

eréndira

Ikikunari

Las Américas Film Network
Presents

eréndira



A Film by Juan Mora Catlett

www.erendiramovie.com

Directed by Juan Mora Catlett
2006, Mexico, 1 hour 47 minutes

Distributed by:
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Quick Synopsis:

ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI is a beautifully shot action film that recreates the 16th century legend of Eréndira, a young Purépecha woman who became an icon of bravery during the destruction of indigenous Mexico by the Spanish conquistadors. When the Spanish arrive, they take advantage of the discord and conflict among the Mexican natives, reaping the benefits of a region divided. Eréndira, a young Purépecha woman on the verge of marriage, refuses to allow her land to be destroyed and stands up to the social conventions prohibiting women to participate in battle. In the face of the invasion, she steals and learns to ride a horse against the Spanish, winning the respect of her tribal leaders. Along her amazing journey, she becomes a symbol of strength and resistance within her culture. This feature length film was shot entirely in the original Purépecha language.

Awards and Recognitions:

- Best Drama, 8th Indio Hispanic Film Festival, 2008
- Best Director, 8th Indio Hispanic Film Festival, 2008
- Jury Award, 10th Annual Latin American Film Festival, Marseilles, France 2008
- Best Make-Up, Mexican Academy of Motion Pictures, 2007
- Best Art Design, Mexican Academy of Motion Pictures, 2007
- Best Special Effects, Mexican Academy of Motion Pictures, 2007
- One of five films selected to represent Mexico at the Oscars
- One of five films selected to represent Mexico at the Goyas
- Recognition by the Secretary of Public Education for the Diffusion of the Original Languages, presented during UNESCO's International Mother Language Day, Mexico, February 2007.
- "José Tocavén Lavín" Award, Presented by the President of the Republic, Mexico, February 2007.

Select Festivals

- Festival internacional de cine de Morelia, Mexico October 2006
<http://www.moreliafilmfest.com/asp/programasverindividual2006.asp?id=68>;
- The International Festival of New Film, Croatia, September 2007 <http://www.splitfilmfestival.hr>
- Films from the South Festival, Oslo, Norway, October 2007 <http://www.filmfrisor.no>;
- 11th International Latino Film Festival, San Francisco, USA, November 2007
<http://www.latinofilmfestival.org/>;
- Latin American Film Festival, University of North Carolina, USA, November 2007



Synopsis:

Hucha mítetixapquia escacsi hupiringa, máteru cuiripuecha. Atahpiticha encacsi tyámu xucuparhapca ca engacsi cacapequa úquaaca imaechani engacsi cuahpequarhenga.

We had heard about the intruders: Fearful warriors covered with iron that descended from the sky and killed all who dared oppose them.

Ma cuiripuhcu no cherheaspti. Yurhistsquiri ma enga naneni, hamemquia Eréndira arhicurhispti...

The only one that didn't fear them was a girl, barely a woman: Her name was Eréndira...

ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI is an action film about the conquest of Mexico by the Europeans in the XVI century. It tells the story of a young Indian woman who stole a horse from the Spanish conquerors and used it against them, defending her people. She is an exceptional girl who shows astounding uprightness and courage in face of the Spanish invasion of her land. She was a warrior woman who fought to attain the dignity and respect that her culture only granted men.

ERENDIRA is similar to the legend of Joan of Arc, with elements of tragedy, such as the fratricidal struggle for power in a closely related group, amidst apocalyptic chaos.

The plot is based on two XVI century sources, the Legend of Princess Erendira, who stole a horse from the conquerors, and the codex RELACION DE MICHOACAN, that tells the history of the Purépecha people, since pre-Columbian times until the arrival of the Europeans. The two narrations complement each other, though giving opposing views of the conquest, the RELACION being the official History, written by the victors, and the Legend handed down by oral tradition, which is often the only history book of vanquished peoples.

The story is told through the narration of an old Indian, using the text and drawings of a codex. The film combines the RELACION DE MICHOACAN drawings with live action, establishing a style that follows the Indians' concept of epic and allows the rendering of a myth, making credible a world that we can't possibly recreate.

The dialog is spoken in Purépecha, XVI century Spanish and Latin. In order that the Purépecha language could be used in a fluent way, the actors were mostly authentic Indians. Since this was the first time that many of them acted, intensive rehearsals were held for eight weeks prior to shooting. For the role of Erendira, we wanted to break away from the image of mannish and superhuman heroines that American films have made commonplace.

