

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

WWII-era historical fiction novel celebrates female friendships and the resilience of the human spirit

With a cover designed by the author's brother, Daniel Libeskind, and a compelling story inspired by their mother, the novel is a moving tribute to the bonds that connect us

New York, NY—The master planner of rebuilding Ground Zero, world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind, has created a new piece of art for the cover of **“The Corset Maker,”** the forthcoming historical fiction novel by his sister, author Annette Libeskind Berkovits. The novel—loosely inspired by their mother’s real life story—is a powerful addition to the genre of 20th century historical fiction, and is slated for release on International Women's Day, March 8, 2022 from Amsterdam Publishers.

In Warsaw, Poland, the young Rifka Berg, raised in an ultra Orthodox home, asks her father why girls don’t have bar mitzvahs. Eventually, his answer provokes Rifka to risk everything. In a bold move, unheard of at the time, Rifka and her close friend, Bronka, open their own business—a corset shop on the most fashionable street in Warsaw. In an unforgettable journey, Rifka soon becomes embroiled in some of the most violent events of the century: the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine, the Spanish Civil War and the Nazi occupation of Southern France. As her involvement deepens, she sees firsthand how autocratic rule deprives people of even the simplest freedoms.

Time and again, Rifka is faced with heart-wrenching choices. She must decide if there is ever a time to abandon her principles for a higher purpose. Rifka's personal struggles and dilemmas go to the heart of the major ethical issues and challenges of our time.





“The Corset Maker”

Annette Libeskind Berkovits | March 8, 2022 | Amsterdam Publishers | Historical Fiction

Hardcover | 9789493231924 | \$26.99

Paperback | 9789493231917 | \$19.99

Ebook | 9789493231931 | \$6.99

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Annette Libeskind Berkovits is the author of two acclaimed memoirs: “In the Unlikeliest of Places: How Nachman Libeskind Survived the Nazis, Gulags and Soviet Communism” a story of her father’s survival, and “Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator.” She has also penned a poetry book, “Erythra Thalassa: Brain Disrupted.” “**The Corset Maker**” is her first novel. To learn more about Annette’s life and work, visit her website: annetteberkovits.com



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ABOUT THE DESIGNER:

Daniel Libeskind is an internationally renowned architect, known for the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, and the Dublin Performing Arts Center in Ireland, among many others. His Master Plan for rebuilding the World Trade Center site in New York City was selected in 2003 and has served as the blueprint for the entire site, including the Freedom Tower, the Memorial, the Museum, and the PATH Terminal.





In an interview, Annette Libeskind Berkovits can discuss:

- Which elements of “**The Corset Maker**” were inspired by her mother’s life
- How the novel explores female friendships, and asks important questions about what makes a woman complete
- How pacifism and violence are portrayed in the novel
- Why and how she braided together three major conflicts of the 20th century
- What it was like working with her brother, Daniel Libeskind, on the cover design

An Interview with Annette Libeskind Berkovits

1. **Why did you choose a corset maker as a protagonist of a historical novel that deals with some of the bloodiest events of the twentieth century?**

It seemed to me that precisely because a woman who spends time designing undergarments would probably be an excellent example of a woman *furthest* away from violence. But that’s not how real life happens. Life takes people into directions they’d have never imagined. The corset maker in my novel was inspired by my mother and her three friends who themselves experienced the brutality of the times from the 1930s to the end of WWII and beyond. These were women who found incredible courage under impossible circumstances. I hope that my protagonist can inspire young women of today who often see violence in the media and have no idea how they would react if faced with a real life circumstance of theirs, or their loved ones lives in danger.

2. **Most historical novels of that period deal with one huge event—say WWII alone is enough of a subject for many books—yet you’ve woven together not one, not two, but three or more violent events: pre-WWII antisemitic attacks on Jews; the Arab—Jewish conflict in Palestine; the Spanish Civil War and WWII in Southern France. Why include all of these?**

Well..it is as you say ambitious, but for some women, the events of the twentieth century,



one of the bloodiest in history, actually threw them into such events in a serial manner. This was the case with the women who inspired the novel. My own mother for example escaped the antisemitism in Poland to find herself in the midst of the Arab revolt in Palestine, then found herself at the outbreak of WWII in Warsaw, Poland on September 1, 1939 and after she escaped that hell, she wound up in a brutal Soviet gulag in Siberia. I was interested in exploring what inner resources keep such women going, what gave them strength to survive. I also wanted to spotlight how young women, in particular, can sometimes make spur of the moment decisions that can alter the course of their entire lives.

3. What about the male characters in your novel? How did you happen to invent them?

I started with a very young, curious protagonist and I knew that her insular religious community wouldn't be enough for her, especially not after she enrolled in a secular school at the behest of her grandmother who was a woman ahead of her times. I just knew that her hormones would begin to make an impact, so meeting a man—well, it had to happen. But how would she react to him? And what if he was a man of a very different social status, a Parisian Count, no less? That's the stuff of moving the plot forward. Of course in her long life there would be other men, for other reasons.

4. I found it interesting that you placed this young woman of orthodox Jewish upbringing in a monastery in Spain. Why there?

So this is a good example of how life can take someone to unplanned places. Readers will find out why and how Rifka got there and why she chose to devote a portion of her life to care for orphans. In some ways this experience was a foundation for her future growth as a woman. And in the monastery she tried to give the children the kind of education she wanted to have, but of course some of it had to be subversive. There was, in fact, a lot of tension during the Spanish Civil war between nuns who supported the democratically elected government on the Republican side and those who supported Franco's forces. He of course eventually won and became a dictator who ruled for thirty five years.



- 5. I understand that your protagonist struggled with some deeply held principles and had to make extremely difficult choices. Can you tell me more about those choices?**

Without spoiling the plot, it's not easy to do. But I will say that after reading "All Quiet on the Western Front" in school, Rifka became very wary of violence in all forms. She thought human conflicts should be solvable by listening and discussion. It took some horrible events to get her to look at life differently. Though, I must say that in her heart of hearts, no matter her actions, Rifka never truly accepted violence as the solution.

- 6. What about the other women who inspired this fascinating story?**

I cannot say too much about them without revealing some plot surprises, but one of them was, in fact, my mother's business partner. Another friend from my mother's teenage years in Warsaw went on to participate in the Spanish Civil War. And the third, a courageous, seemingly fearless woman, saved my mother's life in the Siberian gulag. I have made some of these real women into composite characters in the fictional account.