

## Movies in the Twilight of the Inner and the Outer Reality The Insights of Taliya Finkel

by Doron Rabinovici

In her films Taliya Finkel offers us her perspective. She is not afraid to show us her emotions. The way she looks at herself is not pretentious but full of irony. Taliya Finkel first started to paint, to sculpt and to shoot photos before she began to make films. She says those early experiences still have an influence on her work.

Taliya Finkel is an Israeli filmmaker who currently lives in Vienna. In all her films she delves into the question where the inner reality ends and the outer reality begins. She confronts us with the borders of normality.

Her film „Taliya.Date.com“ 2011 tells the story of the quest for love in the estranged world of the internet.



After every date, she writes a "documentary poem". Her gay flat-mate Oded becomes the initiator, the constructor, the guide and the ironic comentator of her romantic search. The movie portrays the bizarre, as well as normal aspects of internet dating. The film shows us a personal and a collective phenomenon that is well known to every single who plays the romantic internet game. The movie deals with a global experience, but at the same time with its local expression in Israel.



Her film „Tikkun“ 2002 is a portrait of a „Rabbanit“, the wife of a Rabbi.

The Rabbanit Lea Kook is an orthodox leader followed by her female admirers. She is an extrovert enthusiast and a staunch believer in a prophecy the world refuses to hear. To explore the backyard of this orthodox scene, Taliya became one of the members of the house of the Rabbanit. Lea Kook agreed to the intimate exposure of her physical and spiritual world for two years. She saw her cooperation as a form of „tikkun“, of healing and of redemption. „Tikkun“ is without any doubt a film about the Rabbanit, but nevertheless it reveals the perspective of Taliya on Lea Kook.

On one hand the documentary is a very personal work of art, on the other hand we are confronted with a social phenomenon. Lea Kook is a controversial figure in Israel. She is regarded as a spiritual leader by one faction of the society, whereas others just see her as a crazy woman. She was even called „the Rabbanit Cuckoo“ in the press. She was accused of being the impersonification of a collective insanity. Even the son of the Rabbanit admits: „If I saw someone else screaming like my mother, I would be sure that person was mentally disturbed, if it wasn't a hundred percent authentic...“



סרט של: טליה פינקל

# המיקון

Tikkun a film by Taliya Finkel

סרט דוקומנטרי על הרבנית קוק.



Lea Kook is not the old-fashioned, classic Rabbanit, who is only preparing the dinner for her husband's guests and looking after the children. She is a religious authority and a woman from whom also men gather to receive blessings. Taliya succeeded in making a movie about one certain individual and about a collective phenomenon of religious passion in the postmodern society of Israel.





In her film „Over My Dad’s Body“ 2008 Taliya Finkel studies the difference between the inner and the outer reality too.

Here we are confronted with her very personal family story. When she was a little girl Taliya did not know if her uncle really was her uncle, or a look-alike planted by the KGB. At least that was her father's theory. He said his brother Sterik wasn't the same man when he came out of prison, but nobody believed her father, as he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and had to be treated. Five years after his death Taliya dared to study the open questions which surrounded her father. Did Schmuël Finkel work for the Israeli secret service as he claimed? Did he really commit suicide? Or might he have been murdered by his brother Sterik, who was the last one to see him alive? Taliya began to investigate her uncle, traveled from Israel to the Ukraine and back in a desperate quest to find proof of her father's story, hiring a private investigator and documenting the whole journey. In the movie she investigates the thin line that separates imagination and reality, sanity and madness.

Taliya proves a lot of compassion and self-irony in this film. She shows that you can live with a mentally ill person. She makes us believe that you can respect him in spite of his schizophrenia and his crazy ideas. She teaches us that you may love him. She portrays him as a charming father who strives for the interest and for the recognition of his daughter. He wants to inspire her with his stories. He wants to convince her of his love. The film does not claim to be an objective documentation of the real truth but succeeds in being a true documentary movie of a certain and special subject.

As an artist Taliya does not judge, but allows us to find our own answers. She checks and rechecks her father’s story. Was Schmuël Finkel really working for Israel’s secret service as he claimed? She does not belittle his mental disease. She tells us that he even believed that people were poisoning his food. But in the movie, he is seen saying: „Even if I'm a schizophrenic, it doesn't mean that what I'm saying isn't true.“ He was right: Also a paranoiac is sometimes persecuted. In the end the filmmaker does not find any proof that her uncle was a KGB agent, but it seems possible that her father had once been active for the Israeli secret service.



The narrative of Shmuel Finkel touches a lot of experiences that are not quite unknown to many migrant families. The threats of the KGB, the alienation between the relatives who left home and those who stayed behind, the personality changes somebody underwent in Russian prisons, the paranoia in the communist Soviet Union and in an Israel at war. Taliya's movie deals with those topics that were rather taboo for many years. She does not condemn but teaches us to feel with and to feel for the sick, but sympathetic father.



This empathy can be found in all the films of Taliya Finkel. She is a courageous and truthful artist. Her attitude also dominates her current project in Vienna. She is working on a movie about foreign musicians in Vienna. They do not know each other, they are all strangers in this city who do not speak the local language. It is again her own and very personal experience that functions as the starting point of her art, as she lives for the first time outside of Israel.

When I see Taliya Finkel's documentary movies I cannot help to have the impression that her true desire is to make long feature films, and – guess what! – that is exactly what Taliya Finkel's told me in the end of our meeting. She wants to make feature movies for the big screen. Cinemas with real scripts and with great actors. Her wish seems to me the logical continuation of her work. All her pictures deal with the border of fiction and facts. Her art is full of insight. Her films are beautiful reflections in the twilight between the inner and the outer reality.



pic by Doron Rabinovici 2011

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