

My Father, The Genius

SYNOPSIS

When long-estranged father, dreamer and visionary architect, Glen Small bequeaths his daughter the task of writing his biography, she answers instead with an irreverent film about his precarious career and rocky private life - while he is still alive.

Her father has always called himself a genius; Lucia Small is torn. On the one hand she fancies the idea that her dad might be amongst the undiscovered greats, but she also wonders if maybe he isn't suffering from a giant ego.

My Father, The Genius explores the precarious framework on which a career and family are built. How does a man dedicate his entire life to "saving the world through architecture," yet miss some basics at home? How does one balance creative obsession with familial obligations? And how does a filmmaker daughter balance her father's wishes with her own artistic vision?

Interviews with the brash, sometimes outrageous Glen Howard Small are juxtaposed with comments from his peers and former students, his clients, daughters, ex-wives and girlfriends. Archival footage, animation, and startling models and drawings of Small's work combine to form a vivid, compelling portrait of an unfulfilled and uncompromising talent, and a daughter seeking to come to terms with the man.

At 31, Glen Small was a rising star. At 61, he barely escapes financial ruin. The current drama is revealed: what happens toward the end of a dreamer's life when his dreams are still unfulfilled? Where and when will his statement of architectural genius finally be made - now or never? And how does a daughters' journey offer her not only new appreciation and compassion for her father's life's work, but a much deeper understanding of her own plight?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 1992, when my father called to tell me: "Lucia, I've written you into my will," I was not sure how to respond. For as long as I can remember, my father Glen Howard Small, futuristic architect, has never planned for his future. He has always been broke or on the verge of it. He says it is because he is "true to his vision - a vision the world isn't ready for." He continued: "I'm leaving you all my drawings and models - the Biomorph Biosphere, Turf Town, the Green Machine. If I can't do it before I die, I want you to write a book about my work."

Quickly, I tried to assess whether this was an honor or a curse. I questioned whether or not I could live up to the challenge. Did I even want to? I offered to

make a film instead - while he was still alive. Only after the conversation ended did I realize the implications of what I had suggested. I wondered how I could make a movie about a maverick visionary architect and, more importantly, why I would choose to venture down the treacherous path of examining my father's life.

I immediately realized that the film I wanted to make differed from that which my father had envisioned. He couldn't really expect me to be objective, could he? Dad wanted a retrospective of his professional achievements, while I wanted to focus on all aspects of his life, including those that affected my family, his second family, and the girlfriends that followed. He ultimately agreed, as long as I "got the work down."

During the making of the film, I struggled to remain true to my own vision, battling the notion of what my father deemed "important" for the film and what I saw as critical. Many years later, older and a tad wiser, I see that I've been able to stand my ground, albeit not always easily; Dad finally seems to like the film. But that didn't prevent him from rewriting his will, bequeathing the biographer's job to all of his children.

Then, in late 2002, nearing the end of our festival whirlwind, I couldn't help but promise my father that if he ended up building any significant buildings, I would film him again. In 2003, just as he was breaking ground on a couple government buildings in Managua, Nicaragua, I got an e-mail from my father... "*Genius II must be made.*"...I couldn't help myself. Soon thereafter, I flew down with a Director of Photography, Allie Humunek, (<http://www.ahp-productions.com>) to spend several days filming his life and work. Yes, it's true. Amongst the various new projects I am currently developing, *Genius II* is now in the works.