

Exhibitions

FILM SHOW

'Ways' by Amos Gitai

Sala delle Cariatidi

Palazzo Reale, Milan

1 December 2014–1 February 2015

Reviewed by Alberto Boralevi

On 1 December, the Palazzo Reale, Milan opened its doors to Amos Gitai, revered Israeli filmmaker, for a very unusual exhibition organised together with Moshe Tabibnia, the renowned Milan-based antique textiles dealer. The combination of carpets and movies seems rather odd and is something new in the international scenario of rug exhibitions; however, it worked very well.

Titled 'Ways', the show tells of the travels and paths undertaken by Gitai during the preparation of three movies. The first two, *Free Zone* and *Lullaby to my Father*, have already been completed, while the third one, *Carpet*, is still at the scripting stage. It will be filmed as soon as the director acquires sufficient funds.

I first met Amos Gitai in 2008, when he was working on initial ideas for this film. He was introduced to me by a mutual friend while he was researching the international carpet community, hoping to gain insight into the world of trade, auctions and collecting. We soon became friends and I in turn introduced him to Moshe Tabibnia, who like Gitai is an Israeli citizen living abroad. Together they have now set up this outstanding exhibition.

In his early years Gitai wanted to become an architect like his father, Munio Weinraub, to whom he dedicated *Lullaby*. That movie

¹ tells the story of his father's life as a young Bauhaus architect forced to escape Germany in the 1930s and head for Palestine, where he became one of the founders of the new movement in Israeli architecture. Gitai studied architecture in the US with Christopher Alexander, who fostered his interest in oriental rugs.

The film is a thriller and a spy story, centred on a precious antique carpet – a sumakh that a young and adventurous woman buys at auction in Los Angeles for \$1 million. This impossible rug (I've never seen a

sumakh at that price) contains a mystery, having been restored in the Middle East at the Iranian/Turkish/Azerbaijani border by someone who has hidden something in it. It contains a secret symbol or inscription that could lead to an undercover Iranian nuclear plant.

The plot is a pretext for the author to travel to the main carpet markets and production sites: from Istanbul to Baku, to the Azeri town of Kuba with its surreal Jewish quarter Krasnaya Sloboda, from the Turkish-Iranian border to

Lebanon, Beirut and the Bekaa Valley, to Damascus. The carpet becomes a metaphor for life and cultural interchange, linking peoples of different languages, religions and political views.

The exhibition presents beautiful, often unsettling photographs shot by Gitai himself during various trips to the places described in the film, together with eight outstanding carpets from Tabibnia's and other private collections. Among them are two large examples of the Caucasian



'Dragon' group and three Persian classical carpets (a 'Salting' prayer rug, a 'Polonaise', and a vase carpet). There are also three Turkish masterpieces: the well-known 16th-century large Karapinar carpet previously exhibited in Tabibnia's 'Milestones' (2006); a 16th-century small medallion Ushak; and a shining red-ground 'Transylvanian' prayer rug.

The show is given breathtaking impact by the large space and high ceilings of the Sala delle Cariatidi in the Palazzo Reale, a room never restored after being damaged in World War II.

This unconventional exhibition is the climax to a year that will be remembered as particularly rich with regard to carpet events in Italy. It began in June with the outstanding 'il Giardino del Paradiso', curated by Michael Franses at the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan, which celebrated the conservation of one of the most beautiful surviving classical Persian carpets, the so-called 'Darius of the Universe' (HALI 179, pp.80-85).

Then, in September, for the 10th Sartirana Textile Show I had the opportunity to organise a unique exhibition of peasant rugs from Sardinia and southern Italy, displaying some of the earliest and rarest examples of these neglected and surprisingly beautiful textiles (HALI 180, pp.44-45).

On 3 October the Bruschetti Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art opened a show in Genoa. 'Arte Ottomana 1450-1600' was a major exhibition that included about fifteen early Ottoman carpets and fragments, mostly from private collections, either unpublished or very rarely seen (HALI 181, pp. 118-119).



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1 Installation view of 'Carpet' by Amos Gitai and Moshe Tabibnia at the Palazzo Reale in Milan, showing a Karapinar carpet and a Caucasian Dragon carpet

2 The Foy Caspar Karapinar carpet, Central Anatolia, 16th century. All carpets Moshe Tabibnia, Milan

3 Caucasian blossom and palmette carpet, possible Kuba region, 17th century