



Press Kit

Nr. 7 - A Film by Michael Schindegger

mischief

Contents

Synopsis	3
Description	4
An interview with Michael Schindegger by Maya McKechney	5
Statement from the Director	8
Historical Background	9
Michael Schindegger	12
Team & Credits	13

Synopsis



The best subject matter is often only just a few steps away. Director Michael Schindegger has been living with his father and brothers in an apartment building in the second district of Vienna, Leopoldstadt, at house "No. 7", for thirty years. However, he hardly knows any of his neighbors. He decides to change all that just before marrying his fiancée and moving out. Camera in hand he rings all of their doorbells and introduces himself to the building's multi-lingual, primarily Jewish residents.

Description



A classic Viennese apartment building: Built around the turn of the century, a bit run down, charmingly aged wood-framed windows against a gray plaster background. At least the outside façade gleams fresh and white.

Director Michael Schindegger spent the first thirty years of his life here, in his parents' apartment on the first floor. Now he and his Romanian fiancée Dana are getting married and moving out. "Before that," he explains off-camera, "I want to take a look around the building one last time." After all, even after all these years he hardly knows the neighbors. Camera in hand, he goes ringing on their doorbells.

What he finds is a piece of Viennese cultural history long believed to have disappeared. A multilingual, predominantly Jewish community in the building living according to its own rhythms invites the director inside to take part in their lives. The building owners' family lives on several floors: parents, daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren. Together they run a kosher butcher shop on the ground floor, a meeting point for the Jewish community. Here sandwiches are wrapped, while next to the counter young men in baseball caps discuss the importance of resting on the Sabbath. On the rooftop carpenters

hammer together a pavilion for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Michael Schindegger's documentary draws its vitality from the personal encounters between the director/cameraman and his neighbors. As a chronicler of his last few weeks "at home", he himself is present again and again in both sound and image, watching, asking questions and sometimes getting in the way. Precisely because the filmmaker sets out without any clear hypothesis means that he is open to every detail and therefore unearths that much more

Anyone who knows Vienna knows that the building's residents stand for a difficult new beginning: In the period between the two world wars half of the inhabitants of Vienna's second district, officially called "Leopoldstadt" and referred to as "Mazzesinsel", or "Matzo Island", in the vernacular, had Jewish roots. Today, the district's Jewish population totals just 3,000, a significant decrease from the 60,000 who lived here during the inter-war period. Still, more and more are constantly being added.

"No. 7" is a snapshot from 2011. A portrait of a building's residents and their enviable and warm atmosphere. But of course the film, with its unspoken historical and political insight, is more than that.

An interview with Michael Schindegger by Maya McKechney



No. 7 portrays the Viennese apartment building you grew up in. The documentary action in the film ends with your wedding, and the preparations for your moving out of your father's apartment have already begun. "No. 7" is both a documentary about a portion of your life, but also about the building and its residents. How did you come up with the idea for your project?

The jumping off point was a thought that had occupied my mind for some time: How is it that I have lived here all my life and don't know my neighbors? At the time I talked to friends and acquaintances about this feeling, and most of them had similar experiences in Vienna. Dana, my girlfriend at the time and now my wife, is from Romania. There not knowing anything about your neighbors would be inconceivable.

So I began my search. I was curious and wanted to document my investigations.

But first I had to overcome my own feeling of embarrassment. It was kind of a paradoxical situation, after thirty years of showing no interest, just before moving out, ringing peoples' doorbells and telling them: I want to get to know you!

However, in the film one gets the impression that without exception your neighbors received you in a friendly and open way.

Well, the faces were familiar to me from the building. As a result, me knocking on their doors was not like a complete stranger introducing himself. They knew: That's the guy from the first floor. That was my trump card.

Did some of them still refuse to appear on camera?

Yes, there were neighbors who didn't want to be a part of the film. For example, there was one couple who wrote a short, friendly note that they didn't want to be included.

The building belongs to a Jewish family and most of the people who live there are also Jewish. On the

ground floor is a kosher food shop that you also included in the film. Some of the tenants work there...

It's a kosher butcher shop. The family that owns the house has been running the shop for some ten years. At the same time it's a meeting point for the community. The customers come from a very diverse Jewish background.

Unfortunately the building owner himself declined to be in the film. But both of his daughters and sons-in-law, who all live in the building with their families, all appear in the documentary. Besides, in Orthodox Jewish families it is customary for the daughters to remain in close proximity to their families, while the sons do not.

Your own family is just the opposite. The film shows your father with his two sons in the kitchen cooking and talking with them.

Actually there's five of us brothers. The oldest three had already moved out, and now it was my turn.

Religion is a major theme of "No. 7". But in your family it's never really brought up. Did you yourself have a religious upbringing?

We kids were raised to be relatively Catholic. But my father has become more critical of the Church and more liberal, the older he gets. He is a person of faith who also goes to church, but he's very open and interested in other faiths.

That surprises me. I had assumed that your family was part of the Jewish community in the building as well.

Really? I think that even our neighbors weren't

really sure what to think about us. There was one resident who asked weeks after we had carried out preliminary discussions about the documentary whether I was Jewish. I think he assumed that I was and then got confused because there was a lot I didn't know.

In "No. 7" there are a number of situations where you're not sure what face belongs with what family, who lives on what floor and who is related to whom. I think that's a good thing; the audience should discover something in the film for themselves.

And if somebody thinks that I or my family is Jewish, then that's quite interesting. Although it's not true.

There is one indication: One time a neighbor gently, but firmly indicates to you that you should turn off the camera once the Sabbath has begun in their apartment.

After having lived in the building for such a long time I know some things, but there's a lot I don't know. For example, the film shows the tabernacle being built on the rooftop of the building for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Before, the celebration took place in our courtyard. There were also a number of discussions where the neighbors explain things to me, each in his or her own way. The Jewish community is multi-faceted. It's really like a melting pot of cultures.

The building is located on Taborstraße in Vienna's second district, also known as "Leopoldstadt". Those who live in Vienna know that the area was also called "Matzo Island" in the past. Some 60,000 Jews lived there before 1938, today there's just 3,000. If you are familiar with this aspect of history, it is very natural



to see the community on your building as something special. Had you thought about including that historical context in the scope of the film?

I read books and did research on what the population of the area was like. I looked at telephone books, where the names suddenly changed after 1938.

The Jewish history of the second district definitely did interest me. But more so in order to understand the context for my attempt to sketch the residents of the building. I thought that if the other residents brought the subject up themselves, then it'll be in the film. If not, then no.

We've discussed the content of the film, but not yet its form. Did you plan from the very beginning to take on the three-fold role of director, cameraman and protagonist?

I definitely wanted to do my own filming. After all, I'm studying film photography at the Vienna Film Academy and wanted to keep the crew as small as possible on this project so as to create a more intimate atmosphere.

I didn't decide until relatively late to highlight my own personal story as strongly and to put myself in front of the camera.

Did you have to do a lot of persuading to get your own family to appear in front of the camera?

No, it was only difficult to decide when to record the scenes on camera. After all, I could have done the filming at any time. You always want to capture an interesting discussion on camera where the people are talking about topics relevant to the film. The question arises of whether to actively bring up the topic for the film, or because it's important.

In your own family you opted for clearly staged moments, for example when you positioned the camera to look down on your bed when you are talking about the wedding with your girlfriend.

At the time we used an old bunk bed construction in my room to hang the camera on a tripod. On one hand the situation is staged, but on the other it is also entirely typical and real, because it took place exactly like that on many occasions. Almost every couple lies in bed after a long day and talks about things.

Your wedding plans appear throughout the film as a common thread marking the passage of time. Towards the end of the film your father-in-law arrives and wants to invite hundreds of acquaintances to the wedding because that's the way it's done in Romania. How did the wedding go in the end?

Great, it was really fantastic. But it was also complete insanity.

Statement from the Director



In the beginning it was my wish to get to know the people in my apartment building better and at the same time capture the process on film in a documentary. I wanted to tell a story in a cinematic way that anyone would recognize as his or her own, namely the circumstance of living among neighbors whom you more or less know.

