



# GEORGE OSTROVSKY RETROSPECTIVE

*Reho Ostrovsky*



# Foreword

Summer 2008. The Jerusalem Film Center. The annual Jerusalem International Film Festival. Thousands of people move in and out of the four halls, watching dozens of Israeli and international movies from the best of the year's crop. An island of sanity and normalcy in a torn environment of conflict, a place saturated in burdensome history of three monotheistic religions, of two nations and one practically divided city. This flourishing place - a kind of oasis in turbulent surroundings, which brings the world to Jerusalem through the silver screen - convenes people from all over the country to a special experience.

At the entrance plaza, the unknown Asaf Avidan, a brilliant young Israeli singer who some months later will become an international star and will be signed by one of the best record companies in the world, sings like Janis Joplin. Opposite, on one side people are buying beer, and on the other, books. One can feel that the crowd likes its encounter with the place.

I always wondered how this place started, and learned it all began with a Jewish entrepreneur from Brazil named George Ostrovsky. Like my grandfather, he hailed from the caldron of early 20th-century Jewish Ukraine. They belonged to what is now a disappearing generation – sentimental and emotional men and

women with foreign accents who could not forget their past, but could remember when a Jewish homeland was only a collective dream and who wanted to contribute to the future of a strong and vibrant Israel. Both men were among many who at a very early period bought a parcel of land here in order to have a tangible asset even while their lives continued in the West.

George's success and determination led him to make another mark. He initiated a process that resulted in the construction of the first building exclusively dedicated as a cinematheque in Israel. This place - unpretentious, homespun in aura and warmly inclusive - inspires discourse, delight and enlightenment.

That July, in this setting, from the road above, one could watch traffic slow as it moved to and from the Old City. In the terrace café, the writer David Grossman and I sat and took in the breathtaking scenery of the city's ancient walls, the slopes of the Hinnom Valley, Mount Zion and the Tower of David. I was serving on the jury for the Festival's "Spirit of Freedom" competition and discussing how this award reflected the ethos of the Jerusalem Film Center. The JFC has always been dedicated to sustaining a spirit of openness, secularism, pluralism, and partnership. David and I also spoke about the future of Israel, about our concerns, about his

son Uri who was killed in the war in Lebanon in 2006, about my brother Uri who was killed in the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and about our feeling that our country's future continues to be under threat. We agreed we would like to see some of the mentality of this place and the people who visit it resonate more within the characteristics of our society and the decision makers in Israel.

Thinking back on this encounter and what I now know of this place and this project, a line from David Grossman's 1986 novel *See Under: Love* comes to mind: "But what is the point of these wearisome biographies? The same chaos in strange and diverse forms takes hold of all the characters, and is oftentimes unworthy of [the] man...." Now that I have been able to link this place and this man, I can say George Ostrovsky's biography is a worthy study about a life worthy of commemoration. It is about one of those men who lived abroad but felt compelled to contribute to life in Israel. Moreover, this tells the story of a person who did worthy things for us. For this, we, who are trying to make our country a better one, thank him.

Ron Pundak  
Jerusalem, 2013

*"There is a homeland, but it has changed. Once a homeland meant a connection to the land and the landscape. Now most people live in cities, so for them a homeland is the street, the houses in the neighborhood, the theater," said S. Yizhar in [a] newspaper interview. I would add that a homeland is also the culture, the social connections, the language and literature that are created here. All of these form a significant part of Israel's DNA – a country that is renewing itself and looking towards the future, not back at the past. They should protect, preserve and most importantly, develop them."*

Ron Pundak, from "Turbo Zionism," published in *Haaretz*, March, 2001



George at the Cinematheque site, 1975



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# About George

How did a man who was born in Pinsk in 1901, fled the Ukraine in 1919, snuck out of Constantinople in 1921, settled in Prague until he relocated to Rio in 1939, wind up as a founder of the Jerusalem Film Center? He flourished in Brazil despite a succession of military regimes in the 1960s. He managed to reconnect with his Russian family despite Soviet restrictions in the 1960s. And from 1972 until he passed away in 1980, he navigated an array of international challenges triggered by his commitment to build a facility in Israel devoted exclusively to the presentation and preservation of cinema. Adding to the unlikely factors surrounding this destiny, George Ostrovsky didn't even particularly like film. Although he did not live to see the dedication of this landmark institution in October 1981, the Jerusalem Film Center's (JFC) international scope and inclusive spirit perpetuate values central to his character. George was as secular in his Jewishness as his collaborators on this project. He would have appreciated that screenings are scheduled seven days a week, although some in Holy

Jerusalem consider this shocking. For him, this nod to accessibility would not have been in conflict with his own view of the observance of rest on Shabbat. He was quick to admit he regarded the moviehouse as a prime place for a snooze. His daughters Rose and Vivian, convinced him of the importance of cinema beyond commercial entertainment. They guided him to investigate several national cinematheques and discussed how moving image technologies provide a vital source of art, documentation, inspiration, provocation and delight as well as refuge, even for those who choose to remain awake. While the range of film events and programming, including the esoteric, avant-garde and controversial, might have caused George to raise an eyebrow or two, he would be proud that the constituency for the Jerusalem Film Center is the most diversified of any cultural institution in Israel. In a city known for conflicting ethnic, religious, political and social perspectives, the JFC focuses on how cinema can be a catalyst for cross-cultural discourse and understanding. As George's vision took form, he was able to experience how the almost-finished structure frames a spectacular panorama, including a looming profile of the Old City and the sweep of the Hinnom Valley.

This vista has since been shared by half a million visitors annually. What has not been framed, shared or even collected until this volume, is the story behind these walls. The background of all that led to this achievement parallels the complicated history of European Jewry during the twentieth century. A team spread across several countries compiled documents, mementos, oral histories, letters and photographs and mined their own memories, diaries and discussions to provide insight into George Ostrovsky's life and times. While he rarely spoke of his past, and made only cryptic notes without keeping a diary, the fragments amassed suggest his priorities. Dedication to family, obsession with hard work, commitment to 'give back' and a special concern for Israel were fused from the tumult surrounding his childhood and early adulthood. What also emerges is the story of a resourceful optimist and self-made man whose grace along with sheer luck and entrepreneurial instincts fed his taste for challenges. The cement for this mosaic comes from his daughters — Vivian's voice, which pulls personal details into historical context, and Rose's creative expressions and her encapsulating confession: "At the opening of the Cinematheque, George felt more 'present' than at his funeral."

George's goal was to create a connection to Israel that would contribute something significant to Jerusalem. His wife Anya and both daughters recall that, even amidst the shock of his sudden passing, and given the many places he had experienced as 'home,' it was a quick, clear and easy decision he should be laid to rest near his beloved project. Now, extended family and friends who have been gathering annually at the Jerusalem Film Center to honor him and all those who enjoy the impact of his accomplishment can see an actual movie drawn from George's life, Vivian's experimental art-cum-diary film, *Nikita Kino* (2002), and the proverbial 'film' between the lines and images in this book of the man who didn't want his name over the door....

Kelly Gordon

# THINK PINSK



1901 - 1939

George in 1916

ONCE UPON A TIME IN EUROPE

If, as Israeli poet Avot Yeshurun claims, a man's memories are his shoes, my father walked barefoot. He never mentioned his childhood and spoke rarely of his past. As a child in Belarus, he lived through freezing winters, hunger, typhus and cholera epidemics. As an adolescent in Yekaterinoslav, a rough Ukrainian mining town, he witnessed anti-Tsarist revolts and conflicts among the White, Red, Black and Green Russian armies who despised each other but had one thing in common: their hatred of Jews. By the time he was eighteen, he had lived through the Russian Revolution, the Civil War that followed, World War I and fierce pogroms in the Ukraine. But growing up in Brazil, my sister and I never heard about this. Nor did my mother. Grisha was a doer and a mover, not a talker. Perhaps it was particular to that generation or perhaps he simply preferred living in the present. At forty-five he had already changed nationalities three times: first Russian (born in Pinsk in 1901), then Czech — Prague was where he chose to study, enlist in the army and start a successful engineering career in the 1920s — and finally Brazilian, after fleeing Nazi Europe with my mother in 1939. My father was yet another Diaspora Jew who moved with his family from Belarus to the Ukraine when he was fourteen, spending a year alone in Constantinople (Istanbul) at nineteen, settling in Prague until he was thirty-eight and finally emigrating to Rio. His was a shifting geography with transit as a way of life. He died on his way from Paris to New York, in a London hospital.

His name was transitory as well: born Grigory Solomonovitch Ostrovsky, he became 'Eljakim Ostrovsky' for a brief period in order to leave Constantinople. He probably entered Turkey, as so many other Russian refugees, without any documents. A fictitious backstory stated that 'Eljakim Ostrovsky' had lived in Palestine with his parents from 1906 to 1913, and with letters from the Grand Rabbinate of Turkey and the British High Commissioner in Constantinople as proof, he obtained his exit visa. As a Czech citizen in Prague, he was 'Rehor,' a Czech version of Gregor. 'Senhor Jorge' was his Brazilian name; for the French he was 'Georges' and for his English-speaking friends, 'George.' But for the family he was always 'Grisha.' His parents, Ida Lvovna Mostovliansky and Zalman Grigorievitch Ostrovsky, had four children. Although Ida was the granddaughter of a rabbi from Pruzhany, they were secular. Sofia, their firstborn, later changed her name to Zoya Alexandrovna, dropping the 'Solomonovna' to make the name less Jewish, and, in her mind, more romantic. She married five times, had numerous fiancés, wrote poetry and worked her whole life as an ear-nose-throat doctor. Grisha was the eldest boy, then came Yuli, born in 1903, then Boris. Of the youngest boy we know nothing at all. Yuli bore a striking resemblance to Grisha and was one of the engineers planning the Moscow subway (1931-1950s). The job came to an end when all Jewish engineers were put on trial and falsely accused of embezzling government money. Yuli was saved by Stalin's death in 1953. The family lost contact with Boris, who moved to Bishkek (Russia).





George in Turkey, 1922

During the time the family lived in Pinsk, it was one of the few areas in Russia where Jews were allowed to own land, run a business and go to school without being subject to the legal restrictions of the *numerus clausus* which, from 1887, regulated the number of Jews permitted in an institution. As a result, Pinsk's population was 74% Jewish. The Ostrovskys had a bookstore (1903) and later a stationery store (1911) there.

By 1915 Pinsk was no longer considered safe: the Germans were advancing, and there was a severe food shortage. The whole family moved to Yekaterinoslav, thinking the Ukraine would be a safe haven for them. Little did they know that what awaited them there would be far worse.

Grisha went to the Jewish High School, which was considered excellent, until 1918, then studied for a year at the prestigious Yekaterinoslav Mining Institute (1918-19). The Ukraine proclaimed its independence in January of 1918. Ida Lvovna, a down-to-earth, authoritarian woman, knew that her son was in danger of being conscripted into the Ukrainian army: she advised Grisha to leave the country and try to make a living elsewhere. The rest of the family stayed in the Soviet Union.

When he left, he probably did not realize that he would only see the family again some fourteen years later, in Moscow, where his parents moved permanently with Yuli and Zoya. When Grisha came to visit, around 1935, his mother did not recognize the young man at her doorstep. Throughout the Stalinist years, Ida had managed to keep contact with him. Had she been caught corresponding with someone from a foreign country, she risked losing her life.

In 1920, Grisha had moved to Constantinople. It was the nearest and safest large city that accepted

refugees. Forty thousand Russians lived there then, many of whom were Jews. Most of them were extremely poor and those who had some money saw it melt away almost instantaneously because of the devaluation when exchanged for local Turkish lira. The Jewish Committee for the Relief of Sufferers from the War (JOINT) employed him as 'Porter and Luggage Attendant.' For this he was paid a monthly salary of twenty Turkish lira, including one daily meal. He was soon upgraded to supervisor in one of their four boardinghouses. After working in the neighborhood of Ortaköy for a year, Grisha decided to move on. Prague seemed the best place to continue his studies and find work.

Czechoslovakia, like the Ukraine, gained its independence in 1918, at the end of World War I. Its capital, Prague, developed rapidly from 1922 to 1938. The city had become a refuge for emigrants coming from totalitarian regimes. Its population was growing and by 1938 bordered on one million. Despite the threatening shadows of nationalism and fascism, democratic sovereignty was maintained until early 1939.

In 1922, Grisha enrolled in the Czech Technical University in Prague and graduated in 1928 as an electrical engineer. By 1929 he had a work permit and was soon working for Siemens & Halske. He bought a car, travelled in Czechoslovakia and in Germany for his work, went on skiing trips in the Tatra mountains and on weekends picnicked with friends in the forest. Life seemed peaceful and stable.

Grisha met Anya Kogan in the summer of 1933. Her parents, Boris and Rachel, had left the Ukraine when she was six months old. They moved to Harbin (Manchuria, China) where Rachel's family lived and stayed there from approximately 1915 to the early 1920s. Their next stop was the Weimar Republic's Berlin, a sophisticated





George on a weekend break with friends, Prague, 1924



En route for a picnic, Prague, 1927



and vibrant city they liked.

But by 1933, life for Jews in Germany started feeling uncomfortable; they realized they must go elsewhere. Their Nansen passports did not make things easy. These identity cards issued by the League of Nations were given to stateless refugees. Through friends they heard about a competent lawyer in Prague who might be able to get them better documents. They decided to go to Prague and then spend all summer in Czechoslovakia before moving to Paris in the fall.

Dr. Schick, the lawyer, obtained Czech passports for them and introduced them to his close friend, Grisha. They grew very friendly, and soon Grisha asked Anya if he could show her the city. Being quite a bit younger than he, Anya was not too excited about the idea; she warned that if Grisha happened to come late she would not wait one minute for him. Although he was rarely punctual, on that day, somehow, he came to their rendezvous on time. Anya found him boring at first, but eventually changed her mind.

The Kogans spent the rest of the summer in Marienbad, a spa in the Bohemian mountains, wandering through the park-like countryside, sipping the curative spring waters gushing from neoclassical fountains surrounded by colonnades. A lighthearted atmosphere prevailed with music and tea-dancing in the afternoons. Grisha, who was finishing his reserve duty in the Czech army and was stationed between Prague and Marienbad, was a frequent guest.

After the summer, the Kogans settled in Paris. Grisha drove occasionally on weekends from Prague to Paris and back. In 1937, Rachel suffered a fatal heart attack; she was only forty-eight. One year later, in July 1938, Grisha and Anya married in Prague's City Hall. They celebrated with friends at the Barrandov Film Studios, on a hilltop with breathtaking views of the city. For

Anya, life in Prague was a dream. They had a bright, cheery apartment in the center of town, specially designed by an architect for himself. She enjoyed the city, their friends and the lifestyle. The mood, however, was quickly changing — the Nazi presence was felt in the streets, cafés and restaurants. By September, thanks to the infamous Munich Agreement, Britain and France agreed to the Nazi occupation of the Sudetenland.

In December 1938, Anya boarded the legendary *Normandie* with a couple of Grisha's friends who were emigrating, for their maiden US voyage. Anya was trying to get visas to emigrate to the US. She was carried away by this first visit to New York and would have loved to stay there but was told she could only obtain a visa for herself. Grisha had a problem: despite his Czech passport, US authorities based their quota system on place of birth. Pinsk was now part of Poland after the Polish-Soviet War (between 1920 and 1939), and the Polish quota was filled. The US would not accept him.

When Anya returned a few months later, the Nazis had taken over. Anya remembers the Czechs crying in the streets. Grisha sublet their cozy apartment to a colleague, an Indian engineer, and moved to a small apartment on the outskirts of Prague. It was safer but depressing, at the end of a tramline, far away from their favorite cafés and meeting places. Grisha's idea was to leave as quickly as possible. He devised a plan: He asked Anya's father, who was still living in Paris, to send them a cable saying that he was very sick and instructing them to come urgently. This would provide a pretext for applying for exit visas from the Gestapo. With her Slavic face and fluent German, Anya did not look particularly Jewish. In Prague, a Gestapo officer examined the telegram and said he would give Anya a visa. "But what about my husband?" she asked.



Anya and George's wedding,  
Barrandov Film Studios, Prague, July 19, 1938



"Tell him to come here in person and we will see." Grisha preferred not to risk it. They drove to Budweis, in Bohemia, a city he knew well from former business trips. In this German Protectorate, people were dancing in the streets, ecstatic about the recently appointed Reichskommissar, a senior Nazi administrator. Bracing herself for the worst, Anya was relieved to be assisted by an understanding Nazi officer. She explained she had come alone since her husband could speak no German. The officer was about to sign their visas when the telephone rang. As he finished the call, he announced: "I am so sorry, I just got orders to stop issuing exit visas." Grisha, who was waiting downstairs, was appalled.

