

Kristin Kusanovich
Bannan Grant, November 1, 2005

1. Title

Noche Oscura

2. Statement of Purpose

To create a film installation and performance in spring 2006 in the Mission Church inspired by the poem, La Noche Oscura, The Obscure Night of the Soul, by 16th century Spanish mystic San Juan de la Cruz.

We are interested in creating a work in which a woman, a man and the voice of God meet on a nameless city street, and though fleeting, this encounter reveals a spiritual crisis that is at the heart of the world.

The project will be directed by Mark Larson and Kristin Kusanovich

3. Methods

The creation of this work would involve collaborating with students, alum, staff and faculty to find how this poem is alive and resonates with today's world. We would both gather and construct sequences of images that bring the truths of this poem out and students would work with Larson and Kusanovich on every step of the process from creation to performance.

Directors Mark Larson (Artist in Residence for Loyola RLC and theatre and film director) and Kristin Kusanovich (Theatre & Dance Department, Liberal Studies Program, STS Scholar, Faculty in Residence for Loyola RLC) would write the script and collaborate with students, staff and faculty to create this special performance event. Our purpose would be to engage members of the university community and mentor a group of students in a creative process that is interdisciplinary, challenging and professional in its final form. We would build on the relationships we have established with various professors and staff through previous projects, and look to forge new relationships, perhaps with the newly formed mystical theology discussion group on campus or new philosophy and religious studies courses that are being developed. We would like to eventually show the film in other venues, perhaps at other Jesuit Universities, and bring this kind of professional work to other audiences.

Narration in the film would be drawn from a sermon given by Ray C. Stedman.

A sound score would be created for the film that uses the electronic music of Akira Rabelais.

We have been fortunate in the past to have worked with the Mission Church staff to make our ideas a reality, and they have helped us to find dates once we secured support for each project. We would hope to accommodate approximately 300 audience members over five nights of two showings each, thus allowing general audience and specific classes many opportunities to attend.

4. Timetable

We would aim to rehearse and complete all shooting and editing in winter quarter, and be able to present the project in the Spring quarter of 2006. We would connect with various classes in Religious Studies and English during the Winter quarter to set up class visits and curriculum for spring.

5. Relevance to past and future teaching and research of applicant

This proposed project is another manifestation of the cross-fertilization and faith exploration that much of my work has been focused on. The merging of arts and spirituality, of community and ethics, and the need to bring the beauty of poetry into our lives are the challenges that lead me into new terrain as a scholar and artist. The historical basis of the work juxtaposed with the modernity of approach are what I find deeply enriching and rewarding to explore. Noche Oscura would be related to, but forward moving from previous works such as Morning Prayers or The Book of Ruth. One of the reasons that projects such as these are so relevant to my teaching and scholarship is they afford me the opportunity to create professional original works that engage students in a more intimate and intense process than would be feasible through regular departmental productions. They also involve many departments and many RLCs and are interdisciplinary in nature.

6. Relevance to Bannan Institute Criteