



FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon Dec 14 | 8:30 pm

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$9 [students \$7, CalArts \$5]

Native Visions: Two Documentaries on Indigenous Mexican Culture

***2501 Migrants: A Journey* by Yolanda Cruz**

***Day Two* by Dante Cerano**

2501 Migrants: A Journey / Reencuentros: 2501 Migrantes (Mexico/USA, 2008, 53 min.) examines the effects of mass emigration in the Oaxacan town of Teococuilco, virtually deserted after most of its adult indigenous population departed to look for work in the United States or Mexico City. Yolanda Cruz's documentary tells the story of artist Alejandro Santiago, who sets out to create a monumental installation of 2501 life-size sculptures of all the people who left. Because Teococuilco, he feels, is... so empty. The program also features Dante Cerano's award-winning video essay *Day Two / Día dos* (Mexico, 2004, 23 min.), an idiosyncratic and irreverent take on the second day of a P'urhepecha wedding ceremony.

Both works offer rare insights into contemporary indigenous Mexico that scramble easy dichotomies of self-representation versus the ethnographic gaze, static tradition versus global forces of change, and indigenous culture versus Western "high art" or popular culture. Documentarian Yolanda Cruz finds parallels of communal artmaking between her subject Santiago's commemorative repopulation of his Oaxacan village and her editing suite in Los Angeles, while P'urhepecha videomaker Dante Cerano deploys both pastiche and humor in his genre-bending chronicle of a wedding.

In person: Yolanda Cruz

On *2501 Migrants: A Journey*

Cruz allows her subjects to tell the story in their own words. But the perspective is uniquely hers, a reflection of someone with an intimate knowledge of both sides of the border.

– *Los Angeles Times*

Santiago's sculptures are larger than life, rough-hewn, scarred and sturdy



like the people who have left his village of Teococuilco de Marcos Perez. He dreamed up the project as a way to repopulate the village – at least symbolically, to create challenging jobs for those left behind and to ultimately lure back some [of] the community's former inhabitants with improved job opportunities in his workshop....

Santiago and I are both from Oaxaca – one of Mexico's poorest states and both of us have created art that comments on the state's status as a leading exporter of human labor to the United States. Both of us left home as children and returned to find our communities irreversibly altered by mass migration to the United States. We each had a foot in two worlds – our home state of Oaxaca and the international community of artists, filmmakers and funders. And we were both creating work that tried to make sense of mass migration from rural Mexico to the United States....

When the production reached 80 hours of footage, I stopped filming and returned to Los Angeles to begin the editing process. I had interviewed everyone that had a relationship with Alejandro, his friends, his mother, his wife and the 25 workers.... I hired a team of five people who were transcribing, translating, digitizing and building sequences with the best sound bites. We started making a film per person, per issue, but I knew an eight-hour film would... be accepted neither by the funders nor the audience. We edited for eight months, five days a week, while I pressured the team to cut, cut, cut. And during the weekends we would host dinners to have friends watch rough cuts and provide feedback. This structure became remarkably similar to Alejandro's communal workshop. In a Los Angeles editing suite, my own community-based approach paid homage to Alejandro's work far off in Oaxaca.

– *Yolanda Cruz*

Yolanda Cruz: Biography and Filmography

Yolanda Cruz is an indigenous Chatino from Oaxaca, Mexico, and the producer-director of seven award-winning documentaries. Her work has received the support of prestigious organizations such as the Rockefeller foundation, Latino Public Broadcasting and the Ford Foundation. It has also screened at film festivals and museums internationally, including the Sundance Film Festival, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Park la Villette in Paris, the National Geographic All Roads Film Project and the National Institute of Cinema in Mexico City. The UCLA film school alumna is fluent in English, Spanish and Chatino, and harbors a passionate drive to increase the representation of indigenous people in the media.



