

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Photos, Films, Architecture, Trumpism... and 2018 Challenges

Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, January 3rd, 2018

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Around the turn of the year, newspapers and TV channels publish ample retrospectives and forecast possible events for the coming year. I don't have a crystal ball to predict the future (nobody has it,) however, we can learn from the past, observe the world "as is," foresee trends and create an agenda for the future.

In that vein, I selected photos we shot, films we saw and produced, architecture we recorded or selected, some thoughts on Trumpism, and a few relevant books I read.

IMAGES

Showing images is way of "making a long story short." See: [Selected Photography 2017](#).



Selected Photography 2017

The selection is personal and eclectic. Some have value as a document of an event rather than for its photography quality. The gallery includes panoramic photos, images of historical value (such as of architects [Eric Lloyd Wright](#) and [Dion Neutra](#) getting together in Malibu during Frank Lloyd Wright's 150th birthday celebration, and civil rights activist [Dolores Huerta](#), who coined the slogan "Yes We Can – Si Se Puede," borrowed by Obama; film directors, producers and actors at Q & As' we frequented; [Richard King's](#) memorial and the spreading of his ashes; and some people we met. As a coda, I also added recent photos sent by our daughter Gabby from the [Maldives Islands](#), southwest of Sri Lanka and India; and a few shots of us.

"Stars" included veteran director [Marcel Ophuls](#), [Alexander Payne](#) (*Downsizing*), [Kathryn Bigelow](#) (*Detroit*), director [Joe Wright](#) and actor [Gary Oldman](#) (*The Darkest Hours*), [Annette Bening](#) (*Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*), some images of nature in Idyllwild, and even a visiting bird.

This year I also published for the first time a selection of photographs shot during our "Frank Lloyd Wright pilgrimage" back in 1971, when we visited over one hundred of Wright's buildings across twenty-five states.



Photographs of Frank Lloyd Wright buildings taken in 1971.

SELECTED FILMS SEEN IN 2017

We had a busy year watching documentaries + Q & As' (presented by the [International Documentary Association – IDA](#)) We also saw many feature films at the [American Cinematheque](#), at the [WRAP](#), at the [LA Jewish Film Festival](#), and at the [Israel Film Festival](#). I share the list of some of them. They are all very good. The ones in bold letters are “must see.”

Alone in Berlin, Neruda, Hidden Figures, Gigi Gorgeous, **Hell on Earth**, Nobody Speaks, Dolores, Trophy, **Icarus**, Intent to Destroy, **City of Ghosts**, New York Times Op-Docs, 11/8/16, God Knows Where I Am, I Call Him Morgan, Step, One of Us, The Work, Oklahoma City, Finding Oscar, Atomic Homefront, The Rape of Recy Taylor, Under One Sun, An Inconvenient Sequel, Detroit, I Am Evidence, Arthur Miller – Writer, **Kedi**, Chasing Coral, **Ben Gurion**, **Epilogue**, **Cries from Syria**, **The Divine Order**, The Final Year, **Machines**, **Foxtrot**, **Call Me by Your Name**, **Downsizing**, Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool, **The Square**, **Human Flow**, **I Am not your Negro**, Intent to Destroy, Strong Island, Phantom Thread, The Post.

Documentarians are real contemporary heroes. Many risk their lives in bringing to us images of genocidal wars, human brutality, racism, inequality, global warming, migration tragedies, political and corporate corruption, and also beauty in nature, indigenous cultures and extraordinary human beings. Most of this is produced following prolonged research, scouting, shooting, editing hard work, meager budgets and scarce distribution. They are a unique mix of artists-journalists working with passion, combining filmmaking excellence with the search for truth. Their work contributes to expanding our consciousness of the world we live in.

FILMS PRODUCED IN 2017

My own production this year was intense. With fifteen published titles, most of which [have been published in Cultural Weekly](#), they exceeded two hours of film. This year I now crossed the mark of sixty short documentaries. The ones published during 2017 are:

Tangoing with Paul & Amigos (12:13)

A non-scripted experiment.

The Wright Way – An overture (17:21')

The Wright Way Hint (2:36)

Both the “Overture” and the “Hint” were preliminary warm-ups towards [The Wright Way](#) feature documentary (work-in-progress.)

Tongva Park and the Angelbird (5:33?)

This open public space is the best architecture that we have documented this year in Los Angeles.

Architecture + Cinema + Hollywood (29:52)

Renzo Piano's Academy Museum under construction provided an opportunity to link the museum's content with the Hollywood context and with architecture.

Idyllwild Idyll (9:12)

"Back to nature, this documentary includes the little known Pearlman Cabin designed by architect John Lautner in 1957.

Netflix Night (2:55') A not-scripted documentation of a visit to Netflix.

Normality "Lo-Normali" (4:56')

It summarizes in less than five minutes the documentaries I shot in Israel during 2016.

Radio Day Unabridged (26:11)

Radio Day (16:43)

Both the full version ("Unabridged," which includes questions on Israel) and the short version are the result of a radio interview I had, hosted by Nancy Pearlman, to which I added visualization.

Architecture in a Nutshell (9:20')

An introduction to principles of architecture.

Human-Made Plastic Ocean (3:55)

A Plastic Ocean premiere in Beverly Hills.

Hanukkah's First Candle (40:32)

The lighting of Hanukkah's fifth candle in a Greater Los Angeles home was not only the place for the gathering of people from many backgrounds and areas of the city, but also for the screening of "Never Again is Now," a new documentary telling a unique story of survival in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation, and sending a message about the danger of raising antisemitism in Europe and elsewhere, including the United States.

