



Nili Portugali

**And the alley she whitewashed in light blue. The secret of all those timeless places where one feels »at home«**

172 pp. with 220 colour illus., 240x190 mm, hard-cover, English/Hebrew

ISBN 978-3-86905-027-0

Euro 39.00, £ 36.00, US\$ 48.00

»If someone asked me: what is the film about, I would have to say: It is really about the essence of human life! I find it incredibly beautiful! It is really a moving experience ... I think it is obviously art built and master full ...« (Prof. Howard Davis, University of Oregon, on my film *And the alley she whitewashed in light blue.*)

At a time of existential threat to the physical and human environment we live in, architect and film maker Nili Portugali takes the readers through a poetic essay and a spectacular photo gallery, extracted from her awarded new film, into a deeply intimate journey of memories in the Galilean holy »Kabbala« city of Tsefat.

A childhood journey that unfolds gradually from her present holistic/Buddhist/phenomenological point of view to a discovery of profound universal insights of what is the secret of all those timeless places endowed with beauty and soul where one feels »at home«? And what is that »one pure art of making« that creates them? At any culture at any place and at any time.

Nili Portugali unfolds the way in which her holistic-phenomenological approach to the arts as a whole and to architecture in particular generated her creative process in making her film. A process fundamentally different from the common production processes in the film industry.

The book includes a free streaming access to watch the film.

Nili Portugali, a seventh generation descendant of a family living in the city of Tsefat, is a practicing architect, lecturer, researcher, author and film maker. Her work focuses on both practice and theory, closely connected to the holistic-phenomenological school of thought. Her first book *The Act of Creation and the Spirit of a Place. A Holistic-Phenomenological Approach to Architecture* was nominated for The RIBA International Book Award 2007:

»There is no other book quite like this one, it really is singular and worthy of your close attention.« Her film is the third chapter in her creative trilogy following the buildings she designed and the books she wrote. She did post-graduate studies in architecture and Buddhism at the University of California in Berkeley and participated there in research with Christopher Alexander at the Center for Environmental Structure. She taught at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem and at the Technion Institute of Technology in Haifa.

Distributors

**Brockhaus Commission**  
**Kreidlerstraße 9**  
**D-70806 Kornwestheim**  
**Germany**  
**tel. +49-7154-1327-24**  
**fax +49-7154-1327-13**  
**menges@brocom.de**

**Gazelle Book Services Ltd.**  
**White Cross Mills**  
**Hightown**  
**Lancaster LA1 4XS**  
**United Kingdom**  
**tel. +44-1524-528500**  
**fax +44-1524-528510**  
**sales@gazellebookservices.com**

**National Book Network**  
**15200 NBN Way**  
**Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214**  
**USA**  
**tel. +1-800-4626420**  
**fax +1-800-3384550**  
**customer@nbnbooks.com**

The Book includes a free streaming access to watch the Film

"If someone asked me: what's the film about, I would have to say:  
It's really about the essence of HUMAN LIFE.  
I found it incredibly beautiful!  
It was really a moving experience.  
I think it was obviously Art built and Master full ..."  
(Professor H. Davis, University of Oregon, USA)

\*\*\*\*

At a time of existential threat to the physical and human environment we live in, Portugali takes the readers through a poetic text and spectacular Photo gallery extracted from her awarded new film, into a deeply intimate journey of memories in the Galilean 'Kabbala' holy city of Tsefat. A childhood journey that unfolds gradually from her present Holistic / Buddhist / phenomenological point of view, to a discovery of profound universal insights of: What is the secret of all those timeless places endowed with beauty and soul where one feels 'at home'? and what is that 'One pure Art of making' that creates them?. At any culture at any place and at any time. Portugali Unfolds the way in which her holistic-phenomenological approach to the Arts as a whole and to Architecture in particular generated her creative process in making her film. A process fundamentally different from the common production processes in the film industry.

**Nili Portugali** is a world known practicing architect; senior lecturer; researcher; published author; film director. 7th generation descendant of a family living in the holly 'Kabbala' city of Tsefat , Israel. Her work focuses on both practice and theory. Her first book: The Act of Creation and The Spirit of A Place / A Holistic-Phenomenological Approach to Architecture was listed in the books of the year by the R.I.B.A. Her awarded film '*And the alley she whitewashed in light blue*' and this book is an interface between: architecture; visual arts; holism; Buddhism and Jewish culture.

