



EL SIGNO VACÍO

(the empty sign)

<https://rameyfilms.com/el-signo-vacio/>

PRESS CONTACT / INQUIRIES
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ABOUT

rameyfilms

75 minutes | DCP | USA / Puerto Rico

LOGLINE

Through found footage and portraits of local artists and activists the film is a playful journey into the complex layers of the US occupation of Puerto Rico.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Mixing a hundred years of found footage - tourism, agricultural and propaganda films - with contemporary portraits of artists and activists this film is a journey through the complex layers of the United States' occupation of Puerto Rico. Using an experimental and ethnographic approach the film reveals how carefully crafted American fictions of "democracy" and "debt" obscure a capitalist and military domination.

The coin for the Ramey Sector represents the sector and our agents. We are the "Sentinels" of Puerto Rico but the US Virgin Islands, combating terrorism, illegal immigrants and contraband. The coin shows the American Eagle representing the strength of the United States and a palm tree representing the Caribbean. The front side of the coin has the U.S. Border Patrol emblem. The Ramey Sector below it, as you can see in the picture.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



In 2014 while researching US immigration practices, I discovered a border patrol in Aguadilla PR with my last name. The base was named for a man who was not Puerto Rican and never even visited the islands, yet the name "Ramey" is everywhere in the northwest part of the country. I became a traveler in a place where everyone knew my name. I wanted to give back to the people who were helping me research and so I offered a 16mm filmmaking and hand-processing workshop at Beta-Local in San Juan.

One workshop led to another, engaging me directly with the interests of the artists who had become my friends and interlocutors for the project. Their feedback helped me to create a more nuanced and far-reaching use of found material including working with images from reality TV and social media.

Because the past is only past for people who have the luxury of forgetting, the film connects historic fiscal, agricultural, military and tourist activity with the present-day invasion of "crypto-bros," opportunistic settlers and cynical and corrupt politicians and policies. History is being made today as my friends and their families continue to insist on their dignity and the right to control their future and the future of Puerto Rico.

- kathryn ramey

#PUERTORICO

COLLABORATORS

KATHRYN RAMEY, PhD (filmmaker) A Guggenheim and Creative Capital fellow with an MFA in film and a PhD in anthropology who has made over a dozen films and installations, contributed numerous articles to anthologies and journals and written the essential text “Experimental Filmmaking: BREAK THE MACHINE” (2015). Her films operate at the intersection of experimental analogue processes and ethnographic research and are characterized by hand-processing, optical printing, and animation. She has screened at several festivals such as Toronto, Ann Arbor, TriBeca, Ji.hlava, and 25fps, among others.

JOEL (YOYO) RODRÍGUEZ VARGAS (sound and composition) Muscian, sound recordist and mixer, Yoyo Rodríguez studied painting at LaEscuela de Artes Plásticas en Puerto Rico graduating in 2007. Aftergraduation he began to teach himself music and sound editing playing and recording with a variety of San Juan based artists and creating soundscapes for theatrical performances. Yoyo has always enjoyed mixing and looping ambient sounds as part of his creative work. He is collaborating with Kathryn to create rich sonic experiences from the variety of her ambient recordings and came on board her San Juan based production team in 2019 to work as her on location sound recordist and composer on the film.

PATRICIA ASTACIO ALVAREZ, PhD (consulting producer) Assistant Professor at Brandeis University, with a PhD in anthropology from UCSD and her BA in anthropology from University of Puerto Rico, Rio Peidras, Patricia is an anthropologist and filmmaker whose scholarly research and creative practice develops in the folds between ethnography, critical theory, sensory ethnography, and the documentary arts.

SOFÍA GALLISÁ MURIENTE (consulting producer) A Puerto Rican visual artist whose practice claims the freedom of historical agency, proposing mechanisms for remembering and reimagining. She employs text, image and archive as medium and subject, exploring their poetic and political implications. Sofía has been a fellow of the Cisneros Institute at MoMA, Smithsonian Institute, Puerto Rican Arts Initiative and the Flaherty Seminar, and a resident artist at the Vieques Historical Archive, Alice Yard, FAARA and Amant.

