

SHADOW WEAVERS



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In the Andes, one's hat speaks volumes about the identity of its owner- but what of the silenced voices of its makers?

The Story

Along the Peruvian Andes a network of encoded messages is woven into every hat. The testimonies of all those dedicated to the millinery craft share how wool and straw become forms of communication and resistance.

Context

Peruvian straw and wool are symbolic heirlooms, which transcend the material. Collective transformation of raw materials is a way of life. Each pueblo displays their coat of arms through subtle cues atop their head- legible only to those who can interpret this unique dialect. What can the language of hats teach us about how we display our sense of identity and continuity with our heritage? Especially when indigenous traditions are increasingly endangered.



Where did this story come from?

Director Erica Nguyen is a first generation Vietnamese-American who grew up learning Spanish as a California kid. The outsider diaspora coupled with loss of cultural identity, particularly around language, propelled this project and the questions it asks. Encountering urgent stories of assimilation in the modern world presents a real need for understanding the past; as well as creating space for belonging in the present.



Sélection officielle



SIALE

Sombrero de lana

At the water's edge of Lake Titicaca, a humble peninsula called Capachica is home to a unique *montera*. Dramatically shaped like the upturned corners of a pagoda, its vibrant embroidery celebrates the iconography of Siale's local flora & fauna. Historically pastoral, the raw materials used to construct this temple for one's head are provided by the surrounding sheep, cactus and straw. Within the community there are those who process the wool, others weave on the loom, some dye the cloth, but all create their own designs.

The dialogue between land and water is ever present in this place. Yet threats of pollution have caused much change to the availability of natural resources. Will the modern motifs of this hat include climate change?

Sombrero de paja

Celendín is a small pueblo that belongs to the region of Cajamarca, known for its elegant straw hats and determined people. The hat making process begins in the high jungle Amazon and filters its way through many different hands until it lands with the weavers. The women of Celendín have typically been the primary artisans, extensively laboring over a single hat, while buyers set the market price lower and lower. This part of our story honors the talented women who are seeking equity for the future of their craft.

Not only are the artisans of Celendín defending their ancestral practices, they are also entrenched in the conflict of water rights and mining developments. What does it mean to be a guardian for future generations?



CELENDÍN

Bio

We are a truly independent and grassroots ensemble of female filmmakers, whose determination to tell this story has been marked by drive and sacrifice. Together we improvised to realize this international production without substantial financial sponsorship- knocking on many doors without appointment and building alliances all along the way along the way.



Director/ Producer/ Editor

Erica Nguyen

USA

Erica Nguyen is a grassroots filmmaker based seasonally between the deserts of the southwest. Her interdisciplinary studies framed this storytelling process around how estrangement from our origins manifests in our bodies. As a climbing instructor and adventure therapist, she engages people through felt experiences outdoors.

Assistant Producer

Lucia Sanchez Rodriguez

Spain

Lux works in visual storytelling through drawing & painting. She can be found in her element with pen and paper in hand. With a background in fine arts, she teaches elders- helping craft tools for their unique expression and representation.



Assistant Producer

Bernardita Lira Gaete

Chile

Passionately rustic documentarian, innate explorer, and curious traveler, Berni feels much admiration for ancestral cultures and their bond with nature. As a fellow mountaineer and water defender, she continues integrating their teachings with respect and awareness in San Pedro de Atacama.

Field Producer

Kira Greene

USA

Kira is inspired by the mutualistic relationship within the natural world. A true student and forager of the plant kingdom, she strives to learn as much as she can and share it enthusiastically with her community. Formally studied Film and Media, informally studies everything else.





Community collaboration

We believe our responsibility as documentary filmmakers is not resigned to filming and fleeing with the footage. So we proposed to better integrate our subject communities by facilitating mini audio-visual workshops. As we investigated this topic, play became an important tool to understand the world that we aimed to portray.



"Shadow weavers" incorporates soundscapes from the Podcast workshops in Celendín and Chuschi. Closing credit illustrations are borrowed from the 6 volumes of self produced zines- which have gone on to be exhibited across the Southwest.





CREDITS

Presented by: Filmmakers Without Borders

Produced in Association with: New Mexico Women in Film

Post Production Residency: WISC

Fiscal Sponsorship: New Mexico Film Foundation

Mentorship: Documental Peruano

Translation/ Interpretation: Lucía Sánchez Rodríguez & Erica Nguyen (Castellano-English), Diana Castro Sánchez & Marco Panatonic (Quechua-Castellano)

Sound Mixing: Juan Álvarez Fernández (MENOSDOCEDB)

Colorist: ADAM Shaening-Pokrasso (12FPS)

Design by: Robin Hercia

Illustrations: Lucía Sánchez Rodríguez, Justin DeVine

Production Allies

Museo Amano, Museo de Artes y Tradiciones Populares PUCP, Casa Pallas, Municipalidad de Chuschi, Municipalidad de Capachica, SAYWA, Plataforma Interinstitucional Celendina, MESA, Red de Bibliotecas Rurales de Cajamarca, Oficina de Turismo Municipal Bambamarca, Centro de Exposición Artesanal Rioja, Museo ToÉ, Sharityn Import

Community Talleres

Zine Facilitator: Lucía Sánchez Rodríguez

Podcast Facilitator (Chuschi): Kira Greene

Celendín Podcast "Propuestas tras la Protesta"

Host: Clavitex Guest Speakers: Hipólito Chávez, Yovana Medina

Podcast Facilitators (Celendín): Berni Lira Gaete & Erica Nguyen

Canciones:

Pedro Pablo Más Lloplas, María rufina Quispe de Pancca, Juan Apaza Pancca, los Genios de Chimaycha Anatolia Verónica Sánchez Chavez

