

Zippi Brand Frank / Director

Google Baby 2009



“...Brilliantly made, “Google Baby” raises scary questions of our time...”

Wieland Speck, Berlinale

”...Disturbing, confusing and thought provoking movie. Just as a documentary film should be.”

Yediot Ahronot

“...A compelling documentary. An amazingly neutral hand as Ms. Brand Frank deftly avoids the clichés that typically materialize in any journalistic look at atypical reproduction”

New York Times

“Brand Frank has a knack for gaining access to moments of powerful intimacy and anxiety. She elicits candid interviews and composes images that are worth a thousand words. The film swings from absurdity to profundity, and raises myriad questions...”

Thom Powers, Toronto Intl. Film Festival

“...The film takes you to a place that, if you weren’t in this particular world you would never know it existed...”

Durham magazine

Synopsis

Google Baby is a journey across three continents telling the story of the up and coming baby production industry in the age of globalization.

Doron, an Israeli entrepreneur with a high tech background proposes a new service - Pregnancy producing. The pregnancy producer (as he introduces himself) provides customers with a cost effective solution using outsourcing of the surrogacy element to India as a way to lower prices. The preferred genetic material is selected by the clients from their computer: sperm and eggs are purchased on-line and multiple embryos are produced, frozen, packed and shipped by air to India - where they are implanted into the wombs of local surrogates. The customers arrive only at the end of the nine month pregnancy period to pick up their babies.

Today, technology has turned ‘making a baby’ into an act independent of sex. And globalization is making it affordable. All one needs is a credit card. Instructions can be found on YouTube.

Director's Statement

I have a partiality for bulletin boards. During my fellowship at Harvard University, I noticed many posts on the campus bulletin boards offering \$50,000-\$70,000 for young, good looking, and highly educated women. I was intrigued by how technical baby making had become, and how pregnancy could be disassembled into its elements only to be put together again through an online mix-and-match.

The research and filming took nearly three years. As the work advanced I grew to realize that people are totally unaware of the fact that babies had become a commodity and it was becoming clear that globalization had a profound impact on the growing business of baby production. Local cost and legal obstacles are being addressed by an international global operation. We filmed in the USA, Israel and India, where we made three work trips over the course of the documentary. When we started filming in Dr. Patel's clinic in Anand, India, she had 70 surrogate mothers in process. During our last filming session she had over 250 surrogates and other doctors in Mumbai started offering the same service. The field is obviously growing rapidly.

I can understand those who see the outsourcing of surrogacy to India, for a fraction of the price of western surrogates, as exploitation. However, after having spent considerable time in India, I am more inclined to accept Dr. Patel's point of view and her feminist agenda as she perceives it. Dr. Patel believes that for these rural women in India, surrogacy is almost the only way to make a life changing move. They are transforming their lives and the lives of their families and children by making education and/or housing a viable option.

Yet this growing new industry also provokes a growing list of ethical questions. One example, that did not make it into the movie, was that of Manjhi, a Japanese baby girl born to a Japanese couple through a surrogate in India. Between the time she was conceived and her birth in India, the ordering parents divorced. Neither the would-be mother nor the father wanted the baby and they declined to come pick her up from the surrogate house in Anand. The Indian surrogate who gave birth to Manjhi was being pressured by local authorities in India to take her as her own. The Indian surrogate did not want to take Manjhi as her daughter and the Clinic supported her in a legal dispute against the state. Eventually Manjhi's paternal grandmother decided to take care of her and Manjhi made her way to Tokyo three months after her birth.

I endeavored to keep any personal judgment on my part out of the movie. People tend to have strong opinions on these issues, and what is perceived as salvation to some, is viewed as diabolic by others. The situation will become even more complicated, as I believe that in the future, surrogacy will not only be used as a last resort but rather as an alternative for women who do not wish to have stretch marks or might not want to be pregnant because of their careers.

I believe the business aspects of the reproduction industry are intriguing as well as frightening. With an absence of moral rules or ethics, the global economy is exploited to its full measure. Thus, with no existing legal barriers to overcome and lots of money to be made, the human reproduction industry is steaming ahead. A cold and distant business reality guided only by the principles of the free market dealing with the most sensitive of issues. I tried through Google Baby to provide a glimpse of what I believe is likely to become a major concern for humanity in the future.

Protagonistst

Dr. Nayna Patel one of the leading specialists in IVF, built a successful business offering Indian wombs for western customers. Patel transformed a small city named Anand in the northern part of India to the world's surrogacy capital.

In her clinic she maintains high western standards and supervises hundreds of local women who carry embryos of global clients. Surrogacy is considered in India a social taboo, and the woman stay at the clinic for the full term of their pregnancy as they usually do it without the knowledge of their families.

Dr. Patel believes that her clinic not only offers salvation to her reproductive-challenged customers but also entitles hundreds of rural Indian women the opportunity to transform their economic situation.

Doron Mamet is an Israeli entrepreneur who left a prestigious high-tech position to become what he calls a "baby producer". Doron found a business opportunity in a thriving market that aspires for western-like genetics at lower "Eastern" costs and founded Tammuz. His agency provides baby producing services connecting clients, donors, surrogates and clinics world wide

Dr. Gad Lavy is the U.S. operator of Doron's "East-West" surrogacy initiative. He is in charge of creating embryos from sperm and eggs he receives at his independent New England Fertility Center, currently one of the most active and successful fertility clinics in the U.S. The selected embryos are shipped by air to India to be implanted in the local surrogates wombs.

Lyne Macklin-Fife is the program administrator for Egg Donation Inc., the first online human egg brokerage website, operating from California.

Their online database contains more than one thousand egg donors from across the United States whose complete profiles (including photographs) are available over the public internet to potential egg recipients and physicians.

Katherine Gaylean is a much - sought after egg donor and a leading provider on Egg Donation Inc. Kathrin's eggs have been harvested 3 times before and each time the customer got over twenty healthy eggs. She lives in southern Tennessee with her husband and two daughters. She got into the business of donating her eggs for money and helping people fulfill their dreams as a means of financing her own dream house.

Credits

Directed & Produced by **Zippi Brand Frank** | Cinematography by **Uri Ackerman** | Edited by **Tal Rabiner** | Music by **Karni Postel** | Sound Design by **Itzik Cohen, Gadi Raz** | Additional Directing **Shai Gal** | Co-Producer **Zvi Frank** | Cameramen **Ronen Mayu, Ronen Schecner** | Soundmen **Idan Shemesh, Ravid Dvir** | On Line Editor **Yoav Raz** | Post Production **Edit Studios** | Sound Editing **Jungle Sound** | For yes Supervising Producer **Ronny Perry** | Channel Manager **Guy Lavie** | Executive producer **Yona Wiesenthal** | Produced with the support of **yes docu D.B.S satellite** and **Rabinovitch fund, Cinema project** | Sales Worldwide **Films transit International**