The concierge of the hotel he usually stayed at warned them it was too dangerous to stay overnight. Instead, he suggested they rent a room at a friend's apartment. After a sleepless night, they took off early for Pilsen in western Bohemia. There, a Nazi officer dressed in a long black leather coat seized both passports from Anya's hands. "Will we be able to get our visas?" she inquired. "You will find out tomorrow when you come back to this office," he snapped. They rented another little room for the night. This time Grisha turned over his possessions — car keys, watch and money — to Anya, just in case. When they went back to the Gestapo office the next day, the Nazis were bringing in a handcuffed Jew they had just rounded up. Anya waited, terrified. A door opened brusquely and the officer slapped both passports in her hand: "Here you are." Both visas were there.

They drove back to Prague immediately. Nazis lined the streets, trying to direct the chaotic traffic. The Germans had just changed from Czech left-hand to German right-hand driving. Grisha suddenly realized he had left his passport in his attaché case in the car's trunk.

When he stopped the car in the middle of traffic to

retrieve the document, Anya was panic-stricken. A few days later they packed their bags, said their goodbyes, and drove to the train station where they abandoned the car and took off for Paris.

On a previous Paris vacation, Grisha had walked into the Brazilian Consulate with no particular purpose in mind and had requested two entry visas to Brazil. Now, he felt, was the time to leave Europe. He had already tried, unsuccessfully, to get Argentine entry visas. Since their Brazilian visas were expiring, he asked the Consul if he could extend them. The answer was very clear: "Either you go immediately or you will lose the visa. Czechoslovakia has been occupied, you don't have a country anymore."

Brazil was a remote country somewhere in the tropics. They knew nothing about it, knew no one there and could not speak the language. Boarding the *Massilia* in Bordeaux, they arrived in Rio de Janeiro on May 9, 1939.

*Vivian Ostrovsky*



# THAT MAN FROM RIO



1939 – 1964



Rua Paissandu, Rio de Janeiro,  
Any and George's first address, 1939

## SAILING TO BRAZIL

**T**hey sailed into a dictatorship. How much did they know about Getulio Vargas, the dictator who ruled Brazil from 1930 to 1945? Vargas himself was skillfully navigating between Berlin and Washington, trying to squeeze the most out of each. His authoritarian *Estado Novo* (the New State) drifted toward the Axis until he declared war on Germany in 1942.

The shadow of Hitler looming over South America prompted Franklin Roosevelt to grant a weighty loan that enabled Brazil to develop its first steel mill. This foreshadowed the country's industrial coming-of-age. Vargas was looking for immigrants to develop the economy, but only the 'right people' were allowed entry. Jewish refugees were not always welcomed; some were even sent back. Was it just luck or did my parents have the right credentials? Or did they benefit from the presence of Luiz Martins de Souza Dantas, Brazilian Ambassador to France from 1922 to 1944? Dantas knew what was happening in Europe and despite contrary orders from above, issued hundreds of visas to Jews.

As they sailed in, Anya was so distressed she did not notice the magnificence of Guanabara Bay, surrounded by lush forests, towering mountains and the mythical Sugarloaf. All she felt was the scorching sun and the humidity, which made the heat even harder to bear. They had no idea where they were going or what lay ahead.

After a few days in a pension, they decided to share an apartment with a couple they had met on the ship. That

worked until their new friends got Argentine visas and left for Buenos Aires.

On their first morning in the apartment they were quite astonished to find a fresh bottle of milk, one kilo of meat and two loaves of crisp bread, all complimentary, at their doorstep. The butcher, the baker and the dairyman were eagerly seeking new clients.

Grisha knew he would only find work as an engineer when he could master the language. Boris Schnaiderman, a Brazilian of Russian-Jewish origin, recommended by an acquaintance on the boat, gave both Grisha and Anya Portuguese lessons. Schnaiderman later became one of the foremost Portuguese translators of Dostoyevsky, Chekhov and other Russian classics.

The \$3,000 Grisha brought from Prague bought them some time. And Anya didn't need Portuguese to take out her Rolleiflex camera and start clicking. Most of the chic socialites she portrayed spoke French and she found new patrons easily. Convincing them to pay, however, turned out to be Grisha's new job.

In January 1940 my sister Rose was born and my father obtained a work permit. He quickly found a job as an electrical engineer with Ericsson, a Swedish company. One year later he got a considerable raise and two years later opened his own company, *R. Ostrovsky, Comercio e Industria, S.A.*, which would be his main company until the 1970s.

Rio flourished in the mid-forties. World War II boosted local industries and naval, steel and oil plants opened on the city's outskirts. Its population was rapidly expanding and new suburbs were mushrooming to house people from rural areas seeking work in the capital. For Grisha it was an adventurous time, although he did have to learn







Anya with her Rolleiflex, Long Island, 1946

the modus operandi of a very bureaucratic country. He was an optimist and this 'new world' seemed to provide endless opportunities he knew he could not have found in Europe. He moved from engineering to business, trying his hand at importing and exporting different commodities such as fruits, which were a failure, and non-ferrous metals, a success. His decisions were quick and he didn't mind taking calculated risks. He had good judgment — which on rare occasions failed him. But basically his analyses were sound and he had the perseverance to follow deals from beginning to end. Their circle of friends grew; like them, most were European Jews with whom they felt more comfortable. They often spent spirited weekends together in the hilly countryside.

They moved to their first apartment in Copacabana. Despite happy moments, Anya was having a hard time adapting to her new life, the climate, and coping with an energetic toddler. When Anya caught whooping cough, she had problems finding a good doctor. There were no antibiotics, the cough was contagious and lasted five weeks; finding someone to help with Rose was critical. She chanced upon Benedita, a benediction in every way. 'Dita' functioned as our nanny, surrogate mother and my mother's savior. For the next fifteen years she was to stay with us and travel wherever we went.

Anya was about eight months pregnant when she received news that Boris, her father, who was by then living in New York, had cardiac problems. She gave birth to me in a Manhattan hospital and we stayed in New York for six months, an opportunity for Anya to 'chill out.' Grisha rented a small apartment on the Upper West Side, Boris improved, and Anya found a superlative German Jewish nanny for me since Dita had stayed in Brazil. The war was over and soon we were *Flying Down to Rio*, as Hollywood would style

it. My parents became Brazilian citizens in 1949. Grisha opened a second branch of *R. Ostrovsky* in São Paulo and did not consider going back to Europe to live. Anya still thought wistfully of life in New York. She frequently suffered from severe migraines that were debilitating. Her recourse was to stay in a dark room, in total silence, for a day or two until it passed. Water shortages were constant. Living by the sea was synonymous with corroded water pipes. Replacing them was so slow that by the time one end of Avenida Atlantica was repaired, the other would break down. For about ten minutes, every morning and every evening, we had a John-Cage-like improvisation. We heard the neighbors' piercing cries: "*Olha a agua!*" ("Here comes the water!"), followed by a cacophony of pots, pans, bathtubs, and whatever other receptacles were available to collect the vital fluid. Power shortages were just as frequent, only not as noisy, unless people were caught in the lift. Instead of complaints, these misadventures inspired never-ending jokes, musicals or new Carnival lyrics.

In January 1951, five years after being deposed as dictator, Getulio Vargas made his comeback, 'carried by the people.' Eurico Gaspar Dutra had been in power from 1945 to 1950. Thanks to him, Brazil returned to democracy and now had a new constitution. Dutra improved relations with the US but lacked leadership and financial knowhow. His gambling prohibition unfortunately put an end to the effervescent evenings at the Casino da Urca, a fixture of Rio's postwar years. Anya, Grisha and their friends didn't gamble, but a minimal sum bought them a gourmet dinner, dancing, as well as Carmen Miranda's show and an intoxicating view of the bay from Sugarloaf Mountain.



School vacations, from December to March, were yearly three-month-long safaris to escape Rio's searing, sticky summers. Grisha combined his business trips with family expeditions all over Europe. We spent Christmas in the snow, skiing with my father in French, Italian, and Swiss resorts. Visits to Paris allowed my parents to renew ties with their many friends. Dita was always with us.

New York, usually the last stop on our trips, was the highlight. Eddy Storch, Grisha's closest friend, greeted us at Idlewild Airport. They knew each other from Prague where both had worked as department heads for Electrotechna, a Siemens subsidiary. As partners for US-based ventures, such as real estate deals, they opened an office together on Broadway. The two were complete opposites, quarreling incessantly in Czech. When Grisha, agitated as usual, dashed into the office, he would open the window and turn off the heat. Ed, huddled in his coat despite the heat, would do the contrary. Miss Leslie, their secretary for years, threatened to leave on the spot. Otherwise, Grisha admired the efficiency and speed with which business was done in the US. He was as mistrustful of the stock market as he was of gambling and, like Andy Warhol, never used a credit card. He felt swindled by the credit card issuers. Anya and Grisha took us out on the town. Radio City Music Hall's Rockettes swept us off our feet and we gaped, awestruck, at *Cinerama Holiday* and *Around the World in 80 Days*. It was the biggest screen we had ever seen. A few years later we were starstruck, watching Bette Davis in a memorable Broadway production of *The Night of the Iguana*. Dinners in candlelit restaurants were cause for alarm. Grisha did not want to be mistaken for a 'feinschmecker' or gourmet. One of his favorite haunts was Horn & Hardart's Automat on 42nd Street. The self-service, basic, no-frills atmosphere,

with long tables and the 'you get what you pay for' maxim were made to measure. Chrome-plated slots with porcelain centers revealed alluring lemon meringue pies or tantalizing angel food cakes that seduced us all except for Anya. She preferred the Fifth Avenue 1950s style Schraffts or Stouffers coffee shops where she lunched with her friends. Her biggest treat, though, was taking us to ice-cream parlors for sodas and sundaes. Although he never wanted to live there, Grisha felt comfortable in New York. The Jewish delis, corned beef and pickles, Lindy's cheesecake on Times Square, Yiddish newspapers, the way the city closed down for Jewish holidays, the New Yorkers' Yiddishized English, all appealed to him.

The Vargas years ended in 1954. Brazil was in shock. The 'Father of the Poor,' clad in pajamas, put a bullet through his heart. A dramatic note he wrote before committing suicide was read on national radio all over the country. "There is nothing more I can give you except my blood...I offer my life as a holocaust. I choose this means of being always with you... My sacrifice will keep you united..." Crowds wept for his return.

Economically, these were difficult times. Despite some positive factors, such as creating Petrobras, which became Latin America's largest company, and giving women the vote, Brazil was in the throes of spiraling inflation, a high cost of living that led to massive demonstrations, and a thoroughly corrupt administration.

Grisha, fully established by then, took all these circumstances imperturbably in his stride. He knew most of the European business community and had become a workaholic. Starting his day at 5 am, he read the newspaper, made lists of what he intended to do, wrote letters with three carbon copies, drove us to school, and went to his office in downtown Rio's main thoroughfare,

the Avenida Rio Branco. Telephone connections were almost impossible, even for local calls. There weren't enough lines, so five or six young office boys each sat with a phone in hand, waiting for a connection. When a call came through it was either incomprehensible or inaudible and Grisha's screaming could probably be heard in his São Paulo branch.

The Sunday morning ritual involved a trip to the main post office to check the mailbox. On rare occasions, Grisha would take a few hours off in the morning and join us at the beach. Sunday afternoons were devoted to leisure. Goat-driven carriages waited to take kids for a ride along the canal in the Jardim De Ala Park. We often drove with friends and their kids to more distant beaches, had picnics, or went for walks in Tijuca Forest. Presidential elections in 1955 augured a new era: the 'JK' years. Juscelino Kubitschek's charismatic smile brought the same optimism JFK would bring six years later to the US. The Presidente Bossa Nova's slogan was ambitious – 'Fifty years progress in five' – and with it came political stability and a democratic regime. Other treats followed: João Gilberto and Tom Jobim's rhythmic revolution, Glauber Rocha's *Cinema Novo* and, mainly, the massive Novacap project to build a new capital in the country's center. Built in a frantic forty-one months, Brasília's goal was to integrate all the regions and stimulate the economy of the northern and central parts of Brazil. Countless workers died or were injured in the process but this was not publicized. The dead were simply declared missing. Building the 13,000-kilometer Belém-Brasília Highway meant cutting down thousands of acres of forest. The ecological impact was devastating. Brazil's new sense of confidence was good for entrepreneurs. Grisha diversified his business and bought a flour mill near Rio with a younger partner.

He had also started working more internationally. By 1961, industrial production had grown by a surprising 80%. Cars were now manufactured locally, yet inflation zoomed up to 43%. Foreign debt ballooned to billions, the gap grew wider between rich and poor and strikes from rural areas spread to urban centers.

Constitutionally, JK could no longer run for office in 1961. Jânio Quadros, perhaps Brazil's most quizzical candidate, with no party affiliations, became President. His campaign logo was a broomstick to clean up the nation. Having banned bikinis on the beach, prohibited commercials in cinemas and established warm relations with the Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War, he resigned after only six months in office. João Goulart, the Vice President, who was visiting China at the time, was appointed President. Three very unstable years followed, leading to a nightmarish military regime in 1964 that was to last for twenty years.

We were ready for a change. After my graduation in Rio I enrolled at the Sorbonne in Paris, choosing to major in psychology. Rose had just finished her studies at Pratt Institute, an art school in New York, and decided to try painting classes in Paris. Anya often stayed with us, welcoming the idea of spending some time in Europe again, where she still had many close friends. My psychology courses at the university were so boring that I replaced them with visits to auteur films playing at art movie houses around the corner from the Sorbonne. Rose and I discovered a treasure trove of unseen classics at the Cinémathèque Française. Attending at least one showing a day became our routine; we morphed into cinephiles without even noticing.

Grisha shuttled among Europe, the US and Rio, continuing his business wherever he was. Ever the entrepreneur, he now felt ready to concentrate more on philanthropy. Palestine and Israel had always been

George in Caracas, 1956

central in his thoughts. If asked why he hadn't chosen to live in Israel, he invariably answered that he thought he could make a more profitable living elsewhere and thus be able to contribute more to the country.

His mother's sister, Maria Mostovliansky, had settled in Palestine with her family in 1921. When Grisha visited her in Jerusalem in 1934, he persuaded his aunt to rent two floors of a new building in the city center that became Jerusalem's first inn. He chose to name it the 'Pension San Remo' after the San Remo Resolution (1920), which established Palestine as a home for the Jews. He himself invested in a plot of land at that time, which would later be expropriated and become part of the Hebrew University. This real-estate venture turned into an epic battle. Compensation for his expropriated parcel of land was negligible. Grisha filed a lawsuit, which lasted thirty-four years. He won the case posthumously, thanks to his perseverance and thanks in part to his nephew, Boaz Nahir, an astute attorney, with whom he loved to scheme whenever they met.

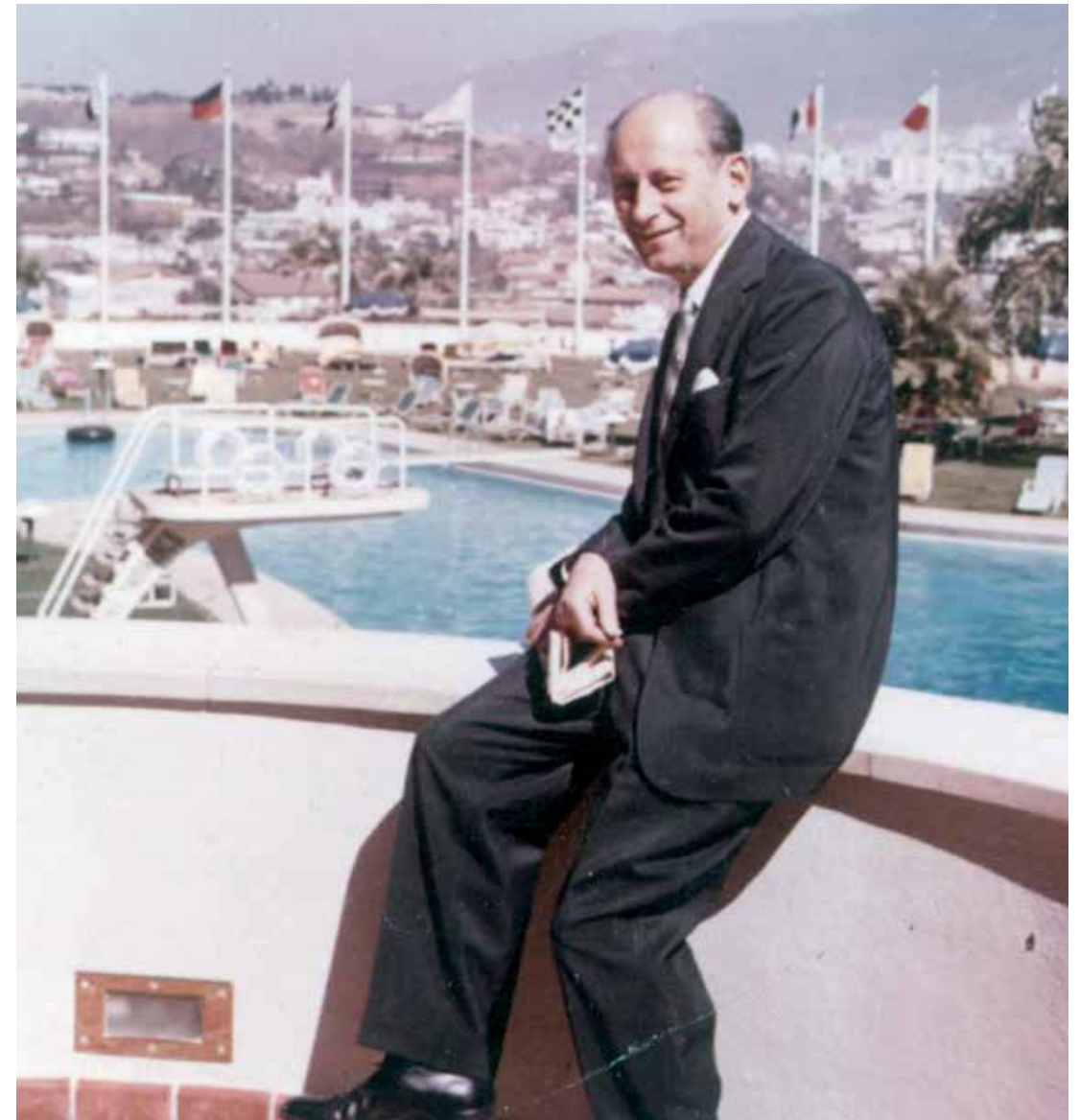
Anya and her mother first visited Palestine in 1936, spending a month seeing close friends. Anya loved the small-town feeling of Tel Aviv and was at home speaking Russian or German. However, when Grisha took all of us to Israel after the War of Independence in the 1950s and 1960s, she was less enchanted with what she saw. For her, the new country had lost its coziness and its pioneering spirit. We did not share Grisha's Zionist ardor. Our discussions at dinner were vigorous and usually ended in a battle of three against one. As soon as he could, Grisha had donated funds to the usual secular causes in Israel: the Jewish National Fund, universities, hospitals, libraries and research. By 1972, however, he wanted to make a contribution that would significantly enrich Israel's cultural life. He asked my sister and me for ideas since he also hoped to strengthen our own ties to the country.

