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DISENGAGEMENT

a film by Amos Gitai



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from the director of
Free Zone, Kadosh and Kippur,

STARRING: JULIETTE BINOCHE,
LIRON LEVO, JEANNE MOREAU,
BARBARA HENDRICKS

DISENGAGEMENT

A FILM BY AMOS GITAI

Ana is reunited with her estranged Israeli stepbrother, Uli, when he travels to France for the death of their father. She decides to return to Israel to search for the daughter she gave up at birth 20 years ago. Crossing frontiers by car, train and boat, Ana and Uli are caught up in the turmoil and emotion of the military-enforced disengagement of Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005...



INTERVIEW AMOS GITAI

The Opening Scene

It's "Make Love Not War"! I thought it would be nice to see a relationship between an Israeli man and Palestinian woman in a non-combative way, going against how the Middle East has been portrayed again and again and again. Let's get out of these caricatures and see if we can find some common ground, even a passionate kiss, and not just the exchange of extremely entrenched political points of view. I'm convinced that politically the solution will be when both sides become exhausted by mantras, ethnocentricity, believing that they are right and the rest of the world is wrong, and being under the syndrome of persecution and paranoia. When they get out of all this, there will be peace, also passion and love.

Engagement

In this film, we are into crossing borders, into linking people that otherwise we would think are completely apart. After all, human beings know that they have the capacity to meet each other. I think otherwise humanity would not have survived all the atrocities that mankind did to one another. So if human beings didn't also have the capacity to forget – not just to remember – they would not be able to bridge it and move forward. *Disengagement* allows a form of disengaging from the past and to move forward to some form of reconciliation. The film touches the way human desires are often crushed by powerful geopolitical forces. People may have a lot of good intentions and would like to do some things with their lives, but then reality has another agenda. This agenda in the Middle East often sabotages the very delicate human lines. Can human beings conquer the political megastructure? This question remains open.

The Song of the Earth

I've always loved "The Song of the Earth" by Gustav Mahler. Since the film also talks about the uprooting of people, it is a Song to the Earth in some way. I always wanted Barbara Hendricks to sing it. Like a kind of non-identified priest of all religions, she sings it as a hymn to the earth, but she also sings the piece called *Der Abschied*, "farewell" in German, so it is also an adieu to the dead father and the departure from Europe. This adieu will lead Ana, played by Juliette Binoche, to follow the path to meeting her daughter and eventually re-finding her brother who already led her to another territory.

Ana

I think Ana is bored and wants to provoke. Even the big cultural references - the Shakespearean text - acknowledge her intellectual capacity, but at this point, she is bored with all that. She feels the urge for a real emotional encounter. All the verbal, intellectual encounters are not enough for her. She needs something physical, concrete. Uli, who is from a rural kibbutz background, somehow relates to her. I think that both of them, each in their own society, are out of touch. They are not in sync with society. That's what makes them interesting. In a way, the switch of territory to Israel, where the stakes are very different because the drama is always exterior, is vital to Ana. The Middle East rewrites itself every day, again and again. Whoever writes the political narrative of the Middle East is not satisfied by the calm nature of the evolutionary nature of history. It wants to impress us each time by reaching new peaks, sometimes really tragic, sometimes absurd. So when Ana finally is confronted with this kind of external drama in

Israel, she calms down, she becomes more reasonable. Juliette rose to the challenge of shaping the role which can reach these very high notes. I think that men can be threatened by the openness of Juliette, like Uli is threatened by Ana – by her nudity, playfulness, her being completely outside of "good social conventions" or what is supposed to be good taste. She challenges it, she plays with it, she provokes it. She is childlike. This comes from an internal turmoil because everything is so static and motionless. This makes her even more agitated. She wants to shake the world up. I think that this big turmoil in her comes from facing this highly manicured environment of the *haute bourgeoisie*. These are the two places she is born with. My father came from Europe and my mother was born in Israel, so I'm also between these two poles and in some way this corresponds to these feelings in myself.

