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How this Project born?

THE LITTLE KITE project has deep roots. I first visited Guatemala in 1987 and spent time in Chichicastenango and was lucky to attend the Giant Kite Festival in Santiago Sacatepéquez. In that trip I was able to visit with Mayan people and something rather important happened to me as a result. I saw how they lived, I saw their love and connection to their *milpas*, and how essential the act of creating was to them, how living

and “making things” seem to be one thing. To me, they had a spiritual balance, that a hassled American could only dream of. I was especially influenced by their weaving, and bought several pieces in 1987 that hang on my wall in Los Angeles today as a creative example.

Like most “modern people” - my life has become filled with chaos and uncertainty in recent years. I find myself getting trapped into focusing on things that are not “real,” - like the endless flood of content on the screen of my mobile phone.

Americans especially seem to believe that going faster is always better, and often we don't take the time to actually live a life. In truth, going slower is better. This is one thing I have learned from Mayan weavers, that there is beauty and power and healing in creating an object slowly and carefully. Many of the exquisite Mayan *hupiles* (intricate hand-woven blouses) take a weaver over 3 or 4 months to make. They believe these are sacred objects that connect to and proclaim their heritage. They believe the journey to make the object can be as sacred as the final object itself.

Out of my struggle with modern chaos, came this idea for THE LITTLE KITE in Spring 2017, and now we are on the path to completing shooting and sharing some of what I experienced in Guatemala with the world. I was inspired by simple, classic films featuring non-actors, like De Sica's 'BICYCLE THIEVES' and Kiarostami's 'WHERE IS THE FRIEND'S HOME' which are unforgettable, natural films featuring children.

So from a seed planted over 30 years ago, a film is growing. Some seeds sit in the soil for many years before they sprout.

Why Guatemala and this great story?

I am making this film in Guatemala because of the culture of the Maya that live there. I see Mayan culture as an opportunity to “time travel” in a way — to see parts of humanity that have been lost. I am not suggesting that indigenous people are not “modern”, they have mobile phones and can integrate into modern society as well as anyone, but the foundations

of their culture reveal ancient human characteristics that modern people have abandoned. I'm talking about things like understanding the nature of time and how the creative process is to the human spirit, how they value their family and heritage, how they are connected to their land and other things.

The film is not political, it is not about war or discrimination or immigration. THE LITTLE KITE tells a simple, universal story about a young girl and her mother, and a daughter's resistance to doing what is expected of her, and the complications that result from that. It is about the tragedies and setbacks of life and how perseverance and resilience are the essential characteristics of all people.

We all get knocked down in life, repeatedly, and the Maya, and especially Mayan women, are an inspiration to me in how they show resilience and strength, and much of that strength comes from their heritage that is so strongly represented in their weaving, and also in the kite-making that is the centerpiece at the last part of the movie.

In the story, the family travels from Chichicastenango to Sacatepéquez for the funeral of the little girl's grandfather, and the girl decides to make a kite to honor and connect with her grandfather for *Día de Todos Santos* and the kite festival in Santiago Sacatepéquez. She battles much opposition and many setbacks along the way, but the end is triumphant for her, and a celebration of the resilience of the human spirit.

Today, many people often give up on life, and that is the one thing we should never do.

Who is the writer, what do you think about this movie?

I am the writer and director.

How did you select the actors and what surprises did you receive during the work so far?

I have two associate producers in Guatemala, Clariza Castellanos and Mirna Noriega Guzman, and last August they helped me do castings in both Chichicastenango and Santiago Sacatepéquez. This was made possible by local people who helped us, and especially the municipal governments of each town, who welcomed us and greatly assisted us. We saw ordinary indigenous town people, and found wonderful people to play the parts in the movie. We produced part of the film back in November 2017 to capture the famous Giant Kite festival in Santiago Sacatepéquez. That video can be seen now at TheLittleKiteMovie.com.

My main goal for the film is authenticity. Most Hollywood films these days tell fantastic stories of heroes doing incredible things, and these films are primarily created with digital technology. As amazing as these films are, I also think there is a yearning for audiences around the world to see a "real" story about human beings we can identify with. I tell people my goal is to have the audience "smell the milpa" and "feel the earth under their feet" when they watch the film. So my primary job as a director is to shepherd this cast of non-actors, and capture the real & natural personality of these lovely people on film for the world to experience. In the history of motion pictures, indigenous people have almost always been

portrayed as stoic, unemotional and distant, and that is not my feeling in being with the K'iche' and Kaqchikel.

Why K'iche' and Kaqchikel? Do you learn this languages or know some words? Which one?

It is the locations of the story that determine the Mayan languages they speak. I am trying to learn a few words of these languages, but in fact, all the actors speak Spanish. The film will be about 70% in Spanish and 20% in K'iche' and 10% in Kaqchikel. We will have expert translators on set to make sure the Mayan languages are accurate. Working in three languages will be a significant challenge for us as filmmakers, but I think it will have a significant appeal for the audience of the film.

The movie will be translated into other languages?

Yes. My last feature drama was distributed all around the world, in about 80 countries. It is called STILL BREATHING starring Brendan Fraser (available in iTunes in Guatemala - <https://itunes.apple.com/gt/movie/still-breathing/id1278211120?l=en>)

We are specifically making THE LITTLE KITE to be seen all around the world. I especially think the film will be popular in Asia, Europe and in Latin America of course.

I think the film will affect the global perception of Guatemala in countries that don't know Guatemala well, like China and Korea and Poland and South Africa and many others. They will discover Guatemala and its beauty in a very intimate way. Also, the perception of Guatemala internationally is currently very complicated and mostly negative, with the current immigration dramas and the recent volcano tragedy. The recent earthquakes have also been widely reported in the USA and Europe. I think THE LITTLE KITE will give global tourists a new reason to come to Guatemala.

I think the effect on tourism to Guatemala will be dramatic. I also hope the film will drive significant new markets in high-end Mayan hand-made textiles, at prices that reflect the work and artistry of these unique items.

In my opinion, Mayan weaving is at a crisis, after 3000 years of tradition. Fewer young girls are learning to weave and the markets are starting to be dominated by "fake" Mayan textiles from Asia or made on new automated machines. I was in Santiago Sacatepéquez in November 2017 and again in June 2018 and the change was shocking. I was there on market day, and saw MANY more women and girls wearing fake hupiles and much fewer authentic Santiago Sacatepéquez hupiles. I am worried and so should be all the people of Guatemala, both indigenous and Ladino.

When will be the premier?

Like every filmmaker, I'd like to have the world premiere of the film at a major international film festival. After the world premiere, we will host the Guatemalan premiere, in Guatemala City but also hosting free public screenings in the plazas of Chichicastenango and Santiago Sacatepéquez and maybe other towns. That will be as a "thank you" for Guatemala's gifts to the world. We are working now talking to Guatemalan companies to help sponsor the film itself and these screenings. It is important that funding for the film come from Guatemala to the film can be presented to the world as a Guatemala-USA production. Those that might be interested should contact us via our website, TheLittleKiteMovie.com .

Something else that you want to tell us.? Some help for your movie and a message to Guatemala.

The current political climate in the US incorporates a lot of ignorance and misunderstanding about Central America. We are currently in discussions with organizations and individuals in Guatemala about becoming involved with this motion picture and believe that cooperation will be a major strength of the project. There will be many Guatemalans that will be a vital part of this project, from investors, sponsors, crew and especially the Mayan women, men and children that will appear in the film.

WEBSITE AND TRAILER: TheLittleKiteMovie.com

PRESS PHOTOS: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1zpW3-iiV65ln20xJ4VGWER79cXcZDHEJ>