Mormon Temple Visit (1:51)

A brief first visit to the secluded Mormon Temple in Los Angeles.

Food for Thought (2:58)

Farm Urbana, as presented in "Food for Thought," proposes practical solutions to help the rapidly growing urban population's access to fresh food close to home.

FILMMAKING PLANS

The Wright Way, my first feature documentary, is on the way. **It is to be a cry-out documentary about how some of Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas and principles can help to inspire and appeal the young generation to create a sustainable future of livable cities and human**

settlements. Not a biography, it looks at Wright with fresh eyes and will suggest alternative scenarios for the future of the human environment with a sense of urgency.

ARCHITECTURE

Although 2017 has produced many new projects, I found most of them dominated by acrobatics, infatuation with 3-D renderings, and little concern on confronting an urgent agenda of sustainable quality mass-production to narrow the gap between population growth, decaying cities, climate change and poverty. Organic architecture production was practically zero. I chose to document one of the exceptions in L.A., Tongva Park in Santa Monica.

Some of the examples that follow have been produced by committed architects and designers: Brooks + Scarpa, Snohetta, Whitaker Studio, Eric Rosen, Patkau Architects, Thomas Heatherwick, and Herzog & de Meuron.

The only organic example shown here is the project by [Snøhetta](#), an international architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and brand design office based in Oslo, Norway and New York City with studios in San Francisco, Innsbruck, Singapore and Stockholm. A major new building has opened in the south of France, framing a huge replica of one of the world's most important examples of prehistoric cave art. Called Lascaux IV, the new visitor complex recreates the appearance and atmosphere of the caves in Montignac where the 20,000-year-old Lascaux paintings are located, but which have been closed to the public for over 50 years.



Affordable Housing: The Six, Los Angeles. Brooks + Scarpa Architects



Floating Cabin, Sweden. Architect: Snøhetta. Photo: johan jansson.



Vacation Home, Joshua Tree. Design: Whitaker Studio.



The Barrington Residence, Brentwood, Los Angeles. Architect: Eric Rosen. Photo: Joe Fletcher.



The Barrington Residence, Brentwood, Los Angeles. Plan. Architect: Eric Rosen.



Location 56 Leonard St, New York, NY. Architect: Herzog & de Meuron.



Lascaux, France.



Caves of Lascaux, France. 20,000 BCE.



Caves of Lascaux, France. 20,000 BCE.



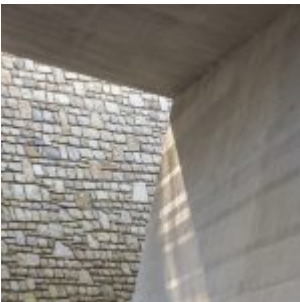
Lascaux IV / Snøhetta + Duncan Lewis Scape Architecture. Photo:: Boegly + Grazia photographers, Dan Courtice.



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La Petite Maison do Weekend. Patkau Architects.Photo: Benjamin



Paperhouse, London, UK. Design: Thomas Heatherwick.



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Paperhouse, London, UK. Design: Thomas Heatherwick.

POLITICS

On Trumpism

World politics had been dominated by the ascent of Trump to power, a sick (*malignant narcissism*) amoral and unscrupulous man. Yet he is just a symptom. It denotes a sick society suffering from branding brainwashing, widespread ignorance of the world's reality and dogmatic beliefs which have been brewed during the past half-century.

Can it be cured? Maybe. It will demand both talking and action, such as:

1. Containment of Trump until 2020 through the rule of law. All other alternatives are worse.
2. Awareness of reality as-is. Documentarians have much to say and show on this.
3. Action-oriented assumption of responsibility, particularly by millennials.
4. A vision of a better world in healthcare, housing, justice, the urban environment, closing the gap of inequality and much more. [The UN goals for sustainable development](#) are quite detailed about 17 areas of challenge.



UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2010 (Image by the United Nations.)

On Trump's Decision to Move the US Embassy to Jerusalem

For the wrong reasons, Trump made his only right decision, so far, to take the bull by the horns. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel since 1948 and the spiritual center of the Jews for millennial. This is the truth, irrelevantly of what other nations may say for political reasons and/or for history ignorance. The moving of the US embassy to Jerusalem (most likely to be followed by other countries,) which does not preclude the city becoming one day the capital of two states (see the Vatican and Rome) will brake the decades-long paralysis and aggravation of the conflict.

I disagree with the opinion of many thinkers with whom I agree on most other issues that the decision was “tactically wrong.” Although Trump doesn't have a clue of why it was tactically and strategically right, the crisis that the embassy decision to move provokes is better to precipitate sooner rather than later. The violence that we see these days would have come anyhow even if we had reached an agreement on other territorial issues.



2700-year old coin found in Jerusalem

The so-called Geneva Accord (see also Maps) initiative remains the best one available to date.

BOOKS

From the books I read during 2017, the ones that I found the most relevant are:

Homo Deus , by Yuval Noah Harari

Internal Ecology, by Darío Salas Sommer

No Is Not Enough, by Naomi Klein

TEACHING

Scheduled to give a six-week class on “How to Look at Architecture” at the Skirball Cultural Center and at OLLI/CSULB the classes will use architecture documentaries made to convey a better understanding of the importance of good design in our life.



Class: “How to Look at Architecture.” Skirball, Jan. 16 to Feb. 20, 2018.

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