Juliette Binoche

Ana, played by Juliette Binoche, is a central figure who follows her intuition. She is like an exposed nerve, always sensitive to the changes of temperature in her environment. Juliette was able to brilliantly incarnate this role with great fluidity. Marie-Jose Sanselme and I wrote the script with Juliette Binoche in mind. The early casting of Juliette allowed us to further develop the character of Ana. During the shoot, I found Juliette very curious and open to trying out different facets of the character of Ana. She is very methodical toward her acting and very demanding when it comes to questions about characterization and continuity. This makes for a great actress. We talked a lot about the conflicts here in Israel and I've told her what I think, but Juliette brings something of her own to the movie.





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Uli

Uli, played by Liron Levo, the most outstanding Israeli actor of his generation, is treating the ambiguities of being on one hand the police officer in charge of maintaining order and being a half-brother to the sensitive Ana. Uli is a bit disillusioned. He's a police officer stuck in this job, but he's not very judgmental about it. For me, making films has been like a sort of puzzle. With each film, I work on a new piece of Israeli reality. A lot of Israeli leadership has come from the army. The police is considered to be among the lower ranks of society, so I thought it would be interesting for the character of Uli to be a policeman and not military.

He seems to care more about the car he inherits from his father. He practically fetishizes it since he went to so much trouble to transport it personally from France to Israel. He is a guy who still believes that Israelis have to serve in the military forces, that they have to do what they are told, that they should not be too consumer oriented and run after wealth. But Uli is not exactly representative of contemporary Israeli society because he represents values and behavior, which are not anymore the model of Israeli society. Israeli society, most Western society, is about material success. Uli is still idealistic.

The Family Home

I was traveling in the south of France with Laurent Truchot, my producer, hesitating between Aix-en-Provence and Avignon. As we were about to leave Avignon, we saw this fabulous building with the proper level of decay, a gracious decay, and not at all one of those overpolished restoration projects covered with gold. So you felt like people were actually living there. It was not just a film set. Apparently it was built in the middle of the 18th century. The same dynasty had lived there for more than 200 years until the last member died just a year and a half

ago. My director of photography, Christian Berger, came up with an ingenious lighting system with reflectors and mirrors so that he could use very little light and capture the moment when the light is going down, which made for a kind of a spooky environment of shades and family spirits. I think that was essential for the first part, the French part, of the film.

Structures

As an architect, I always like sets and houses. When you look at architecture very closely it is a kind of a metaphor, a parable, of the place you want to speak about. It is about the immobility, the static quality that one feels in European sites. On one hand, this place is really exquisite and preserves a certain spirit, but on the other hand, it is static and not contemporary at all. Part of the heaviness that one feels in Europe is because of the architecture. In the Israeli part of the film, you'll see houses which will eventually be destroyed. And also a kind of more relaxed attitude in which Israelis move mountains. This has a completely opposite kind of energy, sometimes agitating and disturbing in a different way and sometimes more free, more liberated. I think the contrast of these two very different environments was important for the film.

Inspiration

Ben Gitai, my son, is in a way responsible for me making this film. In August 2005, he was doing his obligatory military service. He called to tell me that he was being sent to take part in the Israeli disengagement of Gaza. He was going to film and photograph. He suggested that I should go, too. Being a filmmaker, being interested in Israeli society, you have to participate and witness physically where it is really happening. I took my car and told Ben, "I don't have a permit." I knew that

the army was sealing the area. He said, "I trust that you'll find a way to get there." It is true that at different road blocks I had to exploit all of my stories of the Kippur War to convince the soldiers to let me in. Finally, I was allowed with other journalists to enter the settlements just before the evacuation. I went at night and saw the beginning of the conflict between the military forces and the settlers. It really left a strong impression on me, this episode of Israeli public life.

Around the same time, I came across a book I had read years ago which I wanted to read again - the immense and wonderful "A Man without Qualities" by Robert Musil. It's a book he wrote between the two world wars in which he describes the state of mind of a man divorced from the big ideological struggles of the time. He's kind of surfacing on the reality between different relationships that he had with different women. The second volume describes the main character meeting his sister after the death of their father. There was something in the mood that I found very contemporary. I decided not to adapt this book directly, but when I started writing the script with Marie-Jose Sanselme, I really wanted very much to have the state of mind of the two lead figures to be inspired by Musil.