We had visited Israel's museums, its Philharmonic, concert halls and the Habima Theatre, but what we felt lacking were quality films. Lubitsch, Wilder, Lang or Godard were nowhere in view. Thinking of the considerable Jewish contribution to the art of film, we suggested a cinémathèque; Grisha did not say no. He wanted to know more. We took him to see the Cinémathèque Française where he met Henri Langlois. He saw the British Film Institute in London and the Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek in Berlin. At the time, I organized women's film festivals in Europe and paid a yearly visit to the Cannes Film Festival. I heard from the Israeli delegation that there was no cinémathèque yet but that a couple called the van Leers, from Haifa, held regular screenings of art films which were quite popular. When Grisha was invited to an economic conference in Israel in 1973, he asked me to come with him so we could meet the van Leers. And that was the start of a new adventure.

Grisha immersed himself intensely in this project. He attended all the preliminary draft stages, studied the blueprints and discussed the project with all those involved, kept an eye on the budget and followed all the construction phases. During these trips he saw his relative Boaz Nahir frequently and on his recommendation, engaged Boaz's nephew, Ilan Kwiatt, to work with him. Grisha, usually critical and hard to please, was happy to work with this young man.

June 1980 was Grisha's last Jerusalem journey. Despite a four-year delay, he could see the project coming to an end. Unfortunately he had stringent business problems to solve, which made him zigzag from one continent to another, nonstop. Dashing from South America to North America, then pausing overnight in Paris before continuing to New York, he stopped in London — in transit — on December 4, 1980, just long enough to die.

*Vivian Ostrovsky*



# FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE



1962 - 1980



Sarah, George, Rose, Vivian, Edward and Zoya,  
Moscow, 1962



## INTRODUCTION

**A**n elderly Russian friend of the family insisted we visit the Mausoleum on the Red Square despite endless hours of queuing. “Why?” we asked. “Just so you know for sure that both of them are dead,” she replied.

Grisha first heard about his family in the Soviet Union in 1959, through friends who had succeeded in locating them in Moscow. They had not seen each other for over twenty years. Khrushchev’s thaw allowed him to go a year later with Rose to meet his sister Zoya, who lived alone, and his brother Yuli Ostrovsky. Yuli and his wife Sarah Bernstein had two sons, Viktor and Edward. Grisha remembered Viktor as a child from a previous trip in the 1930s, when he visited his parents. Now Viktor and his wife Rita had a three-year-old daughter, Irina.

Grisha made yearly trips with all of us to the USSR — except in 1968, the year of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia — since for Russian Jews it was almost impossible to leave the country, even for reasons of health. We visited Leningrad (St. Petersburg) several times and once toured Georgia and Armenia by car. Our last trip with Grisha was in 1980.

Our family ties grew stronger with every visit and, for Grisha, it was wonderful to catch up with his past. We lived through the geopolitical changes from both sides of the Iron Curtain. The Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam, Che Guevara and Kennedy’s assassination were all subjects of heated discussions in the midst of our picnics in the forest, where we knew we were unheard by others. The 1960s were the Nikita, Nina, Jack and Jackie years.

We witnessed an upgrade as the family moved from communal-style living to their own apartments and got their first car, a Fiat 500-style two-door Zaparojets, into which we crammed at least six people.

Far more enriching, however, was our mutual learning process as we probed each other’s culture. They guided us through the Tretyakov Gallery and brought to light Repin, Levitan, Serov, Deineka, and other soviet painters we had never heard of. Many of the Matisse, Bonnard, and Vuillard paintings at the Pushkin Museum were discoveries since they came from Russian collections we had only heard about. We saw cutting-edge and controversial plays and performances by the Taganka Theatre, the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre, and heard Arkady Raikin, a Jewish stand-up comedian who sharply criticized Communist bureaucracy. Underground poets and singers Yevtushenko, Bulat Okudzhava, and Vissotzky played sotto voce on forbidden audiotapes that circulated hurriedly through their hands. We met unforgettably warm, witty, intelligent people who had lived through years of persecution and privation and left a lasting impression on us.

The uninterrupted supply of Soviet anecdotes and their wry sense of humor gave us a good idea of their daily life. A typical story: “Someone walks into a shop and asks: ‘You still have no fish?’” “No,” replies the vendor. “We have no meat. If you want no fish you must go across the street.” The Russians, on the other hand, had infinite questions about life in our Western countries. We brought books, magazines, music, and had some hilariously silly moments giving hula hoop and Twist lessons in a tiny half-bedroom apartment, cluttered from top to bottom with closets, books, a samovar and other kitchen utensils, skis, and more books.



Anya and George in Moscow, 1960s

After Grisha's death in 1980 we returned to Russia a couple of times but by then our Russian family could travel abroad. Jerusalem replaced Moscow as the natural yearly gathering place to visit Grisha's grave and for his Memorial Evening in December at the Jerusalem Film Center. The younger generation, incurable film buffs, added a summer rendezvous at the Jerusalem Film Festival as well. For all these reasons it seemed relevant to include their testimonies in this chapter.

Vivian Ostrovsky

## RITA OSTROVSKAYA

It was the year of 1960 that George, 'Grisha,' my husband's uncle, returned to Russia for the first time and found us. Five years had elapsed since the death of the Tyrant; four years since Ilya Ehrenburg, the Soviet writer, published *The Thaw*, a novel whose title characterized a whole period of Soviet life. Three years had elapsed since the 20th Congress of the Communist Party had launched an attempt to carry out a program of de-Stalinization. When Strelka, the Soviet space dog, went on to have six puppies, and Khrushchev presented one of them to President John F. Kennedy's family, it felt like an idyll had come to pass: the USSR was establishing good relations with the whole world and particularly with the USA.

Fear, however, still lingered for the Soviet people who remembered the horrors of 1937, 1949 and 1952 — the most horrible times of Stalin's Gulag repression. The fear was of doing something out of line, of showing any sign of nonconformity. Having relatives abroad was particularly unthinkable because it looked like some sort of crime. If you had such relatives, it had to be kept secret!

One pleasant Moscow spring evening, an elegant woman in her sixties, with a charming smile — she just looked so very American! — rang the doorbell of a huge shared apartment (*kommunalka*). Sofia, George's sister, fortunately lived in the room closest to the entrance door. Sofia preferred people to call her Zoya, a more gentile-sounding name in a country so anti-Semitic as the USSR. The woman, Mina, had come to pass George's regards on to Zoya. One can well imagine the storm of emotion this message occasioned for Zoya, who was in the midst of a card game with friends in her room. Showing the group out, she summoned her and George's brother Yuli. And we, Yuli, Yuli's son Viktor (my husband) and I immediately grabbed a taxi for Zoya's.

After meeting Mina, a charming person, like an alien from another world, we all felt immense joy and elation, especially Viktor and I, being young and reckless. Yuli and Zoya felt not only joy at hearing from their dear brother, but also fear. A decision was made to maintain correspondence not via Zoya or Yuli, but via Ketty, my mother, who, by the nature of her job (secretary at a small office), was not under obligation to inform her superiors about the grave crime: relatives abroad. Yuli was an engineer, Zoya a doctor, and both these jobs were more closely monitored.

At this stage, we could not imagine that Mina's visit and soon Grisha's arrival (this first time only with Rose) would start a new period in our life here, as well as in the life of the Ostrovskys abroad.

The summer Grisha came to Moscow for the first time, my daughter Irka was three years old, and out in the countryside with her kindergarten group. Grisha did not want to wait for her to return. After having taken his Intourist car — Intourist was the organization that 'managed' his and Rose's presence in the USSR or,





Stills from the film *Nikita Kino* (Vivian Ostrovsky, 2002)





Rose, Edward and Vivian in 1962

to be more precise, traced their every step — went himself to get to know her. He quickly came to love the girl with huge brown eyes. Since we had decided to look for an English class for Irka, she easily believed that this man who spoke to her in English had come to check whether she was ready for school. The only thing she could not understand was why he had come in such a long black car and why he had brought her such an amazingly beautiful doll with eyes that opened and closed.

This was Grisha's first visit. The second and all the subsequent sixteen visits (1960-1980) included all four members of the family: Anya, Grisha, Vivian and Rose. The first visits took place at our *kommunalka*, as well as in restaurants where we had to spend most of our time. Then, in 1964, we moved to our own apartment. Visits took place, however, with serious attendant 'problems.' First, since we had to deal with twenty-eight neighbors, we constantly had to explain who this tall elegant man was. According to the story we concocted, Grisha came from the Baltics (this accounted for his accent!) in order to propose to Zoya (something easily believed, since she had had five husbands — and that is only the official count). In this scenario, Rose and Vivian were his daughters who naturally desired to meet their stepmother-to-be. The girls, however, were in no joking mood since they had to pass a line of suspicious neighbors to reach the bathroom at the end of a long corridor. Those who are acquainted with the movie *Room and a Half* by Andrey Khrzhanovskiy (Russia, 2009) can easily imagine what the girls were experiencing. However, this was nothing compared to what Grisha experienced on one of his returns from Russia, when he was strip-searched and subjected to a full interrogation at the border crossing. Grisha's love for his Russian family was so great that

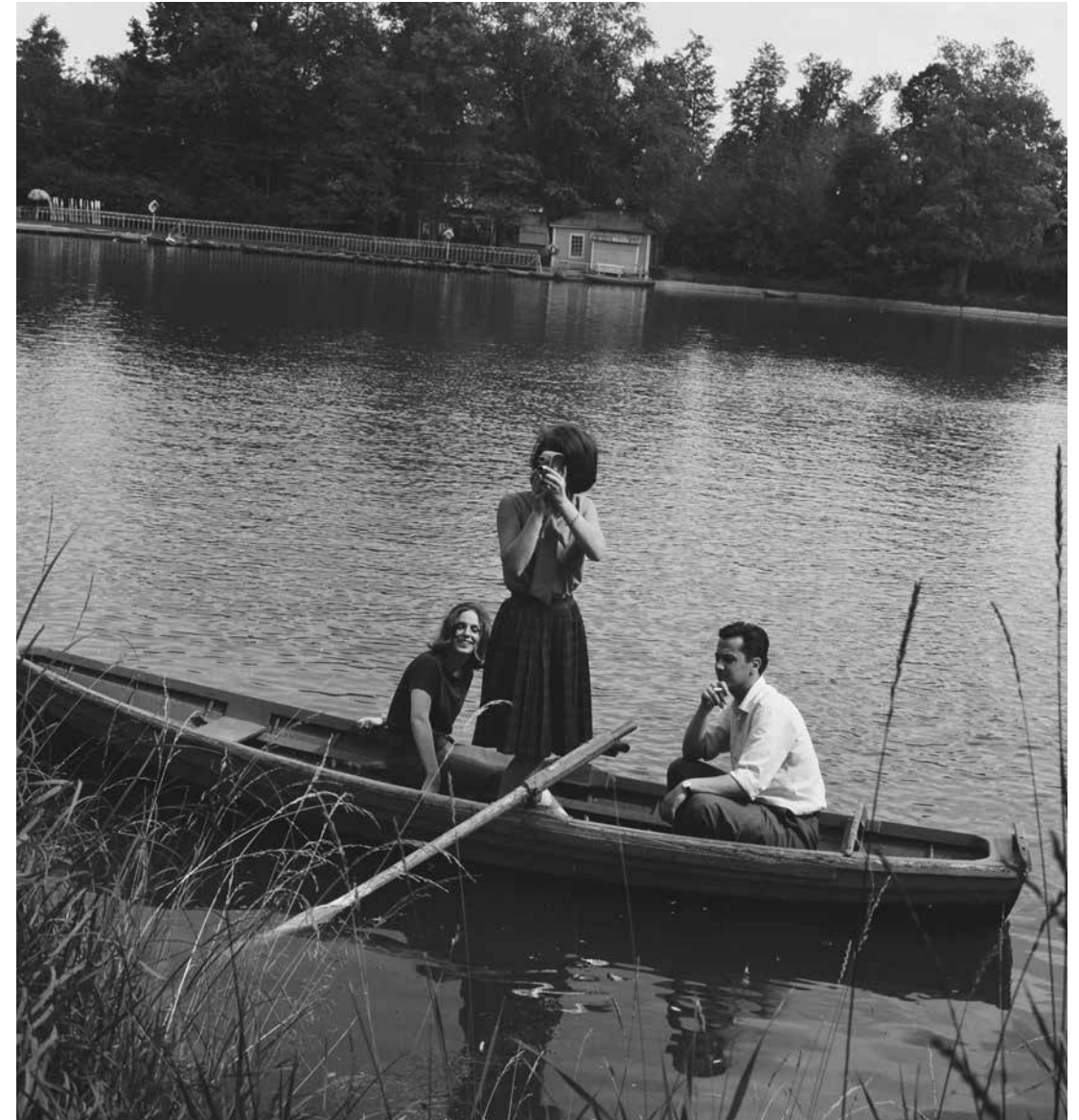
he came to visit almost every year with few exceptions. He loved his brother Yuli and sister Zoya tenderly, but he only saw his brother once because, in 1961, Yuli's life was cut short by a heart attack. He however had many joyful reunions with Zoya and the rest of the family: Viktor's mother and Yuli's lovely wife Sarah, her children, Viktor, myself and our daughter Irka.

After Yuli's sudden death, Grisha and Anya's main concern soon became Yuli's eldest son Viktor who was a well-known expert in resuscitation and anesthesiology in the Soviet Union. This highly important position was also unfortunately a position of high stress, and this led to Viktor's first heart attack (a myocardial infarction) at forty-three. This initial heart attack was followed by two more. At this time in Russia, there was no such thing as bypass surgery, and for this reason Grisha arranged for Viktor to undergo the operation in the USA. Later it was decided that it would be easier to carry out the surgery in France.

Even now it is very hard to read Grisha's letters full of concern and anxiety for Viktor's fate. Special permission was necessary to be operated abroad. The form had to certify that the bypass surgery Viktor needed was really impossible to execute in the USSR. Professor A. I. Burakovsky, who was the head of cardiosurgery in Russia, refused to write this declaration.

We decided to present documents for emigration. At that time it meant that we wouldn't see our daughter, our grandson, and other relatives and friends ever again. This was November 24, 1979. The following day, November 25th, Viktor passed away. And Grisha passed away in a hotel in London the next year.

Several years passed before the dawn of a new time for us, the rise of Perestroika. Here there is no place for the keen memories we cherish of our exciting





first visits to Paris and our marvelous meetings with Avneq Shmida just following the fall of the Iron Curtain, for we must highlight a new custom which has had a deep impact on our life, namely, visits to the Jerusalem Cinematheque. Every December since 1995, we fly to Jerusalem for a special evening at the Cinematheque to honor the memory of our dear Grisha.

The Jerusalem Cinematheque was Grisha's original conception. It was his dream for many years, and came true in the early 1980s through the joint efforts of the Ostrovsky and Van Leer families. It has since become a cornerstone of Jerusalem's cultural life.

