

A response to ageism: Grains of Sand

Sarah Anne Gross's cinema tells stories that are not captured on camera but are touched, felt, and lived together. Grains of Sand is one of the calmest but most profound steps of this journey for now.

Original article in Turkish

<https://bianet.org/yazi/yas-ayrimciligina-bir-yanit-grains-of-sand-307710>



The sounds of cinemas mix with the spring breeze of Izmir. The slogans of women, the routes of the struggle lines...

The 8th International Women Directors Festival, held this year between 5-10 May 2025, offered a unique opportunity not only to watch the works of female filmmakers, but also to take a closer look at their worlds.

The slogan for this year's festival was quite meaningful: “ *It's Not What It Seems.* ” And indeed, every film that hit the screen pulled the audience much deeper than what was apparent.

The film that won the best film award in the international category of this year's festival was Sarah Anne Gross' documentary “ *Grains of Sand* ”.

I met Sarah in Izmir; we talked about the story of this touching film and her life. During this enjoyable conversation, I also owe a special thanks to Berna Gençalp, the creator of the Kim Mihri project, for her translation support and for making this meeting possible.

A journey that begins with family

Sarah Anne Gross' relationship with cinema begins with her family. "We were a family like the United Nations," she says. Six children of different ethnic backgrounds, four *adopted children*, American and British parents... Growing up in such diversity was not easy. "Each of us had a different wound in our soul," she says.

She made his first film about this family. When she attended a script development workshop in Greece, she was working on a fictional story, but with the encouragement of the other participants, she turned to her own story: “Your life is already a movie, why are you telling something else?”

And the film touched not only the audience, but also her family. They reconnected in front of the camera. “I picked up the camera and the dialogue started,” says Sarah. They didn’t just ask each other questions, they opened the door to a heartfelt conversation by holding the camera out to each other. That was the power of cinema for her: to heal, to bring together, to talk.

To South Africa for a woman's story

Sarah’s second documentary takes her to South Africa. The bond she formed with Jabulile , a woman she met through a women’s leadership program, was both personal and cinematic. Jabulile is a woman who strives to be a leader in her own neighborhood, despite her children growing up in poverty. “My camera brought two different worlds together in the same frame,” says Sarah.

“I grew up with black brothers,” she says, explaining why she feels so close to Jabalili. Her struggle is a reflection of a universal female struggle for Sarah.

Four continents, one camera in the pandemic

Sarah has been one of those who have not been alone during the pandemic. She reached out to her friends on different continents and asked them to document their lives. She held meetings via Zoom, collected the videos, and produced a four-part documentary. Each episode covers a different economic level, a different daily routine, and a different child’s perspective on the pandemic. “One child had nothing.

The other had planned every hour,” she says. And these contrasts were the very truth she wanted to capture with her camera.

Age discrimination



One of the most talked about films of the festival, *Grains of Sand* is a project that Sarah has dedicated the last eight years to. It is about the friendship between her own mother, Margot , and her husband's mother, Barbara . Both are artists, both in their 80s. They meet every year to spend time carving stone, cooking, and chatting.

“They can be not only the subject of stories, but also the subject,” says Sarah. The film, which aims to increase the visibility of older women, shows that old age can be full of not only loss but also productivity and

friendship. “At first I thought this film was about the end of life, but when I finished it I realized it was about life itself,” Sarah explains.

The response to the film screenings touched Sarah deeply. One viewer said that her grandfather had recently died, but after watching the film she felt like he was still alive inside her. This is the essence of the connection Sarah wants to create with the films.

"The film is not a message, it is a bridge of emotions," says Sarah. The story of two 80-year-old women offers young viewers the opportunity to think about their own old age, past ties and future relationships. This is a documentary that makes you say, "I want to age like that when I'm 80."

At the end of our conversation, I ask her this question: “What is the secret of such long-lasting friendships?” His answer is short but profound: “Time and space. Sitting across from each other, making eye contact, touching. This is very valuable in the age of social media. We did it now, and we will never forget it.”

Sarah Anne Gross's cinema tells stories that are not captured on camera but are touched, felt, and lived together. *Grains of Sand* is one of the calmest but most profound steps of this journey for now.