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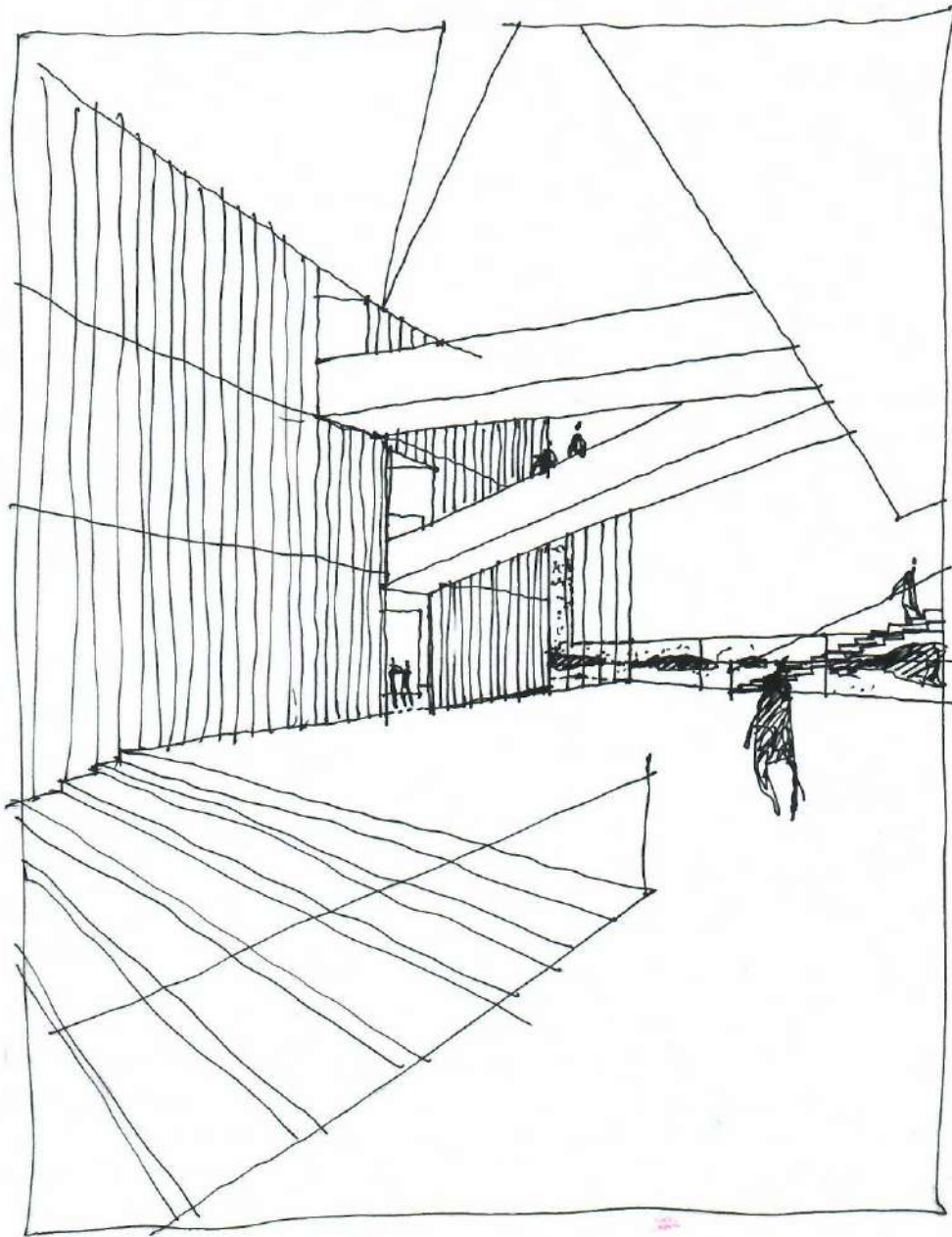
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Jacobs-Yaniv Architects and Golany Architects
Interviews from Tel Aviv



Oshri Yaniv
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Galit Golany
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“Tel Aviv has the vitality of a big metropolis, with the friendliness of a small town. It is cosmopolitan, cultural and entices a creative mood.”

What are the unique features of Tel Aviv as a city?

Oshri Yaniv: Tel Aviv is one of the most vibrant cities in the world and definitely one of the Mediterranean’s capitals of Cool. While Israel’s capital, Jerusalem, ancient, serious, tense and conservative is looking mainly back to its past, Tel Aviv is the young liberal sister looking forward to its future. Established only in the beginning of the 20th century on the sand dunes outside old Jaffa, it is still developing, constantly changing and is a true playground for the Israeli entrepreneurial nature. It has wonderful Mediterranean beaches, 24/7 night-life, brilliant food, a vibrant art scene, Hi-Tech and business centres, UNESCO recognized architecture, and an international outlook. Tel Aviv is where young Israeli’s who want to “make it” go. It is definitely an island of sanity and liberalism in the Middle East.

Galit Golany: We live and work in the area that is called “The White City”. It consists of buildings that were built in the International Style and is poetically named after their white plaster. Yet, in reality, it is dominated by green, with trees and gardens that line most of the streets. Its charm is not derived from a monumental architecture, but from being leafy and casual. It has the structure of a Garden City, with a system of shaded streets and boulevards that are connected to the beach that is just minutes away. These make walking, strolling

and biking the best way to move around even in sunny and hot days. Tel Aviv has the vitality of a big metropolis, with the friendliness of a small town. It is cosmopolitan, cultural and entices a creative mood. Its most important asset is the people that inhabit, work and visit it.

What does it mean for you to work as an architect in Tel Aviv?

Oshri Yaniv: Working in Tel Aviv as an architect is both interesting and challenging. Israel is a young nation, most of its population is first, second or third generation of immigrants. There is almost no local tradition when it comes to building and planning. We have complicated and inefficient planning authorities and no strong association. Things improve but there is still a long way to go. Like in many other fields, no tradition of planning or building evolved yet. This is something that takes time, which can be frustrating. But it also means that we have the privilege and responsibility to develop a tradition and really shape the place we live in. One can draw inspiration from historic buildings in old Jerusalem and Jaffa, traditional Arab villages can teach us about integrating a building into the landscape, there are some great buildings by British mandate architects, Tel Aviv is home to one of the best-preserved collections of Bauhaus and International Style architecture, there are fine brutalist buildings all over and plenty of talented architects and designers. Developing our own



Photo: Oshri Yaniv

Romano House is a historic building in south Tel Aviv. On the second floor there is a hip restaurant-bar-lounge, at the ground floor a gallery hosts exhibitions and special events.

language is hard and fascinating. The Israeli client typically wants things made cheap and fast, but can also be very open-minded.

Galit Golany: The “White City” at the heart of Tel Aviv was built mainly during the 1930s and 40s by architects that came from Europe. The buildings were meticulously designed, but as Israel was a young nation that struggled for its survival, they were executed in very modest means. Hence nowadays those buildings prone to crumbling. Some have already been renovated, while others are still waiting for their past grandeur to be revealed. The buildings have aged along with the aging inhabitants. Until about 20 years ago, when the young generation began to replace the older generation of pioneers. This has helped to revive the city and raise the demand for repairs, additions and replacement of the older buildings. In a modern new city that writes its own history, we perceive our challenge as architects in designing buildings that will present good partners to the adjacent buildings and integrate into the surrounding environment. We want our design to become part of the built context.

What are your three favourite places in Tel Aviv and why?

Oshri Yaniv: Engel House: Built in 1933 by Zeev Rechter who became an enthusiastic disciple of Le Corbusier while studying in Paris.

It was planned according to pure modernist principles with ingenious solutions adapting it to the local context: It is the first Israeli structure built on stilts to create an illusion of open space in dense cities. The architect created a semi-public space that connects the building to the street and the city, allowing breeze to pass through and naturally cool the building. The building recently went through a fantastic restoration. It is a mile stone in Israeli architecture.

Dizengoff Square: I recently heard Jaime Lerner, an inspiring urban planner and Curitiba’s legendary mayor, using the term ‘urban acupuncture’: using small-scale interventions to transform the larger urban context and relieve stress in the built environment. This is what Tel Aviv municipality did with Dizengoff Square. For decades the square was a popular location and one of the landmarks of Tel Aviv’s “White City.” In 1978, in an effort to ease congestion in the area, a concrete split-level configuration was introduced, with traffic flowing beneath it. This modification stopped pedestrian flow in the area and turned the square neglected. In 2016 Tel Aviv municipality decided to bring the square back to its original design; an evening stroll across the square is an absolute pleasure.

Romano house: A four stories International Style building built around an internal courtyard. Built in 1949, it is in many ways Tel Aviv’s first mall, renowned for the large number of fashion stores, some with their original window fronts. Many years after its glory days, the building is now home to the wonderful Romano restaurant,

the Teder Bar and the Teder.fm radio station, hosting amazing summer events in the courtyard. Located in walking distance from hip Florentin neighbourhood, it has an authentic south Tel Aviv vibe.

Galit Golany: I grew up in the country and was not born and raised as a city dweller. Still, I find Tel Aviv to be very pleasant to live in. It presents a balance between the intensity of city life, of coffee shops, restaurants and commercial streets, to boulevards, leafy streets and the beach. The boulevards, which are an important part of the urban structure, would be my first choice. Their street section allocates tree shaded strip in the middle of the street, which is dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists. They do not provide only passage, but they are also places for small coffee shops, events and street performances. My second choice would be the leafy small streets, with their intimate proportions. The third would be the beach that is just a short walking distance away, and stays part of city life.

What challenges will Tel Aviv have to face in the future?

Oshri Yaniv: The biggest challenge Tel Aviv faces is environmental. With average 3.1 children per family, Israel is doubling its population every 25 years. There is urgency to build a lot and fast – a huge challenge for a country with very little land to spare and almost no planning tradition. While Israeli's are proud to be called "Startup Nation", when it comes to urban planning and public transport infrastructure,

we are far behind. Tel Aviv like many other Israeli cities had a good start, but unfortunately in the last 40 years or so, we've been sprawling our cities instead of developing a healthy urban environment and good public transport. This causes not only an environmental problem but also economic and social problems. First signs of change are already visible. We must put people first and not cars. If we want to keep a high standard of living and protect the little nature we have, we must built denser cities and demonstrate that creating high-quality urban environment is possible. We as architects shouldn't judge buildings only by their appearance but mainly by the way they function. We need to design buildings appropriate for our climate, we must pollute less and we must use fewer resources and recycle much more. This can make this shift; it is all matter of education.

Galit Golany: Tel Aviv is a cultural and business centre. Living in the city is sought after and there is a very high demand. The challenge for the city would be to keep it still affordable to live in, so that it maintains the population diversity that keeps its vitality. One way this challenge is addressed is by increasing the density, by addition of stories to the height of the buildings, and the addition of several residential towers. This has to be done carefully, not to lose the pleasant street section proportions, which is the core asset of these streets. Another aspect of this challenge is making sure that tourism rentals would not take over local inhabitants that ensure the city remains a real place of living, and gives it its soul. Urbanity is a living phenomenon – it has to be tended and nurtured to keep it thriving.



Gan HaAtsmaut: One of the gardens that were designed by Avraham Karavan, who was influential in forming 'indigenous' local landscape design in Tel Aviv.

Photo: Galit Golany