Through these visits, we have met and fallen in love with such people as Lia van Leer, Aviva Meirom, Miriam Zagiel, Kelly Gordon and Margarita and Sasha Kleinman. Our visits have also provided an outstanding opportunity to experience the best in world cinema. Grisha's love for Russia was strong and his influence remains. The organizers of these screenings usually make a careful selection of cinema masterpieces that are often closely connected to Russian culture, history and everyday life. Viktor's and my grandchildren — Ilya and Asya — have been greatly influenced by the Jerusalem Cinematheque. Their recollection in the text written by them illustrates the role the Cinematheque has played in their lives.

## IRINA OSTROVSKAYA

Grisha's mother was obviously a very clever woman: she understood at the outset where the whole mess called "The Great October Revolution," was leading, and sent her eldest and most talented son away from Russia. I wish she had also sent my grandfather, Grisha's younger brother Yuli, away as well, but history is not written in the subjunctive mode. It was at this point that Grisha's amazing new life began, full of

encounters and events. But there was one important thing missing: his big Russian family left behind the Iron Curtain. He would try to find a hole in this Curtain and, following Stalin's death, hope arose. Grisha's visits years ago now occasion for me flashbacks to some of my earliest and clearest memories. By that time I had lost my own grandfather so Grisha, seemed to me a mixture of 'Grandfather' and Father Christmas. His appearance always occasioned a holiday atmosphere like the fulfilment in our home of all our dreams. I still have all the dolls he brought me, and of course Grisha's piano!

He was at the same time a very strange Father Christmas, never just walking, always on the run! Always in a hurry, even when on vacation in Moscow or on trips to Leningrad (St. Petersburg) or the former Soviet Republics of Georgia and Armenia. Always awake very early and making his way around the hotel, observing the theater of everyday life. He especially loved observing people, no matter who, at work: the babushka selling honey, with whom he was always nice and provided a piece of the *bulochnka* (brioche) he carried with him to taste her honey; or the road worker building the tramway, with whom Grisha the engineer expressed scathing criticism about qualities and quantities. And we mustn't forget the empty bottles of *kefir*: at that time there was an exchange policy of two empties for one full bottle, a very 'green,' but today forgotten, Soviet custom. Grisha loved this idea and was ready to go a long distance in order to carry out this ingenious 'empty bottle operation,' often at the expense of his fine trousers. And then there was the desperate search for dry cleaners.

I must say that Grisha's visits changed our life completely. He and his family provided us with a general introduction to all the achievements and



George in Europe, 1970s

breakthroughs going on in civilization outside our closed country: Chanel, Lancôme, brassieres, Swiss cheese and chocolate, my first Swiss Army Knife, and then of course all the amazing music — the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Georges Moustaki, Marie Laforêt, Françoise Hardy, Joan Baez, Simon and Garfunkel, Joe Dassin — stop me, I can't begin to list them all, yet they are all so much a part of me.

And memorable too were all the family reunions. Like big-big holidays, they usually went on for seven to ten days almost every year starting in 1960. There we were, all seated around the table in our tiny flat, talking, laughing and very often singing. We mostly sang old Yiddish songs, but also such things as 'Tchet Rekaaaaaa Volgaaaaa.' More often than not our festivities included dancing to a wide range of music from letka-enka and Rock n' Roll and to Sirtaki and of course Freylekh! And then there was the eating... Everybody was trying to diet and ideally be skinny. But the home cooking was SO CRIMINALLY TASTY. All the *bulochkis*, *borscht* and gefilte fish, along with Vivian's sophisticated desserts. "Why Zoyechka," Grisha would exclaim in anger with his sister, "are you still eating sour cream with potato *latkes*? Who needs it?" "You are lucky, Grishenka," she would shout back, "you are nice and slim, while I'm fat whatever I eat, even when I am starving."

In actuality Grisha was quite concerned about Zoya's health because of her heart disease and because of her generally bad and unwholesome eating habits. She also smoked. 'Smoking,' at that time, not 'non-smoking' as now, was something synonymous with 'fashionable,' and this lady was nothing if not fashionable. She was glamour itself. As I read over Grisha and Anichka's letters from the seventies, I am impressed with how deeply they were involved in our

family's problems, how warm and close the relationship was. Grisha always felt concerned about our living in unfriendly surroundings and sometimes even advised us to emigrate to Israel. In the last years though, his major concern became my father Viktor's illness. He continually worked to save my father's life, until the tragic end.

Thanks to Grisha and our loving Ostrovsky family, we always enjoyed a feeling of strong protection in any situation. We began to feel a part of the world again, and perhaps their presence in our lives functioned somewhat like a little valve through which fresh air filtered into this country and eventually resulted in Perestroika.

Thanks to Perestroika we now enjoy many opportunities to foster and preserve close family contact anywhere on the planet. And it seems to me that we owe all of this to Grisha as a person born to influence people's lives for the best!

Grisha used to tell us that he was a Zionist. We, being Jews, also felt sympathy for Israel, but the term 'Zionist' in the Soviet Union was loaded with negative connotations. We did not understand well what it meant to be a Zionist. Later we understood better how much Grisha loved Israel and how important it was for him to contribute to its cultural life and to help this old and new beautiful country become a part of the modern world.

Soon after Grisha's death, the girls, Rose and Vivian, showed us pictures of a very exotic architectural creation, the Jerusalem Cinematheque. It was Vivian who introduced us to this family project. The Cinematheque was conceived and designed as a house of cinema — a mixture of the old film club with a museum, library, archive, and several auditoriums. Then too, of course, there was the restaurant.



Zoya and George in Moscow, 1960s

The whole idea of the Cinematheque seemed interesting, but totally impossible to understand from a Russian point of view at the time. In December 1995 we were invited to Jerusalem for the first time, for the traditional Memorial Evening in honor of George Ostrovsky, during Hanukkah. It was our first visit to the Cinematheque, and we found it a really amazing cultural phenomenon couched in a warm atmosphere, very Jewish and international, that engendered great feelings of humanity, humor, freedom, tolerance and friendship.

There were a lot of very interesting art-house films, together with the great collection in the Archive, which includes old Soviet films. There we also met the famous Lia van Leer and her 'mafia.' Since this 1995 experience, we have been returning to Jerusalem every December to 'recharge our batteries.'

## ILYA KOLMANOVSKY

For the last ten years we, Ilya and Asya — the youngest generation of the family, the great-grandchildren to Grisha's generation — fly to Jerusalem from Moscow once or twice a year for a few weeks' visit to the Cinematheque. These visits contribute a lot to who we are. We see movies, we meet people. We talk, we think. And in this way we communicate with Grisha — he envisioned the whole thing, its impact.

Clearly Grisha believed in culture. I mean, from all that we know: first he lived through the horrors of pogrom, famine, typhus and the Russian civil war; then there was the severe poverty of the early emigration days in Istanbul and later in Prague; then his flight from the Nazis. He was there, he saw the dark side of life. On the other hand, he was the product of a cultured provincial Russian Jewish background. Such families were

imbued with a profound love of literature, theater, music and the arts. I have read certain memoirs from the Yekaterinoslav of his youth. These memoirs talk a lot about the Jewish Science Institute where Grisha studied, its professors, their families, the poetry circles, the parties where theater pieces were read aloud. All such things created meaning and comfort within the chaos and fury of Yekaterinoslav where power changed hands nineteen times during Grisha's last two years in Russia.

When I first left Russia, ten years after his death, I made the same transition: from chaos and fury (it was 1990 in Moscow and food lines were literally winding for hours and hours through the streets) to Grisha's Parisian apartment overflowing with culture like no other living space I knew. Fourteen years old, I spent weeks in the Paris museums, ate fine French food and shopped department stores I would never have dreamed of in my Soviet childhood — Grisha made these things possible. I connect this experience with him and see it as his legacy. He established our family's presence in this wonderful city, Paris, making it possible for me to revel in culture, both material and spiritual.

He did the same thing for many young people in Jerusalem. When I first came to the Cinematheque, I was surprised to find his Memorial Evening packed with a crowd my age. His portrait stood on the stage, the same one we had back home on our kitchen wall but the crowd did not seem to care much about him, they cared about seeing a good movie.

And this is what we all do there: we watch movies. Once we saw *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, USA 2005): a very sad and touching story of same-sex love and, eventually, of the death of the main character, a cowboy from the Wild West. It came to Moscow three





Rita, George and Anya in Moscow,  
late 1970s

years later only to make Muscovites panic at the sight of two men kissing. To watch this film in the company of a Moscow audience producing all kinds of angry noises would have been an unbearable experience. We feel it to have been a privilege to have seen it in the more cultured setting of the Jerusalem Cinematheque.

## ASYA TSATURYAN

I remember seeing *Paradise Now* (Hany Abu-Assad, Netherlands-France-Germany 2005) at the December Jewish Film Festival during my first visit to the Jerusalem Cinematheque. The film concerns a young man from a Palestinian refugee camp who decides to become a suicide bomber. I was very moved, but I was also surprised by my own feelings of compassion for a terrorist. I suddenly realized I was having a they-are-human-too moment.

One of my last visits to Jerusalem was in July 2010 for the Film Festival. I saw *A Film Unfinished* (Yael Hersonski, Israel 2010) and it made the deepest impression I have perhaps ever experienced at the cinema. *A Film Unfinished* uses footage from another film made by Germans of the Warsaw Ghetto during the war. It also shows survivors watching this footage. When the film ended, I could see some of these survivors in the hall. We walked out into the warm Jerusalem night, took the stairs up to Derekh Hebron, the road running above the Cinematheque. From this vantage point, I looked down at these very old people and realized how recent all of this really is and how important it is for them to have their own state. The next day Vivian and a friend of the Cinematheque, the activist Meir Margalit, took several of us to see Palestinian houses that had recently been demolished. We saw three Palestinians, in the eye of the media cameras, walking around the wreckage of their houses.

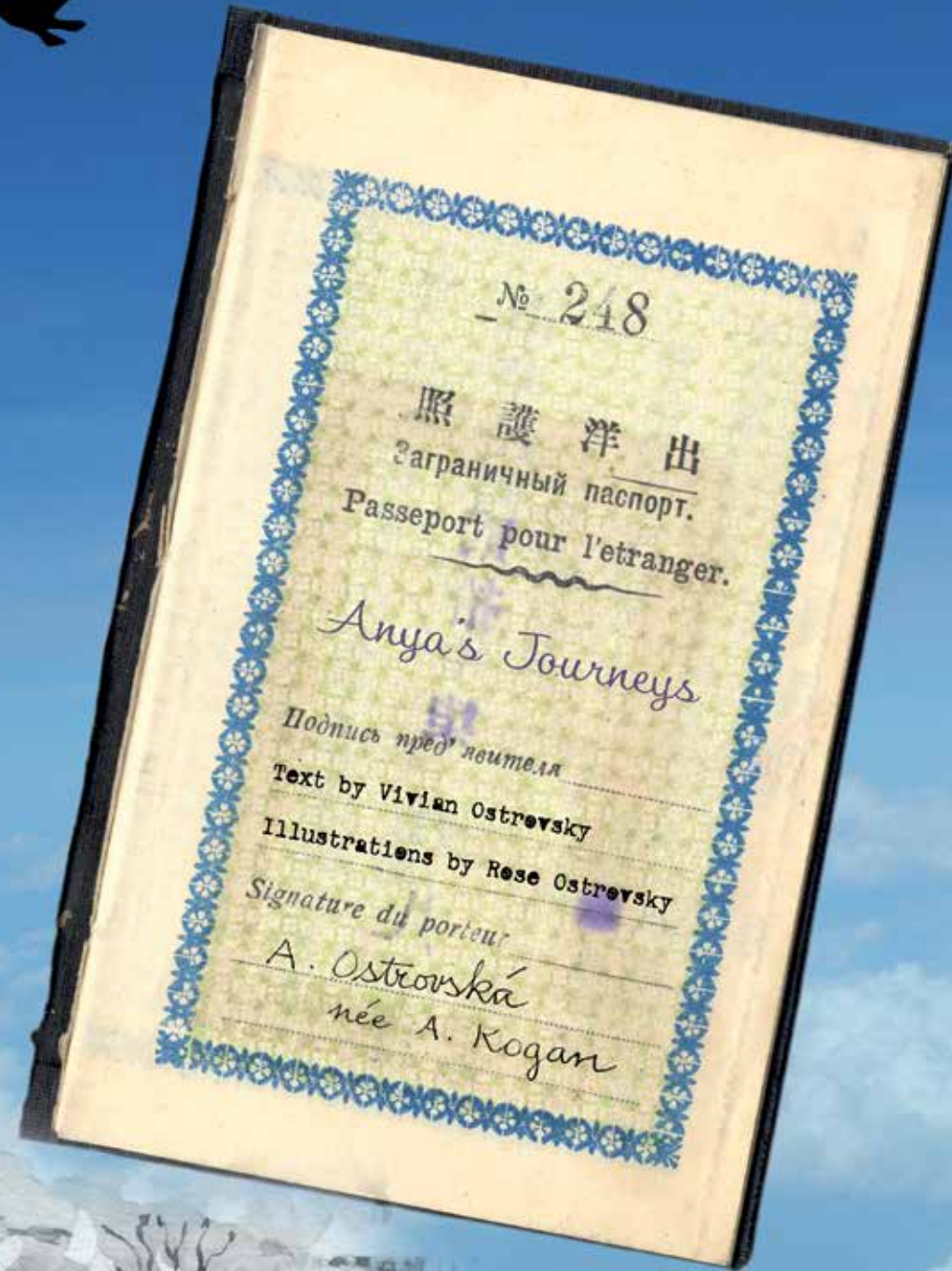
One of the men was still holding the key. Next to the pile of stones, we saw the man's possessions: a bed, a broken kettle, amplifiers and a plastic garbage bag stuffed with clothes.

In the middle of the next Arab village we saw something that stood out like a real medieval castle — a Jewish settlement: high walls, machine guns covered with military camouflage, watchtowers, and metal fencing all the way around. Above the fence we could see balconies. The settlers clearly live in a real ghetto, surrounded by enemies. We saw the metal gates open and a soldier with a rifle convey two boys, each eight years old, in *kippas* and *tsitsit*, to throw out the garbage. These settlers belong to a people who escaped the ghetto to create their own state, only to build themselves a different kind of ghetto. Next we saw another Arab house, demolished just that morning. Such an infinite sorrow showed on the face of the mother of a family of four children, the youngest three months old. It is hard to describe the shame I felt. The Cinematheque that Grisha built is thus a place of intense transformatory experience for us. We not only see films, but we meet their creators, as well as other people from Israel and around the world. Opinions clash and points of view are conveyed. The Cinematheque allows us to see and experience the complexity of life and ask ourselves what reality is.

Art is a strong way of getting messages across, and not just messages about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but about things more general. We strongly feel the Cinematheque as Grisha's idea, that is, that the Cinematheque must be a place where understandings occur. We see this happening in the case of Rosinha and Vivian, and it is important for us and comforting to realize we are a part of this family.







№ 248

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Заграничный паспорт.

Passeport pour l'étranger.

*Anya's Journeys*

Подпись пред'вителя

Text by Vivian Ostrevsky

Illustrations by Rose Ostrevsky

Signature du porteur

*A. Ostrovska*

*née A. Kogan*

## Anya's Journeys



leaving Russia as a child

the early years in Japan and Manchuria



the move to Berlin,



Paris and Prague

Anya's portfolio, Paris



escaping the war in Europe



arriving in Rio





Место фотографической карточки.  
Place pour la photographie.



Подлинность фотографической карточки  
и собственноручной подписи удостоверяется.

Photographie et signature est assurée

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Délégataire Particulier du Ministère des  
Affaires Étrangères, province de Kirin,  
établie à Kharbine:







## The Early Years

Before she could barely crawl, Boris and Rachel Kegan bundled their 6-month old baby Anya and all her belongings onto a train to Kobe. They had bought one-way tickets and were never to return to Yusevka or its gritty black Ukrainian pits again. Seven thousand seven hundred kilometers of landscape later, they reached Japan. Baby Anitchka's three years in Kobe were but a blur of beautiful waterfalls, an exquisite Japanese nanny, a distressing Buddha head, and a swaying staircase in a rattling earthquake.