Jeanne Moreau

I met Jeanne Moreau at an evening in honor of Pedro Almodovar at the French Cinemathèque. She came up to me in her direct manner and said "Do you remember what you told me 15 years ago? You came to my home and you offered me a role. When I told you I couldn't do it, you said I was too self-centered!" I apologized for being such an impolite young filmmaker, but she told me that it made her see most of my films after that. So it was quite effective after all. Then she said, "Now, I'm ready!" The role of the father's lawyer needed a particular kind of

authority and charisma, which was perfect for Jeanne. She said "I think it's great. What you are talking about, this dilemma in the world, is important. I know it's a small role but it's good and I'll do it." I thought the first on-screen meeting of two great actresses from different generations would be wonderful to witness.

Fiction

I think the film is respectful to the different points of view, but I was more interested in making a narrative film, not a documentary. I felt it was more interesting to articulate the links with Europe and more easy to structure it with fiction. We did a lot of research and watched lots of footage. It is as accurate as we thought it should be. When you make a narrative film, it is not a docudrama. It's not about reenacting reality, but about being inspired by reality. A film will always be a representation of someone's point of view - a kind of a poetic reformulation of the events. They are not the events themselves. Our obligation or our desire is to give a similar sense - a similar intensity of the feeling of what is at stake. We are not there to reproduce reality again and again.

Settlements

Amos Gitai the filmmaker is different from Amos Gitai the citizen. Amos Gitai the citizen is against the Israelis settling on Palestinian land. He was never for it and he is for peace and reconciliation. But I think that we should not consider people as pawns. If successive Israeli governments from the right and left encouraged, financed and pushed these people to settle on Palestinian land, then obviously one day when they decide just like that to evacuate the people and destroy their houses, there will be human drama. I met with some of the

settlers during my research. I didn't want to make any kind of promises to them because I believe in artistic license. I didn't want to owe them anything, but I felt that I owed it to myself to treat them fairly. I can understand the settlers even if I disagree with them politically. I can even feel for them when they are uprooted from the places where they spent three generations. It is not simple. Whatever you think about these people, it is not simple.

Israel

Israel has a charming chaotic and anarchic quality. The environment can even be quite hostile. This can be seen in Israeli political life how everyone loves to cut their leaders to pieces. They put them through endless forms of inquiries and investigations, they fire them, they spit on them. It's a kind of local ritual where no one is sacred. In Jewish tradition, this is the attitude to men of power. Although most of Israeli society is not religious, it is in the collective subconscious. If the Israelis became purely military or purely Orthodox, they would be doomed. By not being satisfied with the status quo, by questioning everything, this gives them their great vitality. Israeli reality is like a volcano. In Europe, the lava has frozen already. It has a clear configuration. In Israel, the shape is not defined yet. We don't know what will happen. By making this film, we are really inside the process as it is happening. This is a very peculiar and unique situation in which cinema – really the medium of our time – can observe reality while it is happening.

Frontiers

I decided early on to film different barriers. It started with this tall fence near the Avignon train station. Uli climbs over it to

head toward his father's house. He could have taken another route or found a gate. But this Israeli guy with his excessive energy wants to jump over it. This is also representative of crossing borders. In the film, we move through rooms, along staircases. Then later, we cross roadblocks and police barriers to penetrate spaces that we're not supposed to. There's a dividing fence between the rabbi and his followers and Uli and the police and military forces. There's also a barrier between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Throughout the film, the camera moves through the barriers so that the spectator is a wanderer who is not bound by the divisions. The spectator can formulate his or her point of view after moving freely through these spaces.

The (Im)perfect Solution

When you have a complex political reading, you don't divide the whole world into a simple schematic point of view. You understand that this is contradictory and that a political solution will be made of a non-perfect situation. Political solutions are very different than artistic solutions. I think intellectuals and artists in many cases cause confusion. When you make a film, write or paint, you can be as radical as you want, and you should be as close to your inner reality, your inner truth and not make compromises. Politics is very different from the arts and sometimes people who move from the arts to politics get confused. It is not like making a film. I think the Israelis and Palestinians will have peace only when they accept the idea that political solutions are always imperfect by nature.







© photo / Philippe Quaiasse

Amos Gitai was studying architecture, following in his father's footsteps, when the Yom Kippur War interrupted his studies and it was the use of his Super8 camera, whilst flying helicopter missions that led to his career as a filmmaker.