When I started out, I myself didn't know anything about the other residents of the building I had lived in since birth. And I asked myself why that was the case. In every conversation I had with my neighbors about my project it became clearer to me that my family and I were also part of the building and therefore had to appear on camera as well. A documentary about neighbors became a documentary about families. About their structural strengths and weaknesses. About those you leave behind and those you establish anew.

It was not my intention to explain why others are the way they are or to portray a moral at the

end of the story. It was important to me to allow the viewer be part of the encounters and get a feel for the atmosphere in the building. I had no idea what there was to uncover. The only thing that was clear was that a number of barriers would arise: on one hand the outer walls of the building, which for me stood for the limits of the cinematic space in the film, and on the other the thresholds to the apartments themselves. Overcoming these threshold barriers meant winning the trust of the neighbors in question. Added to this was my own personal story of letting go, in other words getting ready for my wedding and the difficulty of finding my own footing in that situation.

I have now moved out of building No. 7. The documentary is finished, but my relationships with the other people in the building have only just begun. As always, there are always more questions that remain in the end than were to be answered in the beginning. But perhaps the 90 minutes that precede the ending can help the viewer understand just how they all came about in the first place.



Ill.: Leopoldstadt around 1830, red dot: Building prior to No. 7 at the corner of Große Stadtgasse/ Taborstraße.
Pink: Leopoldstadt, yellow: Jägerzeile

“Matzo Island”

Until 150 years ago Leopoldstadt, the name of Vienna’s second district, an island since the beginning, was completely unpopulated or very sparsely populated with the exception of zum Unteren Werd (“Werd” is the Middle High German term for island, today’s Karmeliterviertel, or Carmelite District, the zone surrounding Taborstraße) and Jägerzeile (today’s Praterstraße). The district was named for Emperor Leopold I, who expelled the Jews from the area in 1669/1670 and, among other things, ordered the Leopoldskirche built on the ruins of a synagogue in Große Pfarrgasse, constructed just a few years previous. It had been just 50 years prior to that that the Jewish population had been permitted to inhabit the Unterer Werd after having been expelled from the city (today the center city district) by Emperor Ferdinand II. Despite recurring efforts at repression, more and more Jewish citizens

settled in the area, which was a favorable location for trade and commerce and in immediate proximity to the city of Vienna. The “Tolerance Patent” of 1782 decreed by Emperor Joseph II, which guaranteed equality among all citizens of the empire, and the 1848 March Revolution, which did away with all labor and residential restrictions, helped make Vienna a more livable city, and not just for Catholics. The number of Jews settling in Leopoldstadt grew rapidly starting in the mid-19th century, thanks certainly to the newly erected North Train Station located near Praterstern, which connected Vienna primarily to the far-flung eastern regions of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It was at that time that Vienna’s second district came to be known colloquially as “Matzo Island”, named for the thin, unleavened bread (matzo) traditionally eaten by Jews during the Passover holiday and sold by many bakeries in Leopoldstadt.



Building No.7 and its Owners

The building located at No. 7 Große Stadtgasse on the corner of Taborstraße 52 was built in 1899/1900 and replaced an old one-storey apartment building from the 17th century. The new building, also housing rental apartments, was constructed by one Franz Rudolph, a merchant from Vienna's seventh district "Wien Neubau", and sold to the Jewish couple Moses and Chaja Perel Blaser. With his father and brother, Moses Blaser was active in the shoe and leather business; together they ran a number of stores, one of which was located at No. 7 where the owners later also set up their private residence. Business was apparently not very successful in the crisis years of the interim war period and Mr. Blaser, who had risen to become a shoe exporter, sold the building to Bernhard and Gertrude Horowitz, also active in the shoe and leather business.

Walter Jurmann

A plaque, affixed to the building's façade next to the main entrance just a few years ago, indicates that an artist of exceptional talent was born at No. 7 in 1903. Walter Jurmann gained great fame in Germany and later in Hollywood, among other things for his songs like the popular 1930s German hit "Veronika der Lenz ist da" and the soundtrack to Mutiny on the Bounty. However, he spent very little time at No. 7, as one year after his birth his family had already moved elsewhere. The Jurmanns changed addresses 13 times in 17 years when the Jewish family finally settled in the 15th district. Walter Jurmann left Austria at an

early age and became world famous as a bar pianist in Germany and later as a composer for the singing group Comedian Harmonists.

