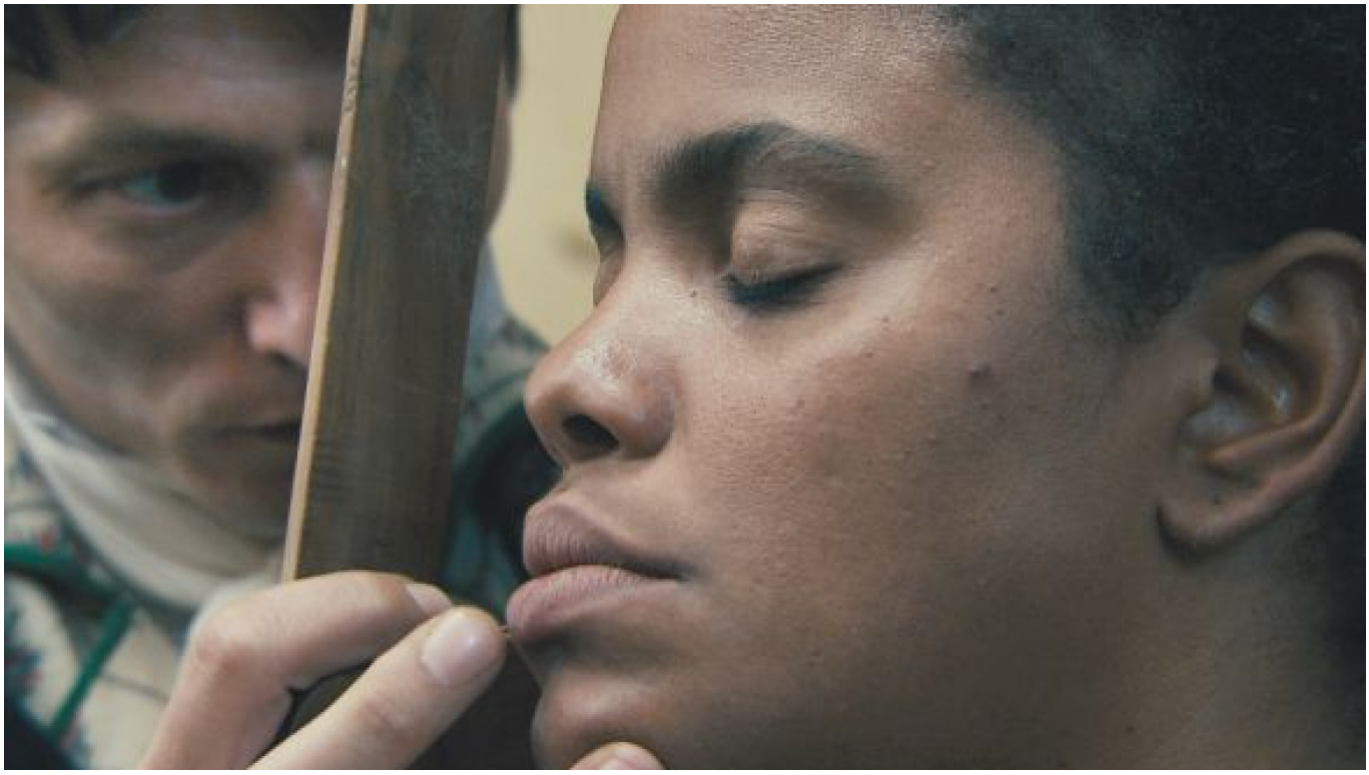
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

'Black Venus' Big Draw At French Film Festival

By The Moscow Times

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Yahima Torres plays the title role in Abdellatif Kechiche's "Black Venus."

35MM Cinema is currently hosting the 12th French Cinema Today Festival, a quick glimpse into the state of cinema in the country of Jean Paul Belmondo and Jean-Luc Godard.

The festival will premier five films: "Black Venus" directed by Abdellatif Kechiche, "A Gang Story" by Olivier Marchal, "American Translation", by Jean-Marc Barr and Pascal Arnold, "The Straight Line" by Regis Wargnier and Eva Ionesco's "My Little Princess."

Kechiche's previous film "The Secret of the Grain" won the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival and "Black Venus" received excellent reviews at that festival this year.

Venus is likely to prove an unsettling but powerful highlight of the festival as it centers on the tragic figure of Saartjes Baartman played by Yahima Torres. A South African servant, she is persuaded by her colonial master to travel to Europe and fulfill her ambition of becoming an

artist. Instead, she becomes a carnival freak who performs under the name “Hottentot Venus,” is leered at and profited from. The film is based on a true story.

Actors Daniel Duval, Tcheky Karyo, Yahima Torres and Vincent Perez and directors Karine Silla, Regis Wargnier, Pascal Arnold and Eva Ionesco will all be present in Moscow for the festival and take part in question and answer sessions.

A program of shorts will finish the festival on Friday.

French Cinema Today Festival runs till Friday. 35MM. 47/24 Ulitsa Pokrovka. Metro Kurskaya. Tel. 917-1883. www.kino35mm.ru

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