Gitai has produced an extraordinary, wide-ranging, and deeply personal body of work. In around 40 films – documentary and fiction, Gitai has explored the layers of history in the Middle East and beyond, including his own personal history, through such themes as homeland and exile, religion, social control and utopia. His trademark style includes long takes with scarce but significant camera movements and a devilishly clever sense of humour.

In the late 70s and early 80s, Gitai directed numerous documentaries, including *House* and *Field Diary*. During the same era, Gitai received his Ph.D in architecture from the University of California – Berkeley.

Following the controversial reception to *Field Diary*, Gitai moved to Paris in 1983, where he was based for the next ten years and during this period continued to travel widely directing such documentaries as *Pineapple* – a humorous odyssey about the growth and marketing of pineapples. He also made *Brand New Day* – a film that followed Annie Lennox and the Eurythmics as they toured Japan. During this period he began directing fiction and historical films about the experience of exile. These films include the Venice Critics' Prize-winning *Berlin Jerusalem* and the extraordinary trilogy on the Jewish legend of Golem. In the mid-90s Gitai moved to Haifa and began the most fertile, productive period of his career to date. Over 10 years, Gitai made some 15 films, both documentary and

fiction. The 1995 feature *DEAVARIM* marked the return to his country and his reunion with the light and landscape of Tel Aviv. The first film in Gitai's trilogy of Israeli cities, *Devarim* was followed by *Yom Yom* (shot in Haifa) and *Kadosh* (shot in Mea Shearim, the Jerusalem district of Orthodox Jews). Other fiction features followed: 2000's *Kippur*, 2001's *Eden*, 2002's *Kedma*, 2003's *Alila* and 2004's *Promised Land*, 2005 *Free Zone*.

Gitai's work has been the subject of major retrospectives, notably at Centre Pompidou (Paris), NFT and ICA (both in London), New York's Lincoln Center and cinematheques in Berlin, Madrid, Jerusalem, Paris, Sao Paulo, Tokyo and Toronto.

His films have been frequently invited to participate in official selection of Cannes, Venice and Toronto festivals.

- 1980 *House* - documentary
- 1981 *Wadi* - documentary
- In Search of Identity* - documentary
- American Mythologies* - documentary
- 1982 *Field Diary* - documentary
- 1983 *Ananas (Pineapples)* - documentary
- 1984 *Bangkok-Bahrain (Labour for Sale)* - documentary
- 1985 *Esther* - feature
- 1987 *Brand New Day* - musical documentary
- 1989 *Berlin-Jerusalem* - feature
- Birth of a Golem* - docudrama
- 1991 *Golem, the Spirit of Exile* - feature
- Wadi, Ten Years Later* - documentary

- 1992 *Metamorphosis of a Melody* - documentary/theatre
- 1993 *Queen Mary* - documentary
- The Petrified Garden* - feature
- The War of the Son of Light Against the Sons of Darkness* - documentary/theatre
- In the Valley of the Wupper* - documentary
- Kippur War Memories* - documentary
- 1994 *In the Name of the Duce* - documentary
- Give Peace a Chance* - documentary
- 1995 *Devarim (Things)* - feature
- 1996 *The Arena of Murder* - documentary
- Milim (Words)* - theatre /documentary
- 1997 *War and Peace in Vesoul* - improvised docudrama
- 1998 *A House in Jerusalem* - documentary
- Zion, Auto-Emancipation* - documentary
- Yom Yom (Day After Day)* - feature
- 1999 *Kadosh* - feature
- 2000 *Kippur* - feature
- 2001 *Eden* - feature Wadi grand canyon - documentary
- 2002 *Kedma* - feature
- 2003 *Alila* - feature
- 2004 *Promised land* - feature
- 2005 *Free Zone* - feature
- 2006 *News from Home / News from House* - documentary
- 2007 *Disengagement* - feature