#FORTALEZ

CREDITS

Camera, Sound, Writing, Editing & Producing by
KATHRYN RAMEY

Consulting Producers
SOFÍA GALLISÁ MURIENTE &
PATRICIA ASTACIO ALVAREZ

Voice of God
David Skeist

Additional Image & Sound
CHERYL HESS, SOFÍA GALLISÁ MURIENTE,
KEELY KERNAN, JOEL RODRÍGUEZ VARGAS &
PATRICIA ASTACIO ALVAREZ

Sound Mix
JOEL RODRÍGUEZ VARGAS

Color Grading
CLOVIS STOCCHETTI

Translations
TERESA CÓRDOVA RODRÍGUEZ

Spanish Tutor
FERNANDO SCHNITZER

A close-up photograph of a person's arm and hands. The arm, which has a red spiral tattoo, is holding a white flower. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green foliage with several other white flowers visible. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

FRIENDS

(in order of appearance)

WILSON DÁVALOS-NIEVES

NORYSELL MASSANET

SOFÍA GALLISÁ MURIENTE

JOSÉ LÓPEZ SERRA

PAPO VIVES

BEATRIZ SANTIAGO MUÑOZ

MARINA REYES FRANCO

PATRICA ALVAREZ ASTACIO

MUSIC

I & II - (auto/anti)nomía (2012)

Eduardo f. Rosario

by permission of the artist

Carcerolozo, Bolerazo & Julio 2019 Calle de la Resistencia

(2019/2020)

Joel Rodríguez Vargas

by permission of the artist

America the Beautiful

Samuel A. Ward (Composer), United States Navy Band (1992)

Public Domain

Un Conflicto

Juan Morel Campos (Composer), Carmelo Díaz Soler (Conductor)

Félix Astol (Composer), Euterpe Porto Rican Orchestra (Performer)

Columbia, [New York], (1927)

Public Domain

The Dauntless Battalion - March

(John Philip Sousa) Sousa's Band

Victor 19056-B - Recorded March 29, 1923

Public Domain

Adicto

(band) lowfade

Recorded at El Local March 2019

by permission of the artist

El Encanto de una Reina

Rafael Balseiro (Composer), Carmelo Díaz Soler (Performer)

Juan Morel Campos (Composer) Euterpe Porto Rican Orchestra (Instrumentalist)

Columbia, [New York], (1927)

Public Domain

La Borinqueña

Luis Miranda (Composer)

United States Navy Band (1996)

Public Domain

Se acabaron las promesas

(band) Sikotrópikas

Recorded at El Local April 2022

by permission of the artist

Isla Desencanto (2020)

(band) La Plaga

by permission of the artist

MEDIA DÉTOURNED - in order of use

(all media acquired via eBay™ or YouTube™ unless otherwise indicated)

"An Island in America" (1972)
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith

"Puerto Rico, Showcase of America" (1962)
McGraw-Hill Book Company

"Territorial possessions of the United States" (1940)
International Geographic Pictures

"Unknown plane excerpts" (1940?)
Craig Baldwin/Other Cinema

"Unknown Travel film" (1950's?)
courtesy of white lady travelers

"News Parade" (1944) Castle Films

"Puerto Rico, Progress in the Caribbean" (1989)
Handel Film Corporation

"Democracy at Work in Rural Puerto Rico" (1940)
US Department of Agriculture

"Age of Discovery: Spanish and Portuguese Discovery" (1956)
Coronet Films

Sean Duffy mashup
A Solution for Puerto Rico CNN (June 10, 2016) &
Sean Duffy Real World Season 06 episode 04

Donald J Trump/Hurricane Maria/Mark Zuckerberg mashup
Trump Throws Paper Towels into Crowd in Puerto Rico / Guardian News
NOAA Satellite Imagery of Hurricane Maria
Mark Zuckerberg VR Puerto Rico

"San Juan, Puerto Rico City of Contrast" (1975)
Castle Films Super 8 sound

Puerto Rico: "Fiesta Island" (1953)
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Visitors Bureau

Brock Pierce Mashup
First Kid trailer / Brock Pierce on the Trader Cobb show 2020

Ricardo Rosselló Rununcia video excerpt
New York Times headline, July 24th, 2019

Earthquake/el León Fiscalizador mashup
Tectonics and Earthquakes of Puerto Rico (2020) IRIS Earthquake Science
El León Fiscalizador live on facebook January 18, 2020

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AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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Emerson
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RESIDENCIES

ATELIER
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RÉSIDENCE DE POST-PRODUCTION VIDÉO

Yaddo



POINTS
NORTH
INSTITUTE

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