

Lullaby to my father
Munio Weinraub Gitai
1909-1970

Munio my father
Like the people of his generation
Was interested and applied in his architecture
A dimension of modesty, of restraint
Of submission to the collective project
And this is also part of the tradition of the Bauhaus
Not only orthogonal buildings

Now that I'm developing a project of a movie
Which is leaning on his biography
And also on geography
And also on architectural geometry
I would have tried to interweave the movements
The historical and political ones
Which created and designed
The minimalist language, the factual one
Like consequences of rationalization of the design
And the technological revolution
That every city like Berlin went through
By the beginning of the twentieth century
Which is the period we are dealing with
Berlin, a kind of a Prussian agglomerate of townlets
Which needed unifying style
Of an industrial rationale
As well as the beginning of the thought of
Habitation of the masses
In the context of mass culture
Like the one of Benjamin, Adorno, Marcuse
In another city, Frankfurt, but at the same period
The creation of a theory, and its architectural iconography
In the architectural language it is called « Hilbersheimer and Hannes Meyer »
The latter, together with Walter Gropius
Sent Munio, who was 18 years old
Who just arrived from the Silesian-Polish-German town
Of Bielsko-Biala or Bilitz
Like in our places it depends on who counts the territory
The Polish, the Germans or the Austro-Hungarians
And then Hannes Meyer admitted the young Munio for a conversation
And recommended to him that before he is admitted to the Bauhaus in Dessau he should study to be a
carpenter in a Hochschule for carpentership of neoclassical style
Meaning the opposed design ideology
By out of recognition that these « reactionary conservatives » know how to use the wood
And after a year of professionalizing himself in neoclassical ornaments
Munio was admitted to the Bauhaus
An there, according to the best of dialectics,
They implemented his technological know how of the wood
But changing and breaking the design ideology

The film will ask therefore questions of macro
How did the young Munio switch
From Bilitz through Dessau to the atelier of the last legendary director of the Bauhaus
Mies van der Rohe ?
And how did he work on the last exhibit before Hitler
In 1932

And how Jews and socialists were chased away from the Bauhaus at a period
That Mies van der Rohe

Thought that he can appease the Nazis
By firing and chasing part of the students
The radicals or the Jews or the Jewish radicals
And how did it happen that he did not manage
I mean Mies van der Rohe
And that the Nazis did not accept his proposition of design of their party's center in Munich ?
As for Munio
He was arrested and beaten and his teeth were broken
And he was released by the father of his non Jewish lover
Smuggled by his friends to the border
of Switzerland
To Basel
Where Herzl had his 1st Zionist Congress
But this was before, in 1897
There, in Basel, Herzl spoke
About the creation of a Judenstadt, a Jewish state,
Modern and secular
And phantasized on Haifa as a big port city
Without rabbis and military officers
But an industrial capital
A modern city
Like the one that Munio will try to design
Forty years later
After he had escaped from Europe on a desk of a boat
Roughly at the period at the Swiss started to return the Herman Jews
To Germany
And he thought that this is the good time to go East
And try something else
Building industry in the Haifa bay
That of Herzl
And also designing kibbutzim
And children rooms for the collective education
The one who wanted to create a new man
Almost social realism
And also to design mass public housing to those
That in short while will escape Europe as well as North Africa

Munio is standing with a hat
With a simple suit and tie in a colour which fits the colour scheme of the suit
In the Eretz Israel heat
Like an immigrant
That it is clear that he comes from somewhere else
He gives a lecture
To whom ?
To construction workers, telling them of the principles
Of modernism and about brick as a basic module
Then he travels in Emeq Israel, and the Jordan valley
To design collective dining rooms to the kibbutzim of Hashomer Hatsair

The kibbutzniks who in many domains were innovative and courageous
Were very conservative in their architectural taste
They don't like the orthogonal architecture
With the flat roofs
Somehow it reminds them Arab villages
And this is something much more inferior
They prefer the pastoral image
Of little townlets and shtetls with tiled red roofs
How will the innovative architects act in such a revolutionary conservative context ?
Une énigme
But Munio and his friends have succeeded partially
And that's why the architectural iconography of this period is modern
And it's engraved and shapes the collective memory
The matter of fact simplicity of design, without ornaments

Not like the one which is current now in our places
Shared by men, women and children
That a Jewish building needs a kippa on its top
Who at all said that a kippa or a dom is a Jewish motive ?
But today, certainly in Jerusalem,
There are more and more doms/kippas and in more senses that only one
And in 48 the State of Israel is created
A big event which shapes new frontiers
Also of the consciousness
And also many Palestinian refugees
But this is another matter which continues and deserves to continue
To occupy us until today

The new state creates a Ministry of Housing headed by Golda Meir
Who nominates Munio to be the head of the architectural Department
Of the new state
This is inspite of having been reprimandé by her that he should have a membership of the Party
That was the habbit
And in many places this is the habit today as well
And Munio and the people of his generation outline the criteria
Urban and architectural ones of the new state
This is also the time to design Yad Vashem
And the Hebrew University in Givat Ram in Jerusalem
And design the passenger boats
That Israel gets as a partial compensation from Germany
And the site of the government in Jerusalem. At the same year I was born

Not all the plans were materialistic
And most of the buildings of this period
Will not be conserved
This activity will continue until 1967
A year that we think that lasted only 6 days
Because this is the name of the war which erupted in June in the center of the year
Now Munio is left with only three years to live
They discovered a rare blood cancer, a form of leucemia
He decides to hebrewize his name to Gitai
From the root *gat*, pressoir
And *banai*, charge
Meaning the worker who will take grapes to the *gat* pressoir and make out of them wine
Or the worker who will take olives to the *gat* to produce pure olive oil
It is of course a process in which there is squeezing
Or the olive or the grape
So they will become pure, unique and distilled liquid

But in this year the face of Israeli architecture is changing as well
Following the new empire that was just conquered
The Israeli architects adopt
A Style that the British call it
And this is really the professional name
The brutal architecture
And then the crusaders like citadels are being erected in the West Bank
Brutal architecture with narrow cracked windows and exposed armed concrete
The bon ton of this period is also that of negligence of the fragile minimalist architecture
Of the previous generation
The Angel of Death liberates Munio from his sufferings
And also from the need to collaborate, yes to collaborate, with a new aggressive architecture

Signé :
His young son Amos