The music was made from the sound recordings of the scenes. Human voices, sounds of nature, conches and drums, were used to digitally create the music. The film thus attained a very special character, as all the sound, music and images stem from the same source. The soundtrack is currently available in Mexico.

The largest part of ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI was shot in digital cinema with three simultaneous cameras, one in high definition (HD) and two miniDV's. Another section was shot with two S16 mm film cameras. This made possible the combination of graphics and live action in collage form, in order to bring the form of the film near to the aesthetics of pre-Columbian codices. The film was printed on 35 mm negative through a data to film process.

About the Director:



Juan Roberto Mora Catlett (México 1949) studied film at the Fine Arts Academy in Prague Czechoslovakia. He has directed documentaries and features. Among other awards he has received the "GREAT SPECIAL AWARD OF THE JURY, VII LATIN-AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL, TRIESTE, ITALY", THE GOLDEN COLUMBUS AWARD IN HUELVA'S IX IBERO-AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL, SPAIN. Two MEXICAN FILM ACADEMY AWARDS. A JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION fellowship, in 1986, and grants from the JOHN D. & CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION, in 1998, U.S./MEXICO FUND FOR CULTURE (BANCOMER-ROCKEFELLER-FONCA), in 1997, and Membership of Mexico's "NATIONAL SYSTEM OF ART

CREATORS", admittance awarded by Mexico's NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE ARTS AND CULTURE, in 1994. He teaches at the University Center of Film Studies, National Autonomous University of Mexico and at the Center for Film Training of the National Council of the Arts and Culture.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- *The Work of Elizabeth Catlett* (1976) 16mm 28 min
- *Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Photographer* (1983) 16mm 28 min
- *Remembrances of Juan O'Gorman* (1983) 35mm 30 min
- *In search of the eternal sun* (1996) video 56 min
- *The murals of the Fine Arts Palace* (1996) video 56 min
- *Betty y/ & Pancho* (1998) video 56 min
- *Return to Aztlan* (1990) 35mm 90 min
- *VolArte* (2003) animation 35mm 10 min
- *Eréndira ikikunari* (2006) 35mm 107 min

Eréndira's Art:



ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI is a cinematic representation of a myth and is not based on historical facts. Its language is symbolic, because a myth is a grandiose poetic image that refers to the essential aspects of the culture of the people that created it. It is placed outside of historical time and sites, with divine or heroic protagonists representing a human reality of universal significance. Therefore ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI is not a period piece or a historical reconstruction. Its time, place and events take place only in the symbolic space of myth, in a non-realist style.

The elements used to create this poetical image, come from two main sources: the archaeological sites of the Purépecha Pre-Columbian culture, including architecture, sculpture, ceramics and pictographic codices; and the contemporary cultural expressions of this People: crafts, music, dance, etc.

The technical means to integrate them were those of digital film and postproduction, avoiding photorealism, and integrating graphically the drawings from the pre-Columbian codices with landscapes, architecture and digitally recorded actions.

The landscapes were those of the Paricutín volcano, of the Zirahuen lagoon, of the “Devil’s knee” spring in Uruapan and of the archeological sites at Patzcuaro lake: the ancient cities of Tzintzuntzan and Ihuatzio.

The stage design was accomplished by combining images of ruins and “trojes” (traditional Purépecha dwellings made of wood) with drawings from the codices; some were done during shooting and others with digital postproduction software.

The set dressing was solved adding to the live action evidently drawn on architectural elements, creating dramatic spaces with a collage character and thus suggesting an ambience of ancient ages.

The props were built with organic and natural materials, such as the century plant (or maguey), stones, shells, etc. We also used those contemporary arts & crafts from Michoacán that have not changed since pre-Columbian times.

Costume Design:



ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI’s costume design was developed from the illustrations of the XVI century codex RELACION DE MICHOACAN, where all the social strata of the pre-Columbian Purépecha Indians appear depicted. Considering that all of these illustrations of wardrobe are stylizations, their translation into three-dimensional concrete costumes was a challenge of interpretation. Instead of using the original materials and textiles, such as tiger or deer leather, tropical bird feathers, raw cotton or jute fabrics, we employed materials used by contemporary ethnic groups, like straw mats, which served to create armor, or hand woven fabrics. Instead of embroidering them, we used textile paint, imitating the codex’s drawings. The end result was very interesting, because when we combined the actors thus dressed with enlargements of characters in the codex’s drawings, on the set or in digital compositing, all the elements blended seamlessly. And the proposed look of the film, a cinematic pre-Columbian codex, was attained.

