



Still from 'If Only It Was as Easy to Banish Hunger by Rubbing the Belly as It Is to Masturbate', 2009

## Guy Ben-Ner: Name Dropping

'Drop the Monkey' is an ingenious eight-minute film made over the course of a year, in which the only edits occur as Guy Ben-Ner presses record or stop – each jump magically flitting the artist/protagonist between



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Tel Aviv and Berlin. We follow him making weekly flights between the two cities for a few seconds of footage at a time, his haircut (shaved off line by line) and T-shirt (modified first by marker pen and then by spilled coffee) proving there's no digital trickery or backtracking along the way.

The Israeli artist swaps rhyming couplets with his jetsetting alter ego about their interminable commute and the peculiar circumstances of this specially commissioned work that doubles, he admits, as an excuse to carry on a long-distance relationship with a new girlfriend. As his sonnets sadden it's clear Ben-Ner's object of

affection sees his task differently and breaks up with him, perceiving that his interest in her is a passing ruse to make a novel piece of work.

Whatever his motives – structural, practical or contingent – it's clearly a labour of love, whereas the other piece here, 'If Only It Was as Easy to Banish Hunger by Rubbing the Belly as It Is to Masturbate' is, as it sounds, an overcomplicated slice of narrated subterfuge on the related topics of uprootedness and infidelity (Ben-Ner split from his wife and kids who appeared in earlier films). This resembles an exceptionally bad episode of 'Lost', complete with a lo-fi plane crash and stilted, florid dialogue that eats its own tail and borrows heavily from Don Quixote and Moby Dick with some Lewis Carroll and Jules Verne references to adventure thrown in (hence the show's title, 'Name Dropping'). While an enviable talent in transgressing filmic norms, Ben-Ner's shaggy dog stories tend to tail off at their end. Perhaps more editing and a few more films will solve all that. **Ossian Ward**