## Other trains crossed other landscapes.

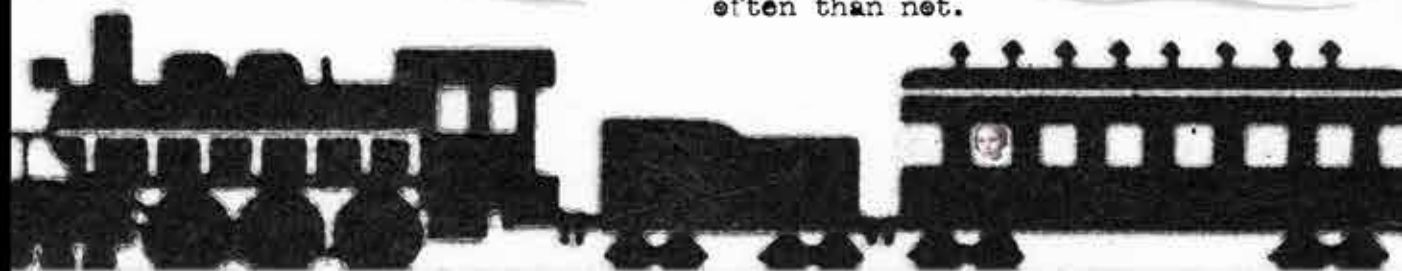
Rachel's father, Piotr Piastunovich, had left Russia in the early 1900s to start a cannery in a sleepy Manchurian hamlet. Unlike the rest of Imperial Russia, here Jews could start their own enterprise. The Chinese Eastern Railway transformed Harbin from a swampy outpost to a thriving Russian boom town. Streets had Russian names, Chinese employees had Russian nicknames, and Russian, not Mandarin, was the spoken language.

Piotr died young, in 1909, but by the time the Kegans arrived, grandmother Senya headed a clan of siblings, cousins, nephews, and grandchildren of all shapes and sizes. They shared a courtyard and the same love of drama; as Jewish High Holidays approached the furor reached its peak and Anitchka forget she was an only child.



After icy winters came Mongolian springs - yellow dust covered every surface in sight. Swarms of summer mosquitoes welcomed bathers along the Sungari River.

In her Russian school Anitchka wore a big bow in her hair and was prone to daydreaming. Classes bored her. Thanks to cholera, typhus and other plagues, school was closed more often than not.





## The Move

In the early 1920s, after a week of weeful goodbyes, Berlin replaced Harbin and Gothic replaced Cyrillic. Anya immersed herself in Teutonic tales, engulfed by the likes of "Max and Moritz" and "Struwwelpeter".

Post-war Berlin was an eclectic mix of "Dr. Mabuse", Bauhaus, Brecht, and the "Blue Angel". Women worked, smoked and adopted Marlene Dietrich's androgynous look.

By the time Anya finished 9th grade her friend Käthe Kalitsoyakis had plucked out most of her eyebrows and all her eyelashes to see how it looked.



In 1933, Anya graduated from photography school and Hitler became Chancellor. The Reichstag burned, 'decadent' books burned on Opernplatz and prescient Jews hurried to leave Germany, if they could.

The Kegans stopped in Prague first, for Czech passports and chanced upon George with whom they quickly bonded.

After savoring summer together in Marienbad, Boris, Rachel, and Anya settled in Paris.



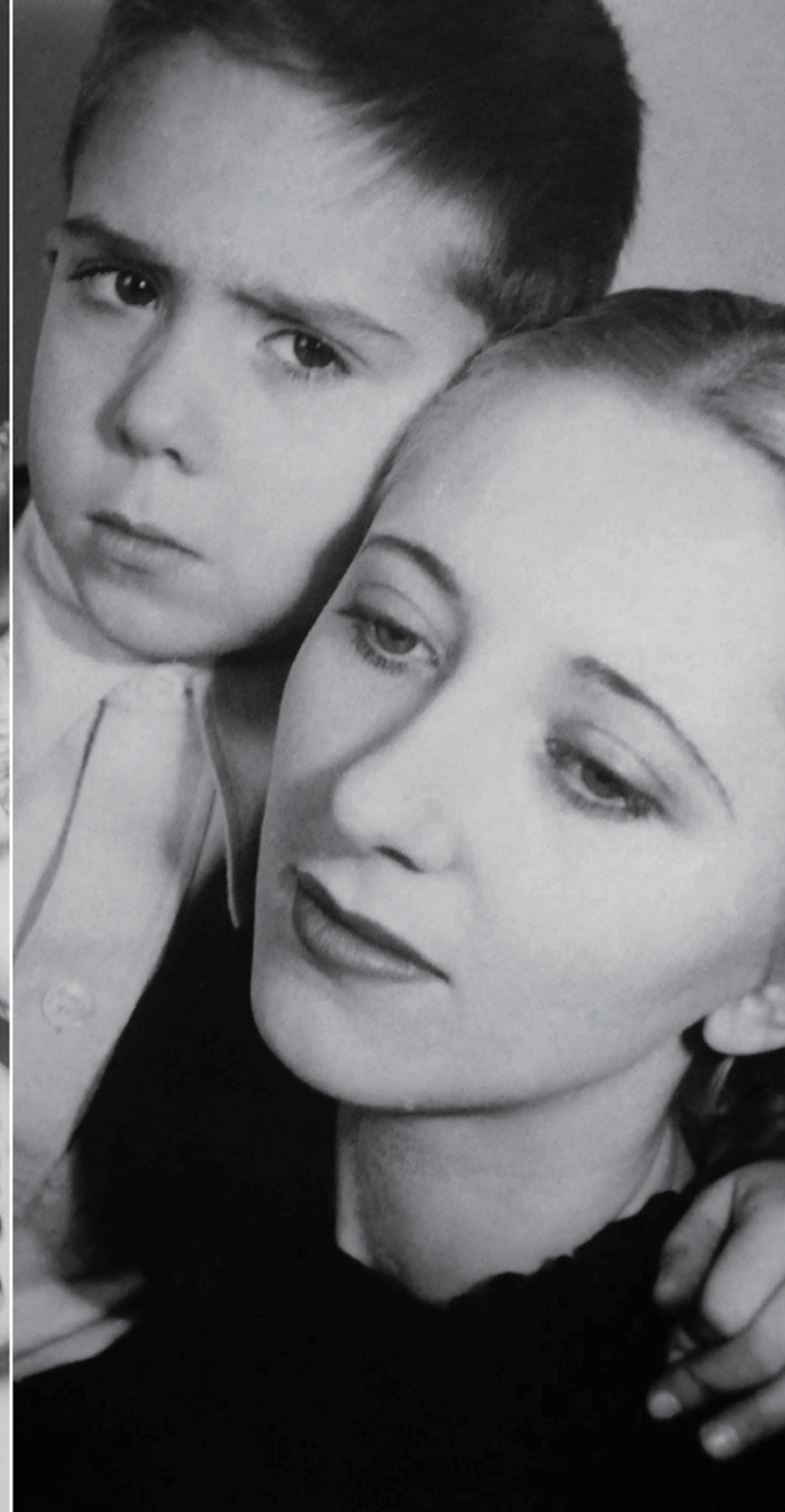
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By day she worked as a photographer for Publiphot, a pioneering ad agency in Montmartre, trying to strike a balance between art and advertising. She fussed with the filters, reflections, and halftones needed to perfect her images which varied between handheld camera portraits, solarized flowers, French perfume bottles, or the more prosaic tin of shoe polish. By night she hung out in Montparnasse with her crowd of Russian and Polish émigrés, at La Coupole, where her Preustian madeleine was in fact a hot fudge sundae. George drove from Prague quite often on visits.

It was during these Paris years that Anya and her mother accepted an invitation to visit Palestine. She brought back images of the narrow winding street beneath the Wailing Wall with bearded beggars and wide-eyed children looking into her lens.

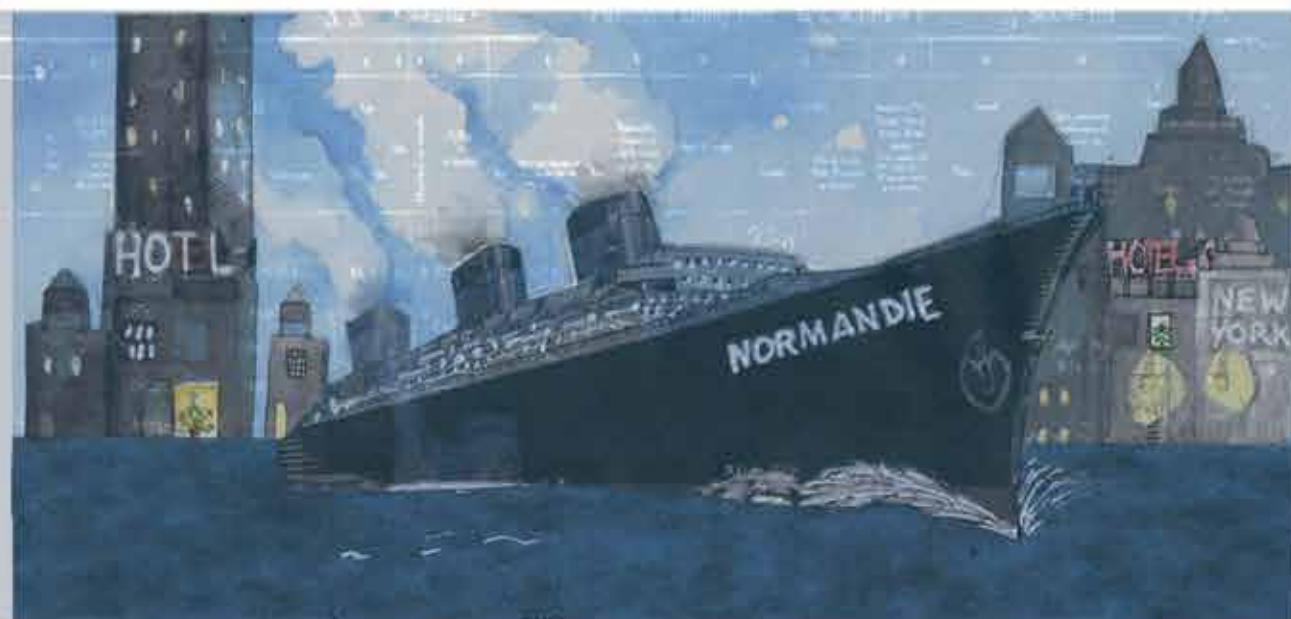


PHOTOS BY ANYA KOGAN





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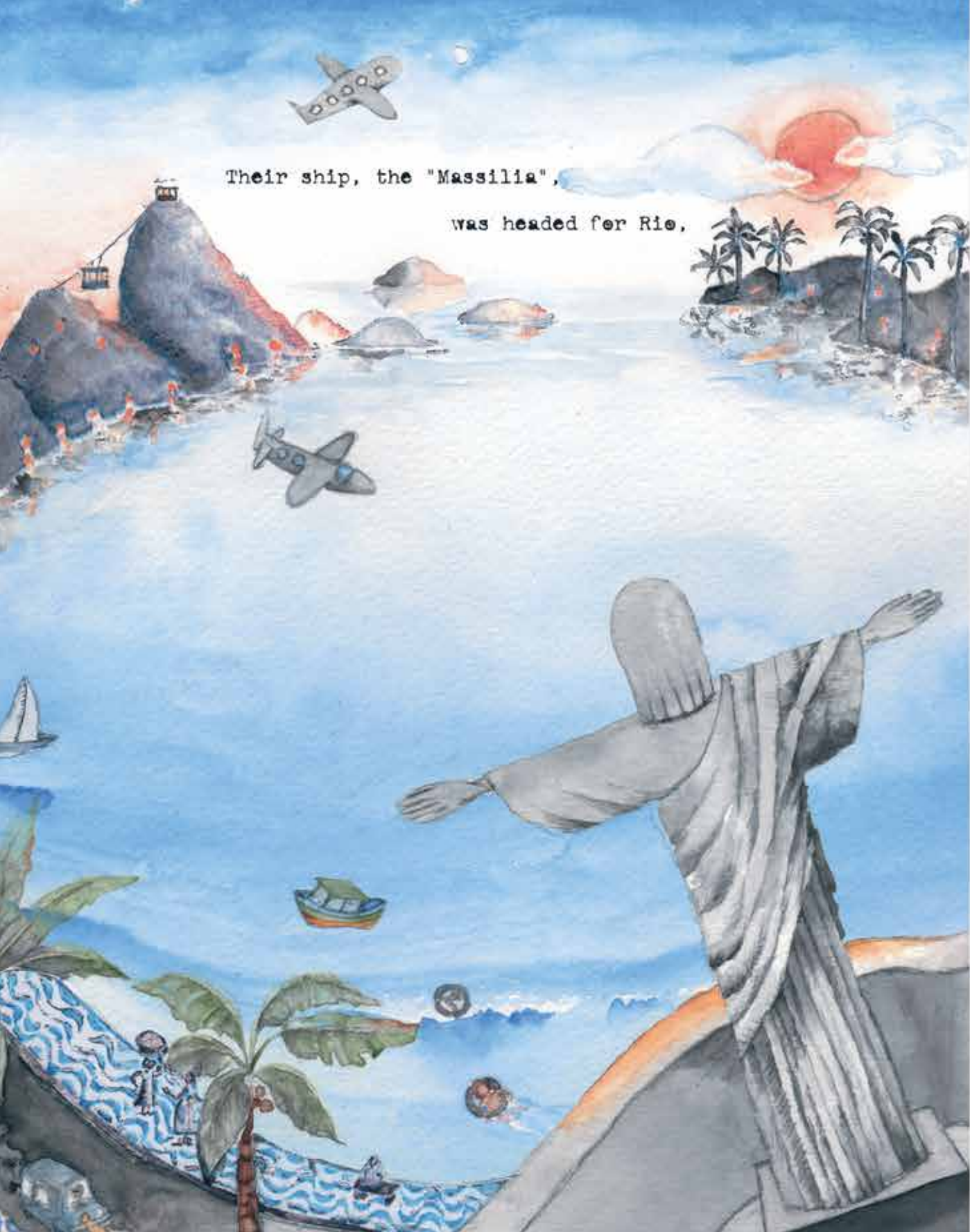
In 1938, a year after Rachel's death, Anya married George and moved to Prague. Four months later, crossing the Atlantic on a lavish ocean liner, the "Normandie", she had a Manhattan mission in view: to secure American visas for both of them. This grid-like city with its horizontal and verticals, its collision of cultures, its effervescence, enticed her. When George's visa was denied Anya's American dream disintegrated.



She returned to find a dismal Prague under German occupation, with people crying in the streets. Leaving the city and all their friends was agonizing but for George there was no alternative. They were amongst those John Berger described as caught in a "century of enforced travel...helplessly seeing others, who were close to them, disappear over the horizon."

Abandoning their car at the railroad station, they fled to Paris  
And from there to Bordeaux, with two Brazilian visas in hand.





Their ship, the "Massilia",  
was headed for Rio,

hoping for less turbulent waters,

wishing for welcoming skies.



Anya's motto resembled most opera librettos:

"It will all end very badly".

For once, however, she proved to be wrong.



# THE JERUSALEM FILM CENTER



1973 – 2014



The Jerusalem Cinematheque in the 1980s



## THE MAKING OF

**P**aris, 1972. Four people around a kitchen table after dinner in a Paris apartment. George, Anya, my sister Rose and I sip tea with homemade strawberry jam. My father announces he would like to contribute something cultural to Israel, something significant. He is not very loquacious so we try to find out more. He answers, "Something like a museum, perhaps?"

After years of quarreling around this and other tables about Zionism, Judaism, Jewish identity, Palestine and the state of Israel, he would like my sister and I to have a closer connection to the country he is so fond of and therefore asks us for suggestions. A few days later, we come back with an idea: how about a cinematheque, like the one we are addicted to and attend every evening in Paris, the Cinémathèque Française? After all, the Jewish contribution to world cinema is sizeable yet, whenever we have visited Israel, contrary to the local art and music scenes, it seems to be a cinephilic desert.

Although not particularly interested in the art of film per se, George is ready to explore something that seems novel and needed. He proceeds to do research with entrepreneurial zeal. We meet Henri Langlois, founder of the Cinémathèque Française, we visit the Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek in Berlin, the British Film Institute in London and he sees what the Danish Film Institute looks like on paper. He likes the idea. At the Cannes Film Festival I ask the Israeli delegation whether any institution of this kind already exists in Israel. No,

they answer, but a couple living in Haifa, Lia and Wim van Leer, after starting home screenings for friends, run a cine-club-type program showing auteur films from their own collection of international classical and art-house films.

In 1973, George is invited to the third Prime Minister's Economic Conference in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, so we decide to visit Haifa. Wim and Lia's house has a lovely terrace on Panorama Road, overlooking the bay. My father tells Lia that he wants to start a cinematheque in Israel and that he is willing to contribute the first million dollars to work with her on this project. Without a moment's hesitation Lia immediately answers: "No." She explains that in Israel, when people give money they tend to tell the recipient how to run the institution and she really prefers to remain independent. My father is happy with her reaction. Someone who doesn't pounce on a million dollars seems very worthy of his attention and for him, the more challenging a deal, the more inspiring.

We sympathized and continued to stay in touch with the van Leers, finding we had common interests and similar tastes in the films we liked or disliked. After many teas and more scones at the Connaught in London, countless hot chocolates in Paris at the Deux Magots, and rote grütze in Berlin, we became fast friends. A year later Lia turned to me and announced, "Remember that idea your father had — to build a cinematheque in Israel?" She hesitated for a minute. "Well, maybe it's a good one after all."