Another challenge was to present the European XVI century soldiers as supernatural beings, because they have turned into conventional images. We tried to see them as the Indians did, as “Ironclad warriors that had descended from heaven”; we found the answer in the folk dance of the “Curpitis”, created by the Purépecha Indians. In that dance we see the Europeans through

Indian's eyes, with their faces covered by wooden masks that depict the white man. The Europeans' costumes were a combination of renaissance armor with the wardrobe of the "Curpitis" dance, including, of course, the white man's masks. We also used masks to depict divinities. Purépecha devils masks were used to represent pre-Columbian gods and even the horse used a metallic mask, acquiring by association a divine quality. This of course, until the Indians unmask the invaders, realizing that they are only human.

The only one that never loses his mask is the horse.

Make Up:



ERENDIRA IKIKUNARI'S make up was developed from the original make up concept of Juan Mora's previous feature, RETURN TO AZTLAN, which dealt with the myths of the Aztecs of Mexico and was spoken entirely in their royal tongue, Classical Nahuatl. In that movie we faced the problem of creating wardrobe for a pre-Columbian period piece with practically no budget. The perfect answer was to substitute wardrobe with body make up, and it came from observing that in the Mixtec pre-Columbian codices, characters were usually decorated all over with signs, and that certain Mexican Indian tribes, like the Cora, still paint their bodies for their ceremonies. All of this was the result of several years of research. It was surprising to discover that a practically nude person, covered with body make up, appeared to be richly attired, and also, as in the case of the depiction of gods, transformed into an extraordinary being. In that way we created all kinds of characters: gods, great warriors, peasants, merchants, etc. To avoid that the actors resembled European renaissance comedians, we painted used a special make up material, specially developed from clay pigments for the film, and not with the usual one, based on creams.

In the case of ERENDIRA we went even further. In the RELACION DE MICHOACAN, a XVI century codex, we read that the great warriors of that time used to stand by bonfires, stacked with green wood, and cover their bodies with the soot from the dense black smoke. That gave us the idea of using different quantities of black body make up to distinguish the great warriors from the foot soldiers. Also, being ERENDIRA the depiction of a fratricide war, to distinguish the factions at war, the rebels were painted black, the Spaniards' allies had white markings over their black and, with the character Erendira, a red element was used. In this way we could show

that all belonged to a common culture although they were fighting each other as harsh enemies.

Make up also served to give dignity and greatness to the characters, and to show different social strata and trades. In the RELACION, characters appear with faces painted in different colors that served also to create a variety in the make-up palette.

Technical Information:

Eréndira, ikikunari is a film by Juan Mora Catlett on the conquest of México. *Isiksi uekasti t'ukupeachecha* (thus was willed by the gods)

A Mexican Feature Film, 35 mm, color, 1h 47min

COPRODUCED BY:

Mexican National Council for Culture and Arts (CONACULTA), Mexican Film Institute (IMCINE), Production Fund for Quality Films (FOPROCINE)
Juan Roberto Mora Catlett and Eréndira Producciones S de R.L.
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University Film Archives, National Autonomous University of Mexico.
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Kodak de México
Panasonic de México
DOLBY laboratories Inc.

Production Credits:

Director and Writer - Juan Roberto Mora Catlett

Direction of Photography - Toni Kuhn

Cinematographers - Alberto Anaya "Mándaro" Daniel Arteaga Rodrigo Montes de Oca
Antonio Ruiz Jorge Suarez

Editing - Rodrigo Montes de Oca

Sound - Enrique Ojeda

Executive Production - Mariana Lizarraga, Walter Navas

Associated Producer - Elizabeth Catlett

Production design - Gilda Navarro

Music - Andrés Sánchez

Make Up - Julián Piza Animation HombreZoo

CAST

Eréndira - Xochiquetzal Rodríguez

Nanuma - Justo Alberto Rodríguez

T'shue - Luís Esteban Huacúz Dímas

Timas - Roberto Isidro Rangel

Cuynierangari - Edgar Alejandro Pérez

Tangaxan - Rubén Bautista