family and village life in her mountain orchard. In a society dominated by men, she finds it difficult to accept that she is alone in this choice. *Amariya* is but a handful of gardeners that still treat their orchard as a full time home. She is the only female gardener that continues to independently maintain this way of life. *Amariya's* unique character matches her choice of clothes: bright pinks; oranges; sequined cloaks with gold and jewels. And all of this in stark contrast to the full-length, black Galabiya cloaks that most women of the locality wear.



*Amariya* in her orchard, Wadi Zawatin, Bryony Dunne ©2012

*Dr. Ahmed* is the last surviving herbal doctor trained in the ancient ways of desert healing. Living full time in his mountain orchard, all of his remedies are collected from his garden, and the mountains that surround it.

He has collected the desert knowledge from twelve other herbal doctors that previously worked in the region. He finds it difficult to accept that young Bedouin are ceasing to maintain their ancient gardens. When he passes away, his herbal lore will die with him.



Dr.Ahmad in his clinic, BryonyDunne©2012

## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

During a childhood, spent in a rural hamlet in the Irish countryside, nature and the mystique of the mountains always surrounded me. Years later I find myself again living in the shadow of a magical world; at the foot of the highest peak in Egypt; Mount Sinai. In between living and working in London and Cairo, it was only in the mountains of the Sinai desert where my passion for filmmaking was truly realised.

What began as a short photography trip to focus on the few remaining orchard gardeners, quickly mutated into a much longer, and more personal, project. It swiftly became apparent that I could not capture the magic of what I experienced only through photography. Neither would a straightforward, descriptive documentary film suffice. True to my roots as a photographer, artist, and researcher – not to mention a mountain wanderer – my new and adamant aim was to craft an atypical and artistically innovative story.

To achieve this I decided to live within the Gabaliya community. This delivered for me a privileged view of Bedouin life. In order to understand the complex social structures of the community I was living in and gain me the confidence to film my

subjects at close quarters, I wanted to be treated outside and above the role of a tourist. A foreigner, living in Sinai at a time when travel from abroad to the region was advised against, I became determined to provide a truthful account of life within a region suddenly notorious. In contrast to global media coverage, I want this film to offer a unique and hopefully more authentic account of an area too long neglected; an area that, sadly, reaches the headlines these days only in the event of tragedy.

Based in Cairo, and having spent the last two and half years in Egypt, I have now experienced the effects of mass media. But I have also experienced life on the other side – the untold stories - the daily lives of people that all too often pass unnoticed. It is not merely Mubarak and Morsi who are living through monumental times. In their own worlds, the ordinary people of Egypt too are undergoing a revolution. With *The Orchard Keepers*, I have attempted to unearth the tender trap that exists between a loyalty to deep and meaningful tradition, and the encroaching claw of modernity. Change is happening fast in Egypt. And it is not without victims.

A time of revolution and violence in the bustling capital city seemed aeons away from the ancient ways of the mountain orchards. Yet individuals such as Amariya prove that nomadic worshippers of the land, and the old ways, do not necessarily lead quiet, traditional, or typical lives.

Each viewer may identify their own truth in the lives depicted by *The Orchard Keepers*. My truth is that the journey of its creation gifted me an unexpected path to change. Metamorphosis came from looking inward and backward, as much as it did looking outward and forward.



In Amariays orchard, Bryony Dunne©2013

## DIRECTOR'S BIO

Bryony Dunne is an Irish artist whose work engages Anthropology, Sociology, Ecology, and Visual Arts. Her various projects have sought to explore human's relationship with the landscape, and the evolution of cultivation and settlements.

Working through installations, film and photography, Dunne explores concepts of intangible cultural heritage, myths and traditional practices.

She has participated in number of national and international group shows for her work. She holds a BA in Spatial Design and an MSc from University College Dublin in UNESCO Cultural Heritage Conservation. Recently she was an invited resident artist at the Townhouse Gallery, Cairo (2013).

She is based in Cairo and working on a new film *In Search of Shisha* in collaboration with Kordoba Pictures. She holds a position teaching Still Image at the German University in Cairo.

## SCREENINGS

### *Film Festivals:*

Ismailia International Film Festival, Egypt (June 2014)

Saratov International Film Festival, Russia (Oct 2014)

Guth Gafa International Film Festival, Ireland (Oct 2014)

Banff Mountain International Film Festival, Alberta, Canada (Nov 2014)

Festival International du film de Montagne, Autrans, France (Dec 2014)

Bilbao Mountain Film Festival, Spain (Dec 2014)

### *Other:*

The Mosaic Rooms, London, UK (August 2014)

Sinai Conference, Netherlands Institute in Cairo, Egypt (Nov 2014)

Nour Festival of the Arts, Leighton House Museum, London UK (Nov 2014)

P 21 Gallery, London UK, Screening and book launch (Feb 2015)

Goldsmiths University, Dep of Visual Anthropology, London UK (Feb 2014)

German University in Cairo, Egypt (Feb 2015)

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland. Screening & Book Launch (July 2015)

Contemporary Image Collective, Cairo, Egypt (TBA)

## AWARDS

2<sup>nd</sup> prize award winner - 'Energy of the Truth', Saratov International Documentary and Drama Film Festival, Russia.

## COMING SOON

**Publication (24 page)**- with a forward by Maria Golia, includes both landscape and portrait images taken from the series '*The Orchard Keepers*'



Bryony Dunne©2014