

WHISPERING SKY NOTES FROM DAN GILROY

Hey Jeth,

I've taken a while to reply - one because I've been so deep into my own trip that I blocked the world out (a regular occurrence when I'm working).

The other is because I really pondered your project and what to do with it. First, I do feel there's something very powerful there and worth pursuing. Second, it feels like one of the bulls at the rodeo - a beast you can barely get your legs around, let alone your arms, trying to buck you off every moment.

You have the makings of many stories - Troy's life, Jordie's journey, your life, the trip you all took, the Native Americans you encountered, the loss of the footage and finding it again. I've thought for quite awhile how to shape it into something resembling a traditional narrative, as I imagine you have - and came to the realization that's a dead end.

This isn't traditional and something vitally important would be lost if one attempted to do so. I've always believed the most powerful art comes from a singular and unique voice - the voice of an artist who speaks with a perspective and language true to themselves. If an artist doesn't come from this place they're merely creating iterations.

You've never done that and you shouldn't now. I think you should approach this using a documentary style. Your first thought may be okay, fine, I've considered that - but like a narrative film, a documentary needs a unifying theme or element and I have many. And this is what needs to be embraced. Because the central unifying element is you. You may be aware of some of the work of documentary filmmakers like Ross McElwee, Alan Berliner, Alfred Guzzetti, Robb Moss and Nina Davenport. If not, soak up some of their work. They take an untraditional approach to the medium in the best and truest sense.

I don't want to simplify but to me they do two things - one, regardless of the subject, their life and relationship to what's being shown is always there, sometimes lurking in imagery, sometimes overt in narration. In that sense, they become works as much about what's being shown as the filmmaker's life and emotional journey. The other thing they do is take the overt subject that's being shown or explored at a given moment in the film, say Troy's life or the Native Americans, and make personal observations through words or visuals that connect to the larger world to give resonance.

It's not easy but for someone with a strong sense of self and a life lived and observations made along the way - you're exactly in the place you need to be to do it. In essence you're telling a story about yourself and the subjects and their relationship with the world the viewer recognizes.

The result is highly personal - the voice of a unique artist revealing emotional and spiritual truth through imagery and words.

Winnowing down the hundreds of hours to something under three hours will be creatively exhausting - but the distillation will help shape it as you go along.

The first assembly might be 10 hours, but through continual refining the essence of the thing will be revealed. And you'll shape it again and again.

There's no guarantees it will work on a commercial level - there never is. But if it does work in the sense an audience responds - it's the greatest form of success. And if not it's a lasting testament to your creative self and viewpoint.

Hope that helps.

DAN