The National Socialist Regime and WWII

Then and now No.7 was a building where both Jews and Christians from various social strata lived together side-by-side. Authors, doctors, teachers, locksmiths, tailors, attorneys lived in the building before 1938, which also housed a number of businesses until that time as well. In addition to a tobacconist's shop, the building owners' shoe store, apparently a perfume store and a locksmith's business were all situated on the ground floor. Some 37 people were listed as living in the building at No. 7 in the Viennese address catalogue Lehmann in 1938, the year of the Anschluss. Just three years later, in 1941, two-thirds of them had disappeared and were not to be found under any other address in Vienna. Among the 12 remaining names in the building were four new ones, including a distinguished gentleman with the title "Hofrat" and a new leather dealer. The deportation or immigration of those predominantly Jewish residents who disappeared cannot be definitively ascertained in all of the cases.

Often the Jewish tenants, after being forced out of their apartments within a very short period of time, were housed in "communal apartments" by the Nazis, from which they were subsequently deported over the next few years. Chaja Perel Blaser and Gertrude Horowitz among others fell victim to the Nazi's

Stadtgutgasse, Große	
□	o, p 15
✉	IV, B. U. 27
linke Seite	
← Ungarren →	
1	geh. zu Castellgg. 9
← Castellggasse →	
3	geh. zu Castellgg. 14
5	f. a. Laborstr. 49
Jrailobici Rachel, Textil- waren	
← Laborstraße →	
7	EZ 2088
f. a. Laborstraße 52	
E. Horowitz Gertrude (XIII. Kuhofstr. 78A)	
H. Rantach J.	
Blaser M., Schuhmach.	
Bauer Elisabeth, Tabat- Trafil	
Brandejsky Marie, Bukerei	
Braun J. D., Dr., Med. Rat T.	
Braun R., Private	
Braun Th., Strickwr. T.	
Dobner J., Fa. Gef.	
Eichberg S., Kaufmann	
Freund C., Kfm. T.	
Gang L., Private	
Gans J., Modistin T.	
Gans M., Private	
Goldblum Marie, Altwr.	
Grünwald S., Schlosser	
Karolzi R., Private	
Koller J., Schriftsteller T.	
Lampel J., Dr., Rechts- anwalt T.	
Landesberg R., Kaufm.	
Leitner B., Elektrotechn. T.	
Mandelbaum S., Ober- kontrollor i. B.	
Plaschke J., Pflanze- anstalt T.	
Plaschke P., Schneiderin T.	
Reinmann M., Lebensm.	
Schimke S., Nieder- süßg. T.	
Schmetterling M., Dr., Sptil. Arzt	
Similes A., Reisender T.	
Sperling M., Kfm.	
Stern S., Private T.	
Stekskal C., Schreiner	
Laußig C., Wäschewr. T.	
Tugner J., Buchhdl. T.	
Wagner J., Päch.	
Wittels A., Private	
Wittels S., Kaufmann	
Zahradnik M., Bedien.	

Ill.: Extract from the street register from the Lehman Address Book (1859–1942) from 1938. The extract shows the names of the formerly registered residents of No. 7 and their professions. Any family members or other persons who may have shared the apartments in questions are not listed here.
Legend: E: Owner; H: Building supervisor; T: Telephone owner

regime of terror. Both were taken to the Maly Trosinec camp in Belarus in 1942. The name Horowitz appears as the owner of No. 7 until 1941. The building was seized in the summer of that year and auctioned off in February 1942. The new owner was the publicly-owned shoe manufacturer “Aeterna Schuhfabriks – Aktiengesellschaft”, whose director, NSDAP party member Josef Ziegler, had already “aryanized” the successful shoe retailer DELKA (founder: Doris Elisabeth Klausner) in 1938, which was also seen as having Jewish roots.

During World War II, an Allied bomb struck the building at No.7 in 1945. A number of apartments sustained heavy damage; however, the building itself was in such good condition that after the war the decision was made to renovate it instead of tearing it down. In 1956 No. 7 was finally restored to its former glory, which it still retains to this day.

Post-war Period and the 1980s

Just before the end of the war Karl und Agnes Missler become the owners of the building. Agnes Missler inherited the ownership of the entire property upon the supposed death of Karl. However, the descendants of the Horowitz family initiated restitution proceedings in 1950, which enabled the rightful owners, expropriated during the war, to regain their property. Starting on June 12, 1970, Georg Fritz Horowitz, s name appears as the building’s owner. Mr. Horowitz lived in Los Angeles and contracted a private building manager, who, from the owner’s point of view, concluded a number of unfortunate contacts until the beginning of the 1980s. This was the time when a number of families, including my own, began renting apartments at very favorable conditions. The Ainhorns purchased the building in 1985 and opened a kosher butcher shop on the ground floor in 2000.



Born in Vienna in 1981

Secondary school-leaving certificate (Matura) from the Vienna Graphic Arts School (photography and visual media) in 2000

Alternative military service in Bucharest (home for former street children) in 2001

Course of study at the Vienna Film Academy 2003-2009, camera photography and imaging technology under Prof. Christian Berger

Filmography, directing

Dacia Express (54 min, DV, Viennale, Duisburger Filmwoche, et al., documentary) 2008

Goldener Buchstabe, Duisburger Filmwoche, Bester Dokumentarfilm, film:riss

Filmography, camera

Mama Illegal (Dir: Ed Moschitz, 105 min, HD, documentary) 2011

Töten (Dir: Tobias Dörr, 12 min, HD, short film) 2009

Rimini (Dir: Peter Jaitz, 85 min, HD, First Steps Berlin, Max Ophüls, feature film) 2008

Esperando (Dir: Alex Trejo, 50 min, DV, Diagonale06, documentary) 2005

Trois femmes de moldavie (Dir: Pavel Cuzuioc, 44 min, BetaSP, documentary) 2005

Perspektiven (Dir: Cevdet Kilic, 8 min, DV, Diagonale05, short film) 2004

Team & Credits

Featuring	Jaffa Ainhorn, Jakob Ainhorn, Bruder Ainhorn, Markus Amesbichler, Gabriele Amesbichler, Shenja Dankovic, Shimon Genin, Daniel Hager, Sarah Hager, Dana Mitea, Ilie Mitea, Iolanda Mitea, Wolfgang Pichler, Rachel Pollak, Schmuel Pollak, Mordechai Pollak, Nechama Pollak, Josef Pollak, Jakob Pollak, Martin Schindegger, Wolfgang Schindegger, Daniel Zinner
Screenplay, Director, Camera	Michael Schindegger
Sound Editor	Gailute Miksyte
Editor	Dieter Pichler
Executive Producer	David Bohun
Producer	Ralph Wieser
Production Assistant	Katharina Meißnitzer
Trainee	Kerstin Loidl
Line Producer	Ralph Wieser
Sound Recording	Michael Schindegger
Color Correction	Klaus Pamminger, Mischief Films
Sound Mixing	Alex Koller, Synchro Film
Titles	Jakob Schindegger
Super 8 Camera	Katharina Mückstein, Thomas Marschall
Super 8 Developing	Andec Filmtechnik
Super 8 Scanning	Frank Rudolf, Filmwerkstatt
Subtitles	Valentina Gal, Anna Kyrey-Köck, Guy Lichtenstein, Thomas Soxberger, Dana Mitea, Jill Kreuer
Accountant	Elisabeth Eisenwort
Insurance	Regine Reiger, Aon Jauch & Hübener GmbH HDI Versicherung
With funding from	BMUKK, ORF Film/Fernsehabskommen, Stadt Wien
A production of	Mischief Films
Kontakt	Mischief Films Katharina Meißnitzer Goethegasse 1, A-1010 Wien T +43 1 585 23 24 25 office@mischief-films.com www.mischief-films.com