2501 Migrants: A Journey (2008, 53 min., DVCAM)
Freedom to Marry (2007, 30 min., DVCAM)
Freedom to Dream: Rights of Immigrants (2007, 30 min., DVCAM)
Freedom to Learn: School to Prison Pipeline (2007, 30 min., DVCAM)
Bi-national Dreams (2005, 30 min., DVCAM)
Women Who Organize Make Progress (2004, 15 min., DVCAM)
The Ones Who Come to Visit / Guenatiza (2003, 15 min., DVCAM)
Within Dreams (2000, 6 min., 16mm)

On Day Two

While... Cerano's *Día dos* does not sit well within any existing genre within the larger rubric of nonfiction, it is nonetheless engaged in a highly self-conscious play with recognizable genres, especially those of the ethnographic film and of the wedding video, while not remaining within either of those genre's conventions. Cerano's pastiche of genres extends beyond these two principal references; one interjection, an awkward montage of tight shots of Corona bottles being consumed at the festivities, accompanied by music of Vivaldi, is a ham-fisted parody of an advertisement for beer. This sequence, introduced with an intertitle: "la sonata de la cerveza" and a graphic of a beer bottle, suggest[s] a kind of intertextuality closer to the spirit of Austin Powers than visual anthropology....

[Yet, like] an ethnographic film, the video is clearly directed at outsiders; it explains otherwise incomprehensible features of the ritual through a sparse and irreverent voice-over narration, read by the director. A graphic summary, stylistically indebted to an Eighties-era video game, summarizes the relationships and movements over an electronic beat. Although the electronica may be alien to the context of a traditional P'urhepecha wedding, the strategy of a schematic summary, a simplified, animated diagram that explains complex social relations, movements and exchange, is not at all an unprecedented one in ethnographic film....

The electronic dance music is only one of multiple non-diegetic music excerpts included in the soundtrack, excerpts that range from hip-hop to... baroque, from kitschy neo-lounge to a repeated guitar riff by the 1970s stadium rock band Heart.... In the context of the wedding video, however, this sort of insertion of non-diegetic and seemingly out of place musical citations, often for comic effect, is not at all outside the norm....

As James Moran points out, the wedding video is a genre that implodes the classic binaries of amateur/professional, private/public and artisanal/industrial. The text on the screen at the video's opening, from the transcendental to the banal, situate[s] Cerano's work within the



commonplaces of the wedding video genre.... This list, mixing the clichés of the ritual with what might be items on a wedding videographer's shot list place us firmly within the realm of the formulaic....

Beyond the generic pastiche and irreverent humor of the video, Cerano's *Día dos* articulates a position that is at once that of an insider and an outsider, a position that I would argue is emblematic of the indigenous media maker.... *Día dos* is, I believe, exemplary of the way that new digital technologies and non-linear editing software have enabled not just a new class of practitioner, but new representations of native Mexico.

– Jesse Lerner, Dante Cerano's *Día dos: Sex, Kinship and Videotape*

Dante Cerano: Biography and Filmography

For the past decade, P'urhepecha director Dante Cerano has explored questions of cultural identity. *Día dos* won the Best Artistic Creation Award at the 7th Festival Americano de Cine y Video de Pueblos Indígenas in Chile in 2004. Cerano is the first indigenous filmmaker in Mexico to work in fiction – *Uarhicha en la Muerte* (2003) is a story of love and witchcraft in a contemporary P'urhepecha community. In 2003 he received the Young Creators grant given by the Mexican arts foundation Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y de las Artes (FONCA). Cerano leads youth media training workshops through the organization Exe Video, and produces traditional and contemporary P'urhepecha music. He is from Cheranatzicurin, Michoacán.

– excerpted from *Native Networks, National Museum of the American Indian*

Cheranasticotown (2005)

Day Two / Día dos (2004)

Uarhicha en la muerte (2003)

St. Cecilia, Patron of Musicians / Santa Cecilia, patrona de los musico (2002)

To See Again / Volver a ver (2001)

Holy Water / Agua bendita (2000)

New Year, New Life / Año nuevo, vida nueva (2000)

Corn Stalks / Xanini (1999)

The Maturity Game / Ch'a nantskua, el juego de la madurez (1999)

Forest Resources / Recursos forestales (1998)

Return Here / Junkua Axu, regresa aqui (1997)

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