By then the van Leers had moved from Haifa to Jerusalem and had started building their house in Yemin Moshe. A few 'minutes' walk from there, Lia spotted the ruins



*Possessed* (Clarence Brown, USA 1931), retitled in Hebrew  
*The Woman Worker: An Interesting Social Drama*,  
 poster from the Israel Film Archive

of three villas tucked under Hebron Road: a perfect site for the future Jerusalem Film Center. George's friend, Teddy Kollek, then Mayor of Jerusalem, had kickstarted the Jerusalem Foundation and was eager to take on new cultural projects that would make the city more cosmopolitan. For a year, Teddy, ever-anxious to modify and expand donor commitments, tried to persuade George to do other projects with his million-dollar gift, such as a playground in the Hinnom Valley or a Boys Youth Orchestra within the same building as the Cinematheque. Neither Lia nor George considered this viable.

In a 1974 letter to Kollek, George was adamant about what he wanted. His hands-on involvement was a reason for frequent trips to see the project come to life. The correspondence also indicates that he remained leery about the ever-spiraling budget. According to his calculations, the entire plan could be built for the considerable sum he was providing. The Jerusalem Foundation marketed the project, offering auditorium and library naming rights in exchange for 'needed' additional support from several US-based families and Hollywood moguls.

In October 1981, the Jerusalem Film Center finally opened, just a few months after George's death. Printed materials accompanying the launch ceremony cite the occasion as devoted to his memory, yet do not state the nature of his involvement nor his contribution. George managed, notwithstanding the odds, to get what he wanted. When the doors opened, Lia as Director proved fearless in insisting that this distinctive institution would remain open even during Shabbat. Activities are conceived to emphasize how cinema promotes humanitarian values. Despite the city's reputation for endless conflicts and rivalries, the Jerusalem Film Center welcomes all and provides them with cultural nourishment, entertainment and pleasure.

Vivian Ostrovsky



Mayor Teddy Kollek and Vivian Ostrovsky,  
Opening night of the Cinematheque, October 14th, 1981



## THE MEANING OF

"Everyone who knows about cinema knows about the Jerusalem Cinematheque. The Cinematheque is a temple of Israeli and international film."

— Isabelle Huppert, 2011

George Ostrovsky may not have lived to see the fruit of his labor, but his legacy, through the Jerusalem Film Center, commonly referred to as the Cinematheque, is immeasurable.

I set out to interview individuals who have influenced and been influenced by it: filmmakers, industry professionals, critics, and the Cinematheque's heart and soul, the staff itself. It became clear that few had envisioned the incredible impact that the Cinematheque, with its four screening halls, its Archive, Library and ongoing activities, would have on Israeli and international cinema, as well as on Jerusalem culture as a whole.

### The Cinematheque

"The Cinematheque has kept the 'art of cinema' alive in this otherwise rather conservative religious ancient city. Keeping the sanity. A liberal voice. Liberty!"

— Amos Kollek, Director

Lia van Leer, the Jerusalem Film Center's President, who co-founded the Cinematheque with George Ostrovsky, still arrives for work nearly every day. In the busy screening halls and corridors of the building, she encounters Cinematheque regulars, old and young, from all walks of life. What is it about this place that draws over 500,000 visitors annually? "We are the ideal essence of Jerusalem," Lia explains.

"Jerusalem is like film. Films open your heart, your mind, to understand the other. Films initiate dialogue, instigate discussions with others. This is what Jerusalem always has to be."

In keeping with the Ostrovsky family's intellectual spirit and their enthusiasm for culture, the monthly program showcases a selection of art-house and historical films, including classics from the Archive, the best of international cinema, experimental and avant-garde programs, Israeli films, as well as events that highlight literary, political and cultural topics. Costel Safirman, JFC Head Librarian for over twenty years, captured the aura of the place: "Cinematheques are usually always focused on film and cinema, but in my experience, this place has served as a cultural center." He adds: "In 1993, together with Dr. Leon Wolowici from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I arranged meetings with Romanian intellectuals in Israel. We met at the Cinematheque and hosted Romanian writers, poets, and philosophers. We spoke about the connections between Romanian culture and Israeli culture, and of course, cinema. Through this organization we have been able to invite the young Romanian Nouvelle Vague filmmakers to the Cinematheque, which has become a center for the cultural exchange of ideas."

Other regular programs with wide cultural focus have included *Poetry Evenings*. Hosted by renowned poets Natan Zach and Yitzhak Laor, a local poet is invited to introduce the work of a fellow poet who then introduces a film. The most popular cultural crossover is *Concerto*. Organized by Safirman for almost twenty years, this often-sold-out series, scheduled every other Saturday, consists of a lecture, a concert, and a film. As a city



July 19, 1974.

Mr. Teddy Koller, Mayor of Jerusalem  
Jerusalem

Dear Mr. Koller:

A few days before leaving Israel I received your letter of May 27, 74, for which I thank you. My family and I discussed the project of the Shamaa area as was explained to me briefly during the visit in Jerusalem when you and Mrs. Cheshin were kind enough to show me several of the interesting projects already accomplished on your initiative together with the Jerusalem Foundation.

Knowing the high cost of all such projects I think that it would be preferable for us to concentrate on what we feel is, at the moment, the least developed of cultural activities in Jerusalem. We could envisage the creation of a film center that could eventually fit in your project of the Shamaa area.

This Film Center destined for general use by the public could consist of:

- 1) Projection and screening room for about 250 persons
- 2) Archives and storage rooms for films (equipped with air-conditioners and humidity control)
- 3) Film Library
- 4) Coffee Shop
- 5) Entrance Hall serving also as an Exhibition Hall
- 6) Several offices

This project would probably require a separate building and I am not sure that the restoration of the old buildings would help but this question can be decided after further discussion of the whole project.

Recently we had the opportunity of project with Mrs. Lea Van Lear, who was in Paris who is very willing to cooperate with us in the Center. Based on her long experience and knowledge in Israel and in many other countries, she could give great help to us all. Mrs. Van Lear promised Mrs. Cheshin upon her arrival in Israel and to the general ideas we had. Afterwards having a look at the whole operation we can approach its financing. Our efforts to those of the Jerusalem Foundation in Jerusalem.

Finally I would like to mention that I would like to work out a scheme for the upkeep and maintenance in the future.

I would be very thankful to Mrs. Cheshin to let me know the approximate size of the Shamaa area (a few photographs of same area and building).

Thanking you again for your kind reception to hear from you soon, I remain

sincerely yours

P.S; this letter was prepared a few weeks ago but I was out of Paris.  
Copy Mrs. Lea Van Lear, Haifa.

Letter to the Mayor: George's blueprint  
of what the Cinematheque was to become

of embassies, Jerusalem is automatically cosmopolitan. To respond to international constituencies, Aviva Meirom, JFC Office Manager and Events Coordinator, has initiated various collaborations. One, in cooperation with the Institut Français de Jerusalem - Romain Gary, is *Cinéma Première*, which regularly showcases French-language films. Many films are Israeli premieres and have included the presence of directors and stars such as Charlotte Rampling, Sylvie Testud, Xavier Beauvois and Isabelle Huppert. Beyond the vibrant cultural scene, the Cinematheque actively engages in outreach to various communities. The Reframing Reality Film Festival, also developed by Meirom, was the first endeavor in the region to collect recent features, documentaries and shorts with the aim of expanding public awareness of the challenges faced by people with disabilities. Organized with SHEKEL (Community Services for People with Special Needs) and Akim (The National Association for the Habilitation of Children and Adults with Intellectual Disabilities), such events perpetuate JFC's mission to use cinema as a departure point for public discourse. Concentrations of screenings have also been organized around various social, political and religious topics, including a recent focus on women's rights developed in cooperation with local women's groups and women's shelters.

Cinema is also used as a departure point to examine Arab-Israeli relations and Palestinian coexistence issues and to encourage personal bonds across politicized barriers. Throughout the year, a popular program, *The Israeli-Arab Sing Along*, draws an audience from all sectors to share song and conversation, and to analyze and enjoy films. Another local organization, Slim Peace, uses this welcoming setting for their regular gatherings of Palestinian and Israeli women who

meet to discuss the challenges of weight loss within the context of a relevant film screening. An award-winning documentary about this group has been broadcast internationally. For over thirty years, the Archive and Cinematheque have also collaborated with the Al-Kasaba Theatre in East Jerusalem and the Ramallah Cinematheque, headed by George Ibrahim. Although political strains can sometimes interrupt such efforts, the JFC maintains a central commitment for initiating and perpetuating a variety of platforms to encourage this crucial exchange. Meirom reflects: "We bring all communities to be with us, to express themselves, to spend time together."

### The Seventh Art in a City of Conflict

"The Jerusalem Cinematheque has greatly influenced cultural life in Jerusalem by being a center of diversity and pluralism, by opening its doors on Friday night even when it was against the law, by offering a Gay and Lesbian Film Festival before it was considered so trendy, by showing political films that attract both Jews and Arabs, and by screening films that are on the cutting edge culturally.

— Amy Kronish, JFC Curator of Jewish and Israeli Films, 1979-1983 and 1989-2000

Many who were interviewed for this book cited the Cinematheque as vital to secular culture in Jerusalem. Increasing religious, political, and social segregation threaten the pluralistic nature of the city. A daring and diverse repertoire has fueled JFC's mission. Gali Gold, who has worked as a Jerusalem Film Festival producer (1998-2001), claims that "it is a cultural haven, a place of positive encounters and inspiration, a real oasis in the midst of a troubled city." Or, as Meirom summarizes, "Everyone can find his or her place at the



Robert De Niro and Lia van Leer, 1993

Cinematheque.”

To celebrate this reputation for inclusivity, in 1995 Vivian Ostrovsky organized the first Jerusalem Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. Festival producer Enulla Shamir, in a *Jerusalem Post* interview, insisted that despite religious opposition and demonstrations planned by *Haredi* leaders, the event should take place “even if we must have police and private guards brought in.” And it did, following a fierce argument in the Knesset. Member of Knesset (MK) Yitzhak Levy, a representative of the National Religious Party, was infuriated that Jerusalem was “following in the footsteps of other major cities around the world” and asserted, as recorded in minutes from the Knesset: “All kinds of films are screened all over this country, but in this case we are talking about bringing a foreign culture to Jerusalem, a culture of sin. That is what we protest against and that is why we are approaching the Minister [Shulamit Aloni, then Minister of Science and the Arts] in order for her to use her influence to cancel this festival that has no place in the Holy City of Jerusalem.” Levy’s opposition included a personal petition to Mayor Ehud Olmert. During discussions on the broader implications of this debate, MK Yael Dayan delivered what has come to be considered an historic speech. She invoked quotes from the Torah to justify the importance of lesbian and gay rights. MKs opposed to the festival failed to assemble enough votes to pass a ruling to prohibit the event. When it opened there was heated debate in the media, wide buzz on the streets, continued rumblings throughout the government, and very successful ticket sales.

Another controversy surrounded a screening in December 2003. Mohammed Bakri’s *Jenin, Jenin* portrays, from a Palestinian perspective, the fighting in Jenin during Operation Defensive Shield in April

2002. Bakri, who felt honored and encouraged that the international premiere of his film was to be held at the Cinematheque, underlined that “Jerusalem must be a symbol of coexistence and the Cinematheque must be the house where this symbol lives.” During and after the screening, screaming matches broke out between the audience and the director. Many viewers, infuriated by the film’s subject and point of view, left in the middle of the film. There were also attempts to derail subsequent showings with protests at other screening sites.

Avinoam Harpak, former JFC Program Director, describes the importance of freedom of expression represented by such films: “As a Cinematheque, we don’t have the means to define lies or truths. The Jerusalem Cinematheque fulfills its duty and screens films without censorship and *Jenin, Jenin* is a film that merits screening. We do not pass judgment on the content of our films. We provide a stage or a ‘window display’ if you may, for all the new and significant Israeli and Palestinian films. That’s my personal stand and the official Cinematheque stand.” This non-censoring stance on content, particularly political content, has been JFC’s policy from the beginning. Films made throughout Israel by all its communities are shown year round — some incite, but others provide refuge. As filmmaker Ron Havilio summarizes, “The Cinematheque in Jerusalem offers an escape from the conflict, a meeting place between Jews and Arabs, secular and religious. The Cinematheque is the secular temple of Jerusalem.”

For many, Lia van Leer’s decision in 1987 to remain open on Friday evenings and Saturdays was a critical moment. This controversy placed operations at the heart of frictions between religious and secular communities. The Cinematheque was the first local cinema to screen films on the Sabbath. This position





won support across the city, throughout the country and around the world. “This decision was a landmark for the city of Jerusalem,” according to Dieter Kosslick, Director of the Berlin Film Festival — a position echoed by his colleague Beki Probst, European Film Market Director.

Safirman recalls the cultural shock he experienced shortly after immigrating to Jerusalem from Romania: “I remember how I came to Israel a little over twenty years ago and I did not know exactly what kind of country I was living in. It was in the 1980s and we had just begun screening films on Saturdays. I arrived one day and these men in long black robes [*Haredim*] started throwing rocks at the Cinematheque attendees. Where was I?” Yigal Molad-Hayo, JFC CFO between 1987 and 2012, recalls that shortly after the Shabbat openings began, the *Haredim* issued an edict against the Cinematheque. Pashkevils, the Yiddish posters plastered throughout Orthodox neighborhoods, condemned the cinema for operating on the Sabbath and called for its ‘annihilation.’ Molad Hayo recalls that one of the Pashkevils claimed that the first Intifada erupted in 1987 because the Cinematheque had opened its doors on Friday evenings! Years later, when he visited the Pashkevil archive in Mea Shearim, he was shown over thirty posters related to movie theaters in Israel. In 2007, Molad-Hayo helped facilitate the exhibition of these historic documents during the JFC’s annual Jewish Film Festival. The now-silenced protest posters not only drew crowds but also extensive discussion in print and broadcast media.

### Bringing the World to Jerusalem Bringing Jerusalem to the World

“The Jerusalem Cinematheque is a home, ‘my’ home, within a stunningly beautiful and ugly city of hope and fear, religion

and the arts, of extremes both positive and less so...It presents the best world cinema, respecting human rights and pushing the boundaries of the art...Once upon a time... there was scope for international and secular culture even on a Friday night in the holy city of Jerusalem...As extremism takes hold in Jerusalem, there is even greater need today for a lively cosmopolitan enclave where art house and world cinema hold sway.”

— Philippa Kowarsky, Managing Director, Cinephil  
*Distribution and Coproductions*

Several generations owe their film education to the Cinematheque. In addition to the International Film Festival which began in 1984 and, since 1999, the Jewish Film Festival, there are several screenings daily. Navot Barnea, JFC Program Editor, curates the monthly calendar that features retrospectives of directors and actors, independent films from all over the world, new releases, thematic series as well as special seminars, lectures and events for all ages and interests. Often, regions or countries are the focal point. Sometimes a film genre is examined. Special guests participate regularly. Jeanne Moreau, David Lynch, Delphine Seyrig, John Malkovich, Michael Winterbottom, Roman Polanski, Béla Tarr, Theo Angelopoulos, Wim Wenders, Andrzej Wajda, Ang Lee and Marisa Paredes are among those who have been featured. Screenings are also often augmented by performances, master classes, exhibitions of art and cinema artifacts, and demonstrations ranging from craft workshops to fashion shows.

Throughout the year, the Department of Education, established by Gilli Mendel, offers educational programming focused on using the universality of cinema to promote historical insight, social awareness, and humanitarian values as well as aesthetic film

appreciation. Annually, over 300 days are devoted to workshops customized for elementary and secondary schools and special needs groups. In 1981, a model for regular academic interface was introduced by Raya Morag, then a secondary-school teacher. Once a month, for a full day, high-school students study film classics, history and technique. This model has since been expanded to include thousands of participants from around the country who come to enjoy the Cinematheque and consider it as their cultural home away from home.

