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Guy Ben Ner: ‘Soundtrack’

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Art in Review

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

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[Guy Ben Ner’s](#) magnum opus so far is a sitcom-satire called “Stealing Beauty” (2007), which he shot guerrilla style in Ikea stores on different continents with his wife and children. In [this](#) show, Mr. Ben Ner picks up many of the same threads, but the work is injected with a new pathos.

In “Foreign Names” (2012), Mr. Ben Ner visited nearly 100 Aroma coffee shops (an Israeli chain), left a fake name in English that would be called out at the counter when his beverage was ready, then edited all the videotaped segments to create an “ode” lamenting the disappearance of waiters. It’s a slightly confusing work, held together primarily by subtitles, but furthers his practice of hacking the apparatus of global capitalism in subtle, humorous ways.

“Soundtrack” (2013), the centerpiece of the show, takes a scene from Steven Spielberg’s 2005 movie “War of the Worlds” as a “ready-made” soundtrack and pairs it with footage shot in Mr. Ben Ner’s kitchen in Tel Aviv. Smashing plates and combusting appliances replace Mr. Spielberg’s high-budget alien apocalypse. The documentary filmmaker Avi Mograbi emerges from the refrigerator at one point, while video of recent Israeli conflicts appears on a nearby laptop screen.

The “War of the Worlds” ethos runs deeper, though. Like Tom Cruise’s character in that movie, Mr. Ben Ner’s children from his first marriage play a pivotal role in “Soundtrack,” billed alongside the cute baby from his second marriage. The artist’s family situation would be none of our business except that, like sitcom audiences, we’ve literally watched his kids grow up on screen. In that sense, “Soundtrack” might be an art analogue to “War of the Worlds” — as well as a sequel to “Stealing Beauty” — in which familial bliss is ruptured and plays itself out on embattled ground.