JULIETTE BINOCHE

- 2007 *Disengagement* Amos Gitai
Flight of the Red Balloon Hsiao Hsien Hou
Dan in Real Life Peter Hedges
- 2006 *Breaking and Entering* Anthony Minghella
A Few Days in September Santiago Amigorena
- 2005 *Mary* Abel Ferrara
Bee Season Scott McGehee & David Siegel
Hidden/Caché Michael Haneke
- 2004 *In My Country* John Boorman
- 2002 *Jet Lag* Danièle Thompson
- 2000 *Chocolat* Lasse Hallström
Code Unknown Michael Haneke
The Widow of Saint-Pierre Patrice Leconte
- 1999 *The Children of the Century* Diane Kurys
- 1998 *Alice and Martin* André Techine
- 1996 *A Couch in New York* Chantal Akerman
The English Patient Anthony Minghella
- 1995 *The Horseman on the Roof* Jean-Paul Rappeneau
- 1993 *Three Colors: Blue* Krzysztof Kieslowski
- 1992 *Damage* Louis Malle
Wuthering Heights Peter Kosminsky
- 1991 *The Lovers on the Bridge* Léos Carax
- 1988 *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
Philip Kaufman
- 1986 *Bad blood/Mauvais sang* Léos Carax
- 1985 *Hail Mary* Jean Luc Godard
Family Life Jacques Doillon
Rendez vous André Techine

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LIRON LEVO

- 2007 *Disengagement* Amos Gitai
Kavod/Honor Haim Bouzaglo
Strangers Guy Nattiv & Erez Tadmor
Joint Venture Stephane Belaisch & Emmanuel Naccache
- 2006 *Parashat ha-shavua* (TV) Rani Blair
- 2005 *Free Zone* Amos Gitai
Munich Steven Spielberg
Ahava Me'ever Lapina (TV) Yasmin Kini & Offer Waizman
Yareach Shel Zeevim Shay Kanot
- 2003 *Alila* Amos Gitai
Knafayim (TV) Shmuel Imberman
- 2002 *11'09"01 – September 11* (Israel segment) Amos Gitai
Kedma Amos Gitai
- 2001 *Jesus: The Complete Story* Jean-Claude Bragard
- 2000 *Kippur* Amos Gitai
- 1999 *The Omega Code* Robert Marcarelli
Nekama Yehudit Aleksandr Shabatayev
- 1998 *Chalomot Ne'urim* (TV) Matti Harari & Arik Lubetzki



CAST

JULIETTE BINOCHÉ ANA
LIRON LEVO ULI
JEANNE MOREAU FRANÇOISE
BARBARA HENDRICKS BARBARA
DANA IVGY DANA
HIAM ABBASS HIAM
TOMER RUSSO TOMER
ISRAEL KATORZA ISRAEL
YUSSUF ABU WARDA YOUSSEF
URI KLAUZNER URI

CREW

DIRECTED BY AMOS GITAI
SCREENPLAY AMOS GITAI,
MARIE-JOSE SANSELME
PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTIAN BERGER
PRODUCTION DESIGNERS ELI ZION *ISRAEL*,
MANU DE CHAUVIGNY *FRANCE*,
TIM PANNEN *GERMANY*
EDITING ISABELLE INGOLD
MUSIC SIMON STOCKHAUSEN
AFTER THE SONG OF THE EARTH,
BY GUSTAV MAHLER
VOCALS BARBARA HENDRICKS
SOUND MICHEL KHARAT
COSTUMES MOÏRA DOUGUET
ARTISTIC ADVISOR SARI TURGEMAN

1ST ASST. DIRECTOR ROTEM KIPNIS *ISRAEL*,
DENIS GERAULT *FRANCE*

CASTING ISRAEL ILAN MOSKOVITCH

MAKE UP CÉDRIC GÉRARD, ZIV KATANOV

HAIR MORGANE BERNHARD

LINE PRODUCERS GADI LEVY *ISRAEL*,
FABRICE CHEVROLLIER *FRANCE*,
ISABELLE GATTIKER AGAV FILMS,
ELKE SASSERATH, VIOLA FUEGEN *GERMANY*

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LEON EDERY *ISRAEL*, MARC BORDURE,
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CO-PRODUCERS
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CLAUDIA STEFFEN *GERMANY*,
PATRICK SOBELMAN *FRANCE*,
TILDE CORSI *ITALY*

PRODUCED BY AMOS GITAI,
LAURENT TRUCHOT, MICHAEL TAPUACH

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CHANNEL

UNITED KINGS FILMS
MOSHE AND LEON EDERY

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