

Twins (Kaluha)

The Philippines

Sherad Anthony SANCHEZ INTRODUCTION



Genre: Alternative
Format: HD
Estimated Running Time: 100 min.

Budget:
US\$ 140,000 (HK\$ 1,092,000)
Funds Secured:
US\$ 53,205 (HK\$ 414,999)

Producer:
Ronald ARGUELLES

Writing Credit:
Sherad Anthony SANCHEZ

Production Company:
Salida Productions

HAF Goals:
Funds, Co-producers

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Folktales and urban legends collide, fragment and reveal themselves in *Twins (Kaluha)*, a film about the loss of innocence, the perversion of folk myths, the murder of native communities and family dysfunction. These issues and problems simmer beneath the seemingly peaceful surface of a community, reflecting the larger problems festering in the country as a whole. *Twins* will take an unusual method to revealing its truths, using the nuances of character to provide a glimpse of the bigger stories that are too grim and dangerous to be addressed directly.

SYNOPSIS

The lush fields of Siargao on the southern island of Mindanao are home to the small town of Barangay Carmen where dust from the dirt roads blots out the mist from the vast fields. Rumors are swirling that the Manobo farmers living in the surrounding mountains are slowly disappearing, being “salvaged” – local slang derived from “salvation” and used to describe vigilante murders. When people go missing, the older people in the community cover up their murders by saying they’re lost in the mountains.

Weeds are overrunning everything.

In a field on the border of the town the twins, Ina and Tiring, are nestled in a mango tree. Suddenly their idyll is broken by the shouts of an older man calling for them. The girls run towards him, through the long cogon grass that whips across their bodies. They arrive at the dilapidated kubo (a nipa hut on stilts) where they live with their Uncle Kadyo and his wife, Aunt Edna. But something strange is stirring beneath the banal routines of this family.

Edna is struggling with menopause and works as a habal-habal driver (a motorcycle taxi common in rural areas). She drives furiously, ferrying passengers from the town to the foot of the mountains. From there, Kadyo, working as a porter and local guide, peddles hikers and vegetables into the deep mountains.

Day and night, the twin sisters escape to their favorite mango tree, which provides a refuge from their strict guardians. One night, in their tree, they are visited by a delicate boy and when Ina wakes up the next morning she finds that her sister, Tiring, has disappeared. As Edna copes with the loss of her period, Ina copes with the loss of her sister by refusing to accept that she is “lost in the mountains,” and journeys into the secret, myth-filled mountains to find her. And both women will come to unravel the secrets hidden in the fields of Siargao.

It is difficult to keep the weeds out; let the mists and the dust cover them in peace.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The people of Mindanao have kept stories about ethnocide and salvages secret. Although these stories have been present ever since the MARCOS era, they have never entered the mainstream national awareness. During the MARCOS era, an elite feudal family headed the Panamin project whose ostensible aim was to educate and civilize ethnic tribes in remote areas. In fact, this project was a land grab from native peoples. It was supposedly discontinued, but is still being used by logging corporations and feudal families who falsely denounce ethnic communities as Communist rebels to justify their extermination. Rural salvages are performed by paramilitary gangs, while in the cities they use zoning to uproot communities and force them into ghettos.

The silence of Barangay Carmen is as disturbing as the murders. The silence here is caused by more than fear. Silence becomes a villain, suppressing and limiting human existence, a symptom of something more complex. It is not an end in itself but a means through which communities are corrupted.

The film’s delicate boy is a Tiyanak, often portrayed in Filipino cinema as a creature of horror but in *Twins* we will adopt a different approach, portraying the Tiyanak as a catalyst for events rather than a direct cause of fear. An aspect of *Twins* will critique the Tagalog version of this creature, and redeem it from its horrific depiction by restoring its mystical aspects and integrating it with the stories of “salvage.”

I see the Tiyanak as a metaphor for the spirit of the tribes who have been slaughtered for their ancestral lands. This figure becomes the embodiment of the force that haunts the guilty. Folk literature will be the catalyst that reveals the complex of guilt, silence and abandonment in a domestic setting that traverses both the social and personal dimension of the film.

Juxtaposing Ina’s loss of her sister and Edna’s lost of her menstrual capacity, *Twins* will explore the twists and turns of their psyches, jumping from one dimension to another in an attempt to examine the culture whose silence, greed and folklore have become concealed weapons that are destroying this seemingly idyllic town.

The harm of narrative reduction is a struggle I explore in rendering what I think is a genuine and sincere experience of my hometown, Mindanao, and myself. It is what my previous two films have explored, playing with both concrete structure and abstract form in an attempt to render an experience of Mindanao that is genuine, at least for me.

DIRECTOR

Sherad Anthony SANCHEZ was born in 1984, and completed several short films in his junior year of university. His first short, *Apple*, premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and during his senior year he went on a leave of absence to shoot his first feature film, *The Woven Stories of the Other*, after winning a grant from Cinema One Originals in 2006. This film won numerous prizes at international film festivals including One Future Preiss at the Munich International Film Festival and it was nominated for seven awards by Gawad Urian, the Filipino Film Critics Association, and won Best Picture and Best Director. SANCHEZ is currently shooting his second feature film, *Imburnal*, while writing and producing *Kolorete*, both for Cinema One Originals.

PRODUCER

Ronald ARGUELLES is the head of cable for Cinema One and has produced approximately 25 titles over the past five years, including *The Woven Stories of the Other* and *Imburnal*. He also produced *Altar* by Rico IARDE, *Tambolista* by Adolf ALIX, Jr., *Romeo and Juliet* by Connie MACATUNO and many more. He was a consultant for the Asian Film Awards.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Salida Productions has produced three co-productions with Cinema One Originals over the past three years. They are *The Woven Stories of the Other*, *Kolorete* and *Imburnal*. The group is composed of various artists and community developers in Mindanao.