



A FILM BY NITSAN TAL

# 8000 PAPERCLIPS

WHEN RESOURCES ARE LIMITED AND THE NEED IS GREAT,  
WHAT IS THE REAL VALUE OF ART?



# 8000 Paperclips

**When Raffael Lomas, Israeli artist and TED Fellow, travels to Uganda to make art with South Sudanese children raised in Israel and deported back to Africa, he forges unexpected connections and wrestles with the question – what is the real value of art?**



Question Everything Productions presents:

# 8000 Paperclips

Produced and Directed by Nitsan Tal

Running Time.....73 min or 58 min (2 versions)  
Genre.....Social Documentary  
Year .....2019  
Language.....Hebrew,English  
Country of Origin .....United States  
Format .....1920x1080, 24fps, 1.78:1,  
Production Web Site .....[www.QuestionEverythingProductions.net](http://www.QuestionEverythingProductions.net)  
Film Website .....[www.8000Paperclips.com](http://www.8000Paperclips.com)  
Facebook..... [www.facebook.com/8000Paperclips](http://www.facebook.com/8000Paperclips)  
IMDB.....[www.imdb.com/8000Paperclips](http://www.imdb.com/8000Paperclips)  
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## Short synopsis

When Raffael Lomas, Israeli artist and TED Fellow, travels to Uganda to make art with South Sudanese children raised in Israel and deported back to Africa, he forges unexpected connections and wrestles with the question - what is the real value of art?

In a complex and layered story, **8000 Paper Clips** explores the value of art, Raffael's own history with depression and struggle, and what humans need - no matter their national status. It follows a group of extraordinary young people as they overcome adversity and build hope for their future - with the support of a team of people whose hearts they have touched.

When resources are limited and the need is great - what is the real value of art? No matter how much Raffael tortures himself with that question, ultimately it is the children who are best able to answer it.

# Full Synopsis

When Israeli artist and TED Fellow, Raffael Lomas turned 50, he knew he wanted his new work to have *meaning*. So when he learned about a group of South Sudanese children who had been raised in Israel and were then deported to South Sudan, he jumped at the chance to go make art with them and “see what would happen.”

What happened was that over the course of several days during the summer vacation of 2014, Raffael and the students built a house made out of 8000 paper clips - 8000 points of connection - symbolizing the meaning of home. But he also learned the children’s complex stories and heard tales of their arduous journeys - escaping the horrors of war, fleeing militias, crossing borders under fire. The connections he forged with them would mark the beginning of a longer quest to make the “project count.”

Feeling that the children’s deportation was still an open wound, Raffael brought the house sculpture back to Israel to afford the children a way to look back and connect to those they had left behind. With an exhibition of the sculpture in Tel Aviv and a skype call, the children are able to traverse space and time and connect to the people who had once been part of their home.

That event led to more connections - and Raffael begins to think about how to forge a connection between the Abayudaya, the Jewish community of Uganda, and the South Sudanese refugees who are Christians but once lived in Israel and speak Hebrew. If the refugee students can teach the Jewish children Hebrew, then perhaps they can earn a living? And what else can an art object do for the children? Raffael travels back to Kampala to take the South Sudanese students to meet the Abayudaya and sends the house off on a journey to meet the art world. As the sculpture travels, maybe it can accrue more meaning, create awareness about the plight of refugees, and make their humanity tangible. Maybe it will even sell and imagine what that money could do for the kids!

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## Director's statement

In November of 2015, I got a text from a friend. Someone is looking for a camera person to document a project in Uganda. Would I be interested?

Two days later I spoke to Raffael, an Israeli artist, on the phone. He told me about his project with a group of deported South Sudanese refugees and sent me a link to a TV program about them. Five minutes into watching the program, I got up to look for tissues.

By the time I learned that there was very little budget for the project and that I wouldn't be paid, I was already hooked on the story and set on going.

Not to say that I didn't have doubts.

Raffael, on the phone, seemed a fascinating person but also a bit nuts. He had so many grand plans for that week, and so many unknowns regarding practical details. Would I be traveling all the way to Africa for a half-baked project that was destined to fail? I did my best to confirm the validity of the trip and at the same time, made sure I could change my flight and leave early if things fell apart.

It was a tough week - between the long work hours in the intense heat, unreliable electricity (Cameras need charging...), and Raffael's personality (we got into a shouting match on the second day over the safety of riding bikes in a torrential rain) - but I fell in love with the refugee children. Their strength, their generosity and their honesty.

I returned home and kept in touch with Raffael. Through long conversations, I discovered a fascinating artist with a remarkable personal history and profound thought process. He updated me on his efforts to bring the work to the art world, while sharing his struggles and doubts about the whole program. As an artist myself, the question of allocating resources to creative projects when there is need for food and medicine, resonated strongly.

When the sculpture was selected to be shown at the New Americans Museum in San Diego, I edited a short film to accompany it. That was also when I realized that this story deserved a much deeper probing and set out to work on "8000 Paperclips."

I sought to address a number of questions in the film:

- What is the role of art in healing from trauma?
- Is it justified to spend money on enrichment projects when resources are limited?
- What are the best ways to empower refugees, to help them regain self-confidence and respect?
- What is there in the human connection that is so elusive and yet extremely powerful?

I do not claim to know the answers to these questions, but I'd like the viewers to explore them with me, and to connect.

We are all fragile paperclips, each in his own little pile. But if we could all connect, across borders and other manmade divides, with other human beings, how much stronger could we all become?



# Credits

## **Producer/Director**

Nitsan Tal

## **Executive producer**

Oded Tal

## **Editor**

Liki Tapuach

## **Cinematography**

Nitsan Tal

Barak Brinker

## **Additional Cinematography**

Irit Sharvit

Joshua Sherman

Jim Kappel

Lisa Kaufman

Dan Tapuach

Star Lillte Musa

## **Stills**

Yotam Gidron

Rami Gudovitch

Joshua Sherman

Camille Wilson  
Taidor Rut  
Activestills.org

**Music Consultant**

Dror Nahum

**Sound mix and design**

Michael Emet

**Graphic design**

Farid Chauki

**Story Editor**

Karen Everett/New Doc

**Story Consultant**

Lisa Kaufman

**Distribution consultant**

Chris Riley

**Colorist**

Marika Litz

**Transcription**

Eden Hillel

**Arabic translator**

lilas Alsyoufi

**Archival footage courtesy of Raffael Lomas**

**With**

Raffael Lomas  
Charlene Seidle  
Victoria James  
Ayween Gabriel  
Ramkel Gajak  
Tedo Musa  
Veronica Musa  
Atoch Amos  
Koor Rouy  
Deng Ring  
Nyock Ring



Deng Kio Machar  
Ajok Akech  
Christina Philip Batista  
Yoash Mayende  
Mugoya Shadrack Levi  
Chuck Crawford  
Pastor Martin  
Ronaldo Luca  
Lea Miller-Forshtat  
Rami Gudovitch  
Alex Gumisiriza  
Abdulla Taysan  
Olga Sureda