039.00 Euro ISBN 978-3-86905-027-0 04800  
036.00 £  
048.00 US \$ 9 783869 050270

Nili Portugali

ואת הסמטה היא סיידה בתכלת  
And the alley she whitewashed in light blue

Menges

# And the alley she whitewashed in light blue

The secret of all those timeless places where one feels 'at home'

Film \* Architecture \* Art



ואת הסמטה היא סיידה בתכלת

Nili Portugali

*And the alley she whitewashed in light blue*

*The secret of all those timeless places where one feels 'at home'*

*Film \* Architecture \* Art*

*Nili Portugali*

**Edition Axel Menges**



Prologue  
פרולוג





Since the days I studied architecture  
I've asked myself: what's at the base of  
all those places in which man feels at home?  
those great buildings of the past, the cities,  
villages, tents and temples that we want  
to return to again and again,  
and what's that Way which is thousands  
of years old, that created them?  
In any place, in any culture, and at any time.

**Original Hebrew**

מאז הימים שבהם התחלתי ללמוד ארכיטקטורה  
שאלתי את עצמי:  
מה קיים בבסיס כל אותם המקומות  
שבהם האדם מרגיש כבתוך ביתו?  
אותם הבניינים הנפלאים מן העבר,  
הערים, הכפרים, האוהלים והמקדשים  
שאנחנו רוצים לחזור אליהם שוב ושוב  
ומה היא אותה הדרך הקיימת אלפי שנים  
שיצרה אותם?  
בכל מקום, בכל תרבות ובכל זמן.



As I moved on my quest,  
inspired by Scientists  
and Buddhist scholars who enlightened me,  
and while reaching the summit of my journey,  
the temple of the Dalai Lama,  
**I realized!**

ככל שהתקדמתי במסע החיפוש  
במחיצתם של אנשי מדע  
ומלומדים בודהיסטים שהאירו את פני,  
ובעודי מגיעה לפסגת אותה הדרך,  
למקדשו של הדלאי למה,  
**הבנתי!**



Tsefat, is one of the four Holy cities in Israel, since the 'Second Temple'. Thousands of Jewish scholars, Prominent mystics, masters of religious law, liturgical poetry and 'Kabbala', who were expelled from Spain and Portugal in the 16th century, found in here refuge, turning the city into the most important spiritual center of the Jewish community in Israel.

צפת, היא אחת מארבעת הערים הקדושות בישראל מאז ימי 'בית שני'. אלפי יהודים מלומדים, מיסטיקאים מגדולי ההלכה, הפיוט והקבלה שגורשו מספרד ומפורטוגל במאה ה-16 מצאו בה מקלט, והפכו את העיר למרכז הרוחני החשוב ביותר של היישוב היהודי הישן בארץ ישראל.



Here Shimon bar Yochai wrote the book of 'Zohar', the most important text of 'Kabbala', and here settled the Holy Ha'Ari with his disciples. The mystic doctrine of the 'Kabala' to which includes various interpretations to the nature of divinity and the work of creation, mysticism, reincarnation and the like – has undoubtedly influenced the **city of Tsefat's unique physical structure.**

כאן כתב רבי שמעון בר יוחאי את ספר 'הזוהר' הטקסט החשוב ביותר של 'הקבלה', וכאן חי הארי הקדוש עם תלמידיו הדוקטרינה המיסטית של הקבלה, שכללה פרשנויות שונות למהות האלוהות ולמלאכת הבריאה, לתורת הנסתר, לגלגול נשמות וכדומה. **השפיעה ללא ספק על המבנה הפיזי הייחודי של העיר צפת.**



But for me Tsefat, is the place where six generations of my family were born and buried. Grandfather Olter was the last to be buried on the ancient part of the hill, alongside the graves of the righteous.

אבל עבורי צפת, הוא המקום שבו נולדו ובו קבורים שישה דורות של בני משפחתי. סבא אולטר היה האחרון מבני המשפחה שנקבר בחלקו העתיק של ההר, לצידם של קברי הצדיקים.





Grandmother was the One! who reached farther than anyone!. 30 years after she left school, she bought that! building where she studied **and founded in there her Hotel.**

סבתא היא! שהגיעה רחוק מכולם!  
 שלושים שנה אחרי שעזבה את בית הספר,  
 קנתה את הבניין שבו למדה,  
 והקימה בו את המלון.