Another seminal initiative for this age group, titled *I Am, You Are*, brings together Palestinian and Israeli students to study filmmaking and produce short films reflecting their experiences and perspectives. These productions have been featured at education conferences and film festivals around the world and the program model not only continues at JFC but has also been repeated for teens in ethnic conflict zones from Poland to Australia. Vivian Ostrovsky, a JFC board member from 1981 to 2010, an advisor as well as a programming consultant, has brought many landmark screenings to the Cinematheque and Film Festival. She is the curator of the eclectic, much-anticipated *Carte Blanche* Festival sidebar, and notes other important firsts. The Cinematheque was the first theater in Israel to screen a Soviet film. Aleksandr Askoldov’s *Kommisar* (1967) had been blacklisted by Soviet censors who considered it Zionist propaganda. Suppressed during the Brezhnev era but accessible in 1988 thanks to eased restrictions under Gorbachev, the screening included the director and the first delegation of Soviet filmmakers to visit Israel. This unprecedented event was widely covered by the international press and drew leaders from many fields including politics, culture and the arts. Gerald Peary, writing in the *Los*

*Angeles Times*, quoted the director who, during the screening, confided to Shimon Peres, then Minister of Foreign Affairs: “The fate of *Kommisar* and also my own are closely associated with Gorbachev.” Peary concluded that “everyone was amazed and impressed, for Fest’ 88 [had] produced an extraordinary coup with international political implications.” Aesthetic firsts have also had wide impact. Vivian introduced experimental and avant-garde cinema as a regular feature of the Jerusalem Film Festival. At the beginning she presented films by Pat O’Neill (*Water and Power*, USA 1989), Su Friedrich (*Sink or Swim*, USA 1990), and Mark Rappaport (*Postcards*, USA 1990). She recalls the initial resistance to such challenging fare: “When I showed a film by Matthias Müller and Christoph Girardet (*Phoenix Tapes*, Germany 1999), someone got up in the middle and yelled, ‘Stop the projection, this is terrible, stop!’ Someone else dashed into the office and yelled, ‘I want my money back!’” Not one to get discouraged, she persisted, and in 1992 brought Warren Sonbert to present his now-iconic films, *Friendly Witness* (USA 1989) and *Short Fuse* (USA 1992): “The hall was almost empty, it was a hard beginning....” Now, the experimental film program is always an early sell out. Also now, there is an additional group of programs devoted to Israeli-produced experimental work, completing the circle: Awareness leads to inspiration and that encourages new art forms. Edgy, often controversial and challenging offerings have been crucial to distinguishing the spirit of the Cinematheque. Audience members regularly report feeling deeply affected. Filmmaker Ron Havilio recalls what he describes as “probably the most memorable screening” of his life, *The Travelling Players* by Theo Angelopoulos (Greece 1975): “I sat in the theater transfixed for four hours, it was an incredible





experience.” Paris-based filmmaker Nurith Aviv annually attends the Jerusalem Film Festival “in order to become exposed to a selection of the best foreign films of the past years and a selection of interesting films from other festivals. At the most recent festival, I saw *The Turin Horse* [Béla Tarr and Ágnes Hranitzky, Hungary 2011] months before it came out in Paris.” Aviv also confides her fond memories of a Chinese film retrospective from over twenty years ago: “There were very few people in the Hall, but it was an amazing experience. A great revelation for me. I had already seen several Chinese films in Paris, but suddenly I came to Jerusalem and saw the most incredible Chinese cinema.” This sampling of opinions represents a consensus about the impact of the Cinematheque as an alternative to commercial cinema and a source of education, insight, inspiration, and delight.

### JFC and Filmmaking Culture in Israel

“Israeli films that are independent, not shown in commercial cinemas, are shown at the Jerusalem Cinematheque. The Cinematheque provided and continues to provide a stage for all Israeli films.”

— Alon Garbuz, Director, Tel Aviv Cinematheque

Since 1989, the Jerusalem International Film Festival has made the premiere of Israeli films the centerpiece of the event. Philadelphia-based Jack Wolgin, who felt competition fostered excellence, proposed a group of cash awards to encourage achievement in feature, short and documentary filmmaking, ranging from producing and directing to acting and scriptwriting. Juries comprised of Israeli and international film professionals determined the prizes. During the Festival, each evening includes a debut, celebrated with a reception, culminating in closing night awards

festivities. Although Wolgin passed away in 2010, others, including the Haggiag family, the Van Leer Group and Esther Hoffenberg, have stepped in to perpetuate this influential festival focus. Renen Schorr, Founder and Director of the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School, notes how the Festival positioned “Israeli cinema at its center” with “significant and dramatic awards for Israeli films. It has succeeded in showcasing for the very first time in Israel, for the local industry as well as the international scene, the year’s most significant fiction, documentary and short films.” The Cinematheque and Festival have also helped initiate the careers of several important filmmakers. Amos Kollek refers to the Cinematheque as a “terrific launching place” that provided a stage for his films which otherwise “would not have found an outlet in Israel.” Film producer and programming consultant for the JIFF, Naomi Kaplansky credits the Cinematheque for opening the “scope and vision” of local filmmakers and for creating awareness for Israeli cinema and the Israeli film industry internationally: “It is still surprising to see so many Israeli films stepping up on the stage at various film festivals all over the world, whether in Finland, Cannes, New York, Los Angeles, Caracas, or São Paulo.” Havilio describes how screening and winning an award for *Fragments: Jerusalem* at the JIFF in 1996 helped launch the film’s success abroad: “A Japanese critic saw the film at the Festival and gave it a wonderful review. He convinced me to send a screener to the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in Japan. The film got into the Festival and received the big prize, and suddenly my film was invited to dozens of festivals and I was able to make an English version. The English version of this film would not exist had the critic from Japan not attended the Jerusalem Film Festival. I think the Cinematheque did this for other Israeli films as

well.” *Fragments: Jerusalem* won the International Film Critics Award at the Berlinale and The Observer Prize for Best Documentary at the Edinburgh International Film Festival, as well as the Grand Prix at the Yamagata Festival. Havilio’s is but one of many Israeli films that debuted at the Festival, won an award, and went on to gain international attention and acknowledgement in the form of foreign film festival prizes. Among these were *Chessed Mufla* (*Amazing Grace*, Amos Guttman, 1992), *Ha-Chayim Al-Pi Agfa* (*Life According to Agfa*, Assi Dayan, 1992), *Lebanon* (*Shmuel Maoz*, 2009), *Shtikat Ha’Aarchiyon* (*A Film Unfinished*, Yael Hersonski, 2010), *Ha’Shoter* (*Policeman*, Nadav Lapid, 2011), and *Shilton Ha’Chok* (*The Law in These Parts*, Ra’anan Alexandrowicz, 2011), and *Shomrei Hasaf* (*The Gatekeepers*, Dror Moreh, 2012). The Festival continues to provide crucial international visibility for Israeli productions. This focus has paralleled a surge in the quality and quantity of Israeli output. Now Israeli film, once considered an exclusively provincial industry with a localized market, is not only featured at festivals worldwide, but its productions also regularly penetrate commercial markets abroad. This phenomenon has attracted considerable interest from foreign co-sponsors. The JFC led the way in this realm by introducing a Festival event focused on connecting local filmmakers with international resources through pitching sessions. The Festival, Cinematheque and Archive have contributed in various ways to inspire and encourage the ever-expanding success of Israeli cinema.

### The Archive, a Repository of Memory

“Our main purpose is preservation. Our Archive is a national treasure. If we don’t take good care of our Archive, we will lose our national heritage.”

— Margaret Kleinman, Archivist and Researcher, JFC Israel Film Archive

The Israel Film Archive, the country’s most comprehensive film repository, holds about 30,000 prints from Israel and abroad, 10,000 negatives of Israeli films, and 13,398 titles, in all film and video formats. As Meir Russo, the JFC Archive Manager, points out: “The Archive holds treasures that cannot be described, such as rare footage by the Lumière brothers depicting vistas of Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Bethlehem. This footage, captured by cinematic pioneers 120 years ago, is considered the first film produced in pre-State Israel.”

The Archive houses negatives, masters and exhibition prints of historical materials and artistic productions from the region, including a large percentage of works made before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. There are features from Israel and abroad, documentaries and short subjects, even early advertising films as well as the celebrated, comprehensive Axelrod Newsreel Collection. Comprised of over 600 newsreels and over 120 hours of film, this footage includes both reportage and narrative films that span from the 1920s to the 1950s. Among the most precious holdings are vintage classics that provide unique insight into a bygone era. Early gems include *Hayei Ha’Yehudim Be Eretz Israel* (*Life of the Jews in Palestine*, Noah Sokolovsky, 1913), *Shivat Zion* (*Return to Zion*, Ya’akov Ben Dov, 1920), *Oded Ha Noded* (*Oded the Wanderer*, Chaim Halachmi, 1932), *Avoda* (Helmar Lerski, 1935), and *Ha’Bilti Legalim* (*The Illegals*, Meyer Levin, 1947). This trove is often consulted and cited by historians, critics, scholars, filmmakers and news agencies worldwide. Regional and international artistic film history can also be found here. Collections include a cache of both



commercial and independent productions, acquired by gift and donation, often directly from filmmakers and distributors who recognize the importance, especially in the Middle East, of this particular Archive. Since 1987, thanks to a major donation by Leon Constantiner, the Joan Sourasky-Constantiner Holocaust Multimedia Research Center has been the namesake for the collection area dedicated to Holocaust holdings. Other dimensions of the Archive include a film research library and previewing stations named for Hollywood mogul Lew Wasserman, and the Cecil Bernstein collection of cinematographic memorabilia and equipment. Exhibitions drawn from these holdings change frequently throughout the public spaces of the building.

Research, preservation and acquisitions are ongoing. Sasha Kleinman, JFC preservation expert, focuses

on rescuing overlooked footage related to the Jewish diaspora, particularly material from Russia and former Eastern Bloc countries. Identifying, previewing and obtaining this footage, which is sometimes fragmentary and often in need of restoration, is a race against time. Thousands of critical film documents languish, under-protected, in poor storage conditions, misfiled intentionally or not, crammed into canisters slated for disposal. Kleinman networks internationally to gather these crucial historical records. In addition to anti-Semitic propaganda material devised by Russian officials to portray Jews as physically weak and provincial, he also uncovered footage of the opening of the Moscow Maccabee Sports Club in 1916. This footage contradicts vicious stereotypes and documents tall, athletic men and beautiful, well-dressed women with a cosmopolitan style. Another

extraordinary discovery includes documentation of pogroms in the Ukraine filmed in 1919.

Revelations such as these prove the value of cinema beyond its impact as entertainment and cultural history. These artifacts provide vital testimonies. It is the goal of the Archive to obtain, restore and digitize such materials for posterity, but also to make them accessible to a larger public, ultimately via an online catalogue.

Meanwhile, the pursuit of the important and obscure titles continues. Russo mentions that the collection of early Israeli features is still shy of one in particular, *La Vie devant soi* (*A Life Ahead*, Moshé Mizrahi, France 1977). To date, although other films have since been nominated, this is the only feature by an Israeli director to have been awarded an Oscar for Best Foreign Film.

Political tensions have exacerbated the challenges of cultivating relationships with many Arab and Palestinian filmmakers. The Archive promotes acquisition, preservation and accessibility for all materials of regional origin and interest, and encourages Arab filmmakers from Israel and beyond to have their work included in this collection. A considerable number of titles by Palestinians came into the collection but in recent years, in protest over political issues, filmmakers have withdrawn them. Requests to Arab countries for archival films related to Jewish populations once or currently living there have also met with resistance. "We continue to try but we have never received any response," remarks Russo. Russo and his team persevere, inspired by the countless examples of Archive holdings that have a unique historic resonance. Filmmaker Nissim Mosek



notes the resurrection of an important part of his life he had presumed was lost. From 1971 through 1973, Mosek worked on an underground film about Israel's Black Panthers. This protest movement was led by second-generation Jewish immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa. *Have you Heard About the Black Panthers Mr. Moshe?* won the Best Documentary Award from the Israeli National Council for Culture and the Arts. Despite this success, the production still suffered from financial constraints and only one print of the film was produced. In 1974, Panther leader Charlie Biton was invited to speak in Norway and Sweden in conjunction with a screening of the film. The single print of the film disappeared during the course of the trip. Biton suspected the Shabak (Israel Security Agency) had removed it from his suitcase. Mosek was distraught and worried that the negative had also been lost. In 2001, Russo called him to review a vintage print about the Black Panthers he had uncovered. The filmmaker reports: "I rushed to the Cinematheque. Meir took a reel out of a box and ran it through the Steenbeck editing machine. After thirty years, I saw the lost images that were so dear to me. Tears welled up in my eyes. How did the film get to the Cinematheque's Archive? Was the Shabak working with the Cinematheque? Was this a conspiracy? This could have been interesting, but the answer is probably much simpler. There was probably an additional copy somewhere which I did not know about. When the negative was discovered in the Archive, I developed an enormous feeling of gratitude toward the Cinematheque, which I continue to feel today." In 2002, Mosek completed a second film, *Have You Heard About the Panthers?*, based on the one he had lost and found. The new film enjoyed a festive premiere and the filmmaker adds: "This was the most important

film I ever made. It brought the myth of the Black Panthers back to Israeli consciousness and in a way also managed to restore to the Black Panthers some of their lost dignity. The Cinematheque restored a lost chapter of my life and made a small contribution to Israel's social struggle."

### Memories and Mementos

"... what struck me most in this war-ridden land were their selection of documentaries . Occasionally Palestinian films were screened. I remember a young woman who was brought out of jail for a day since she was accused of helping her brothers kill their sister over a forbidden love affair. I never saw anything like this in any other festival; it was evidence of the Jerusalem Cinematheque's staunch fight for freedom in a country where this was unforeseeable. We awarded this film the 1st Prize. It was *Yasmin* by Nizar Hassan."

— Chantal Akerman, Jury member in the 1996 Jerusalem Film Festival

Dozens were asked for their favorite memories at the Cinematheque. Many of Lia's stories concern the "dedicated staff and marvelous film stars: Lillian Gish's attendance at the first Jerusalem International Film Festival in 1984 when she was "fluttering chiffon at 95" — Roberto Benigni's proposal to Mayor Olmert in 1997: "Mr. Mayor, I love Jerusalem, I would love to come work for you, come to think of it, I would like to be the Mayor and you could work for me!" These were highlights among visits of such personalities as Ingrid Bergman, Kirk Douglas, Jane Fonda, Robert De Niro, Liv Ullmann, and Warren Beatty. The book *The Jerusalem Film Festival 1984-2008: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Album*, compiled by Debra Siegel (2008), includes citations from visitors, such as Gish's

Anya Ostrovska inaugurating the Cinematheque  
with Teddy Kollek, October 14, 1981



response, “My, what a thrilling experience you gave us in your beautiful Israel and I thank you and all your hard-working Cinematheque devotees.”

Directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, noted for films such as *Rosetta* (Belgium 1999) and *Le gamin au vélo* (*The Kid with a Bike*, Belgium 2011), described their experience as unforgettable, and praised the Cinematheque’s “work...courage...tenacity...love of life, of peace.” Marcello Mastroianni remembered “the sensation of silence and light, suspended like mystic vapor over the city of Jerusalem.” Director Krzysztof Zanussi recalled his “encounters with the most receptive cosmopolitan and open-minded public...and the unforgettable atmosphere of the city.”

Aviva Meirom relates how unpredictable meetings are the rule rather than the exception here. “I once met a new immigrant here. A prima ballerina.... She was crying, she was carrying her ballet kit. She told me she had no work and would like to see a film about ballet. She was going to leave Israel because she was divorcing her husband who was also a dancer. We talked about ballet and cried. I secretly gave her an invitation to the ballet film showing later that evening. Later on, I found out that this was Madame Panov, the wife of renowned choreographer Valery Panov.”

Philippa Kowarsky recalls the serendipity of the Festival days: “Iranian films, films from Lebanon, *Nobody’s Business* by Alan Berliner, a meeting with Ang Lee, a Sundance workshop, a drink with Wieland Speck, a smile from Anthony Minghella.” She has also remarked on the widely-shared sentiment invoked during the rest of the year when the “Cinematheque is essential for life, sanity and love in this city.” JFC Lifetime Achievement awardee Volker Schlöndorff, director of classics such as *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (*The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, Germany

1975) and *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, Germany 1979), treasures another dimension in the film *Lia* (Taly Goldberg, Israel 2011): “Lia is always trying to bridge and to maintain a dialogue and I would say that the Cinematheque is really kind of a free zone. I think there’s more of a peace process in the little coffee shop of the Cinematheque than in all of Camp David and elsewhere united.”

Mohammed Bakri confirms this perception in a letter to Lia: “Every year when we meet and embrace at the Festival, in that city, you tremble and cry about what is happening to us, and that only strengthens me and reminds me that we are not alone in our fight. Our hope is to continue to believe that together we will defeat the darkness.”

George Ostrovsky was hands-on during all aspects of planning the Cinematheque, but in the nine years between its inception and the final months of its construction, could he ever have imagined how his dream would turn into a reality for this city: visits by glamorous stars and directors, throngs gathered under the moonlight for Festival openings at Sultan’s Pool, a staff devoted to saving and presenting films that touch people and capture the essence of history and life? By all accounts of those who knew him, he would have loved the hustle and bustle, the buzz and the drama surrounding the place, but could he or anyone for that matter have foreseen how the Cinematheque would develop into an island of thoughtful resistance, a beacon of cultural diversity and a crucial gathering point for all?

*Daniella Tourgeman*  
with *Diane Gabrysiak* and *Kelly Gordon*



# LEGACY



1973 – 2014

Detail from *The Clock* by Christian Marclay, 2010

## GETTING BACK, GIVING BACK

**B**y the early 1920s, George had escaped the dire conditions in Constantinople and headed for the promise of the new Republic of Czechoslovakia. Once settled in Prague he enrolled in university, enlisted in the army, secured a work permit, pursued citizenship, found true love and enjoyed the first sustained, relatively stable period in his life. For the first time, his professional position provided him means beyond living expenses — he rose to Department Head at Electrotechna. George developed a yen for travel, a determination for connecting and helping his extended family, and a habit of giving support to educational and social causes, particularly in Israel. He never discussed whether he viewed ‘giving back’ as a priority inculcated by his family’s values, a matter central to his responsibility as a Jew, or an impulse indicative of his own personal ethics. As noted throughout these pages, he was also mum about his first-hand experiences surviving the harsh regimes and conflicts that inflamed anti-Semitism, yet he was deeply aware of why such conditions paralleled the urgency for a Jewish homeland.

Relatives have hinted he may have contributed to the fight for Israeli independence from Britain. Whether this notion is fact or apocryphal, the realm of his Zionist perspective did not dissuade him from suing the newly emerged State when it attempted to expropriate without adequate compensation Jerusalem real estate he had bought in 1934. The case, which

began in 1951, continued for thirty-four years and was settled in his favor, although posthumously. Even more than the remunerative award, George would likely have appreciated the importance of having the right to challenge and criticize the State and invoke due process of law — crucial freedoms in a modern democracy. The realization of the State of Israel during his lifetime was significant to him but equally important to George was the type of society it would foster. His Jewish identity endured the challenges of bigotry and suppression, but he was expressly disinterested in the canonical aspects of religion and the factions dedicated to establishing Israel as a theocratically-driven nation. His family has confided that he was a populist at heart and impressed by the stew of Europeans and Sabras determined to forge a new kind of communally-oriented culture. George appreciated the informal, brash, non-materialistic, pioneering spirit of the first generation who created the State of Israel. When they turned to Jews of means around the world to support the plans, projects and dreams they hoped to realize, he responded.

During the 1970s, George created two philanthropic entities to answer requests from emerging institutions in Israel: The Lev and Rosa Kogan Foundation in honor of Anya’s parents — and another, combining her name with his Czech moniker, the Rehanos Foundation. These two foundations provided support for research and for institutions of higher education, such as the University of Haifa, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Hebrew University, and the Engineering and Strategic Studies Departments at Tel Aviv University. There were also considerable contributions for





programs and services at the Chaim Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer and a building project at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot — researchers' residences named in honor of the Brazilian Finance Minister, Osvaldo Aranha. George thus oversaw contributions to an array of causes and operations he felt would enhance the quality of life for individuals and encourage the ongoing safety and aspirations of the developing country.

As the success of his businesses in Brazil and beyond expanded, so did his donations to those in need and for major projects. He was not only engaged by others to underwrite on-going endeavors, but he also challenged his family to identify a unique way in which they could enhance the impact of their philanthropy.

In 1973, he initiated, through a pledge of one million dollars, the establishment of a facility exclusively for the Jerusalem Cinematheque and Israel Film Archive, the dual parts of what is now known as the Jerusalem Film Center. He wanted to create a focus for his family's connection to Israel while expanding the cultural horizons of those in the developing State.

Since 1984, family and friends have gathered at the JFC to commemorate him and enjoy what Rose Ostrovsky reports as his and Anya's favorite shared project. Significant annual support for the institution has been committed each year since the early 1980s. In 2004, the Ostrovskys initiated resources for a comprehensive renovation and expansion of the building, providing two and a half million dollars and securing an equal, matching donation for the massive undertaking which was completed in 2008. During 2008, they added another half-million dollars toward upgrading, outfitting and expanding the Archive which will be dedicated to Wim and Lia van Leer.

Additionally at JFC, Ostrovsky support has:

- Underwritten Archive acquisitions that have enhanced several areas within collection holdings (for a full listing of print acquisitions, see "OFF Funding Initiatives," p.102);
- sponsored promotional and development consultants who, to date, have helped raise over seven million dollars for building, programming and festival initiatives;
- provided regular funding for staff development retreats;
- purchased crucial technical and office equipment;
- endorsed Festival screenings, film and video awards and workshops as well as regular calendar events ranging from the *Concerto*, Saturday live music with film and lecture series, to vintage and current avant-garde film exhibitions, film Archive-driven research, restoration and events.

Additional annual contributions have also responded to a variety of ad hoc institutional necessities and opportunities. The Ostrovsky Family Fund was developed in 1987 to consolidate the various philanthropic contributions that respond to George and his family's priorities and concerns. To date, the Jerusalem Film Center and the Film Forum in New York City have been the principal beneficiaries for operational and capital support, but an array of other artistic, cultural, and human rights initiatives have also received funding. Although George was never interested in projecting his own name into the spotlight, it is recognized on the double auditoriums named after him, which were dedicated in 2009 as teaching halls at the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School in Jerusalem.

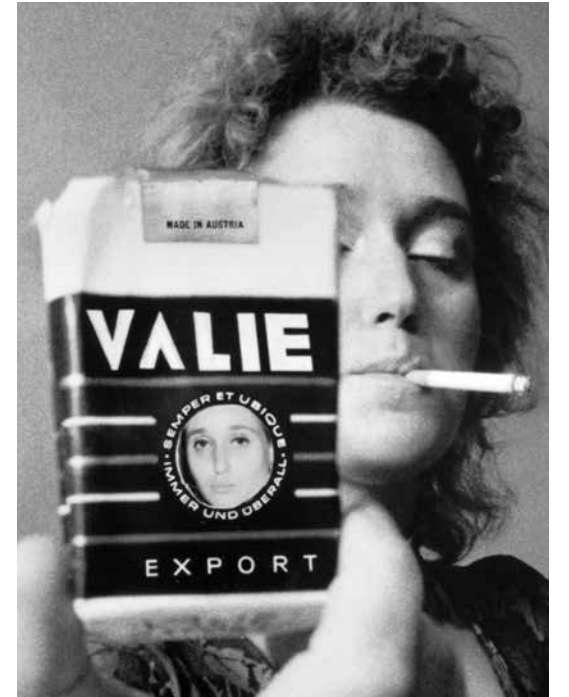
OFF has also regularly supported seminars and student grants at this professional academy.

The OFF has no funding cycle or formal application process. Individuals and organizations must be invited to submit proposals. Unsolicited requests are automatically ineligible for consideration. Projects underwritten by OFF typically enlist innovative, experimental and avant-garde approaches to enhance the preservation, accessibility, and impact of the moving-image arts, or to raise awareness about cultural and social issues.

To date, support has been provided in Israel, Brazil, and the US. George drove himself hard. He was a tireless worker but also appreciated the importance of a deeply-felt smile and the value of a hearty laugh. His gusto, resourcefulness and regard for creativity, his irrepressible optimism and belief in the civilizing influence of artistic production and his heartfelt connections, especially to Jerusalem and Israel, continue to inspire his family. To date, OFF's focus on cinema and art-related endeavors encourages others to do something George rarely did: sit still.

To survive and flourish George Ostrovsky had to master many languages yet he was always a man of few words. The goal of the Ostrovsky Family Fund is to ensure that the resources created by his efforts continue to speak volumes.

Kelly Gordon



VALIE EXPORT, *Self-Portrait: Transfer Identity*, 1970

Still from *Performing Politics for Germany*,  
Public Movement, 2009





OFF FUNDING INITIATIVES

Major Operational and Capital Support

The Jerusalem Film Center (since 1974)  
See: 'Getting Back, Giving Back,' p. 96

Film Forum, New York (since the 1980s). Vivian Ostrovsky is a board member. Funding is provided for:  
- Acquisition of offices, ongoing operational support and the Documentary Fund

Additional Funding

The Sam Spiegel Film & Television School, Jerusalem (since 1993):  
- Student grants  
- Books, courses and workshops on experimental cinema by filmmakers and artists such as Peggy Ahwesh, Yael Bartana, Irit Batsry, Yann Beauvais, Pip Chodorov and Nira Pereg  
- 'Great Masters Series:' talks and workshops by masters of cinema such as David Lynch, Wim Wenders, director of photography Ed Lachman and editor Thelma Schoonmaker  
- Construction of two auditoriums named after George Ostrovsky (2009)

The Center for Contemporary Art (CCA), Tel Aviv:  
- VideoZone Festival (2006, 2008, 2010)  
- Retrospectives of Paul Sharits (2007) and Hollis Frampton (2008)  
- 'OFF Series' - screenings of experimental cinema (since 2009)  
- Exhibition and lectures by Marina Abramovic (2009)  
- Funding of the exhibition 'Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol' and of the video *Four Exercises in Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation System* (2011)

- Support for the digitization and preservation of the CCA's video archive (2012)  
- Support for additional solo exhibitions: 'Gary Hill' (2012); 'Alona Rodeh: Above and Beyond' (2013); 'Michal Helfman: Change' (2013); 'Nira Pereg: All of This Can Be Reconstructed Elsewhere' (2013); 'Christian Jankowski: Heavy Weight History' (2014); 'Tamar Harpaz: Kitchen Sink Drama' (2014)

Artis - an organization developed to promote Israeli art internationally. OFF provides an annual contribution (since 2009) and Vivian Ostrovsky is a board member. Funding is also provided for specific projects such as:  
- 'Trembling Time: Recent Video from Israel,' Tate Modern, London (2010)  
- 'Public Movement,' research and performance, New Museum Triennial, New York (2012)

Israel Museum, Jerusalem:  
- Funding of the exhibition 'Valie Export: Jerusalem Premiere' (2009), together with talks and film screenings  
- Acquisition of *The Clock*, a 24-hour video by Christian Marclay (2010), in conjunction with Tate Modern, London and Centre Pompidou, Paris  
- Support for the production of the exhibition 'Yehudit Sasportas: Seven Winters' (2013)

Mamuta at the Daniela Passal Art and Media Center, Ein Karem, Jerusalem and later at the Hansen House, Jerusalem (SALA-MANCA Group):  
- Support for equipment, artist grants, experimental film programs and workshops (since 2008)

Tel Aviv Museum of Art:  
- Support for the production of the exhibitions: 'Absalon' (2013); 'Guest/Host' (2013); 'Showtime' (2013); 'Alina Szapocznikow: Body Traces' (2014); 'Public Movement' (2014-2015)

Ein Harod Museum:  
- Support for the production of several projects including the exhibition and archive of David Perlov

Bass Museum of Art, Miami:  
- Support for the production of the exhibition 'Unnatural' (2012)

Noa Eshkol Foundation, Holon:  
- Support for the digitizing, re-cataloguing, preservation and restoration of the Noa Eshkol archive (2012)

Grants for Israeli artists designated for the production of a new work/project:  
- Among the recipients: Einat Amir, Ron Amir, Ariela Azoulay, Yael Bartana, Hilla Ben Ari, Orit Ben Shitrit, Ofri Cnaani, Ira Edouardovna, Nir Evron, Dani Gal, Noa Giniger, Yasmeen Godder, Guy Goldstein, Michal Heiman, Tali Keren, Daniel Mann, Nira Pereg, Gilad Ratman, Ruti Sela, Nurit Sharett, Efrat Shvily, Amir Yatziv and others.

'Reels on Wheels' - a mobile cinema project for film and video screenings, workshops and cine-clubs in peripheral communities in Israel (2010-2012)

*The Law in these Parts* (Documentary, Ra'anana Alexandrowicz, Israel 2011) - initial distribution support

'Exterritory Project' - initial sponsorship for the launch of the flotilla art event (2010)

The Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon:  
- Support for 'HEB2,' an audio-visual research and training project in the city of Hebron, West Bank (2010)  
- Support for the digitization of the Center's video archive (2013)

Tel Aviv Student Film Festival:  
- Support for the production of experimental programming (2013-2014)

Restoration of Anita Thacher's installation *Illuminated Station* at the East End Seaport Museum and Marine Foundation, Long Island, New York (2011)

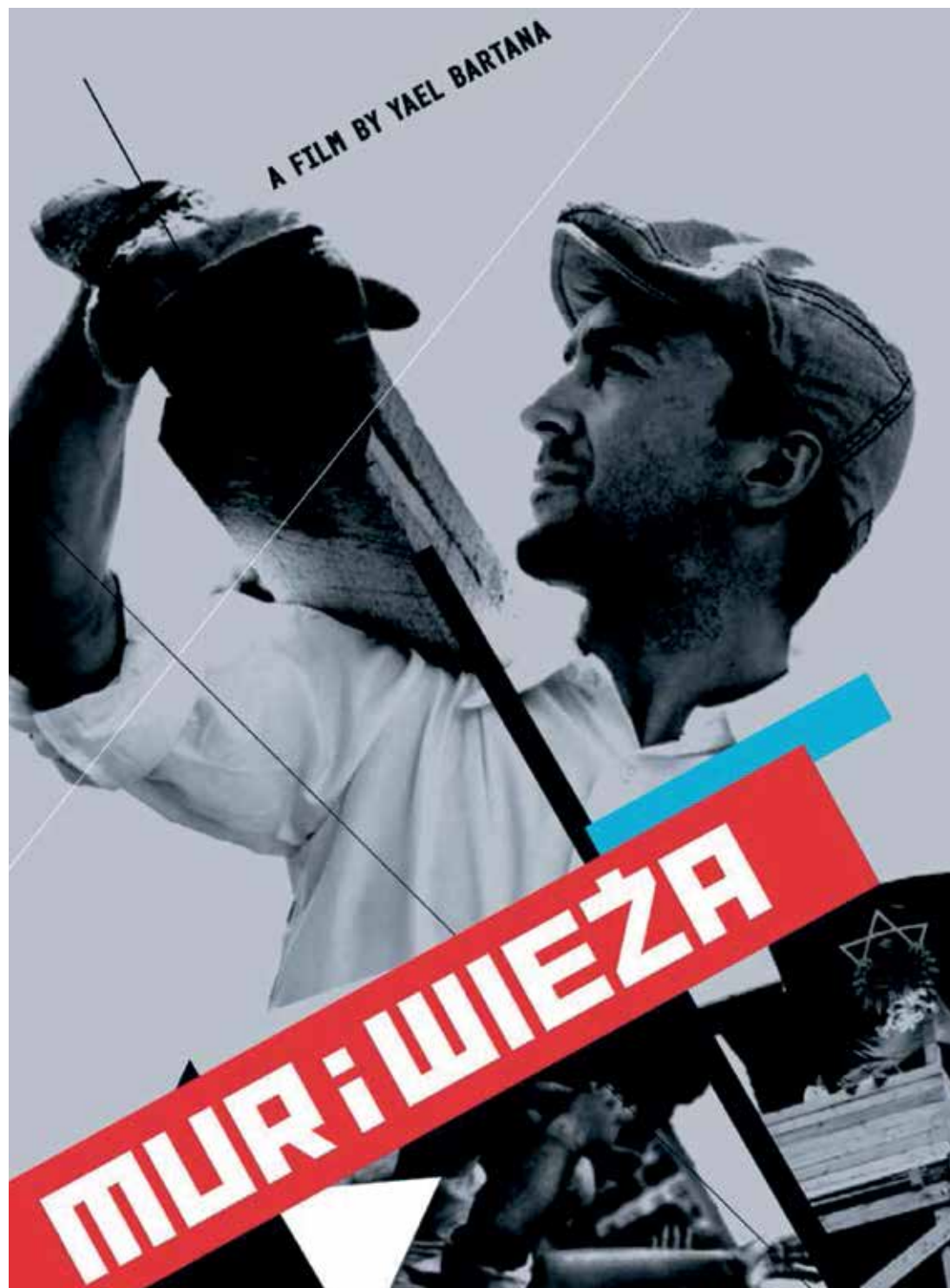
Support for the Carioca Fund (Brazil Foundation) - providing access to education for under-privileged children in Brazil (since 2011)

Donation to the Foundation Center, New York - an inclusive source for information on philanthropy worldwide (2011)

In Development

Preservation and digitization of vintage Brazilian film and video art made by women from 1960 to 1980.

In addition, Vivian and Rose Ostrovsky have personally supported a number of women's and human rights initiatives, as well as art, film, and educational projects.



#### PRINTS ACQUIRED BY OFF FOR THE JFC ARCHIVE (2004-2007)

**39 Steps** (Alfred Hitchcock, UK, 1935)

**A Matter of Life and Death** (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1946)

**Black Narcissus** (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1947)

**Dr. Strangelove** (Stanley Kubrick, USA, 1964)

**Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia** (Ulrike Ottinger, Germany, 1989)

**Man of Aran** (Robert J. Flaherty, UK, 1934)

**Passport to Pimlico** (Henry Cornelius, UK, 1949)

**Peeping Tom** (Michael Powell, UK, 1960)

**The Red Shoes** (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1948)

**The Graduate** (Mike Nichols, USA, 1967)

**The Man in the White Suit** (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1951)

**The Bridge on the River Kwai** (David Lean, UK-USA, 1957)

**Una Giornata Particolare** (Ettore Scola, Italy, 1977)

**Whisky Galore** (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1949)





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“George would have hated a book like this: Do it!”  
Anya Ostrovska 2010