The building of the hotel was constructed in mid-19th century, the 'Ottoman' occupation period in Israel, for the 'Austrian consulate' residence. The space used for the Chapel, Grandmother converted into a dining hall.

בנין המלון ניבנה  
 במחצית המאה התשע עשרה,  
 תקופת הכיבוש 'העותומני' בארץ ישראל,  
 עבור בית 'הקונסוליה האוסטרית'.  
 את החלל ששימש לקפלה,  
 סבתא הפכה לחדר האוכל.





At age 70, Grandmother agreed to leave the country for the first time, and went to visit the family in Brazil. When returned she told me:  
 "And what've I seen? another church and another church, but this is not ours. With that money I could have replaced the chairs in the dining room."  
**Grandmother who understood, that at the end of a worldwide journey you get to the same place.**

בגיל 70 הסכימה סבתא לעזוב את הארץ בפעם הראשונה, ונסעה לבקר את המשפחה בברזיל. כשחזרה היא אמרה לי: "נו מה כבר ראיתי? עוד כנסיה ועוד כנסיה, אבל זה לא שלנו. בכסף הזה יכולתי להחליף את הכיסאות בחדר אוכל." **סבתא היא שהבינה, כי בסופו של מסע מסביב לעולם מגיעים לאותו המקום.**



“This is your atonement!  
this is your substitute!  
this is your exchange!,  
this rooster will go to its death,  
and you will enter to good life and to peace.”

“זאת חליפתך!  
זאת תמורתך!  
זאת כפרתך!  
זה התרנגול ילך למיתה,  
ואת תיכנס  
לחיים טובים ולשלום.”







On the way to Great-Grandmother  
I entered Grandfather's shop.

בדרך לסבתא רבה חיה  
נכנסתי לחנות של סבא.

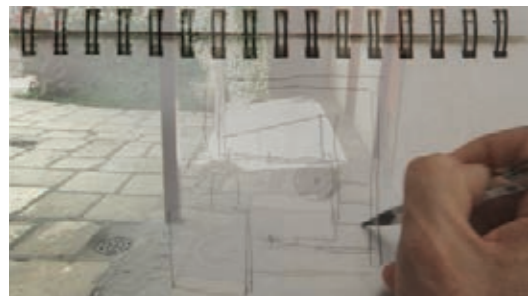




The houses on the street  
where Great-Grandmother lived,  
where man feels at home,  
were those who that take you beyond words.

הבתים ברחוב  
שבו גרה סבתא רבה,  
שבהם האדם מרגיש כבתוך ביתו,  
היו אלה שלוקחים אותך מעבר למילים.





Around the courtyard lived the guests. And here next to them was the room where Grandfather and Grandmother lived. Facing the window grew the 'Pomegranate tree'.

מסביב לחצר גרו האורחים.  
וכאן לידם היה החדר  
שבו גרו סבא וסבתא.  
מול החלון גדל יעץ הרימון.



Grandmother imagined that Grandfather is recovering from his illness. Sukkot was the last time I saw him. When I returned to the hotel in Passover, he was no longer there.



סבתא חשבה שאולי סבא מבריא מהמחלה.  
סוכות הייתה הפעם האחרונה שראיתי אותו.  
כשחזרתי בפסח למלון,  
הוא כבר לא היה.



The first step in the design process, was to identify the most beautiful areas on site, on which I will not! build. What dictated the location of the courtyard and its boundaries, were the trees existed on the site.

השלב הראשון בתהליך תכנון הבנין, היה לזהות את המקומות הייותר יפים שבמגרש, שעליהם אני לא! אבנה. מה שקבע את מיקומה של החצר ואת גבולותיה, היו העצים שהיו קיימים במגרש.



Emptiness is not nothingness!. And the courtyard is not a 'left-over' in-between buildings, but a real entity - inseparable space of the building. The courtyard and the building has no self-existence. **The coming into being of the one, depends! on the existence of the other.**

ריק היא אינה ריקנות!. והחצר היא אינה 'שארית' שנותרת בין הבנינים, אלא ישות ממשית וחלל בלתי נפרד מהבנין. לחצר ולבנין אין קיום עצמי. ההתהוות של האחד, תלויה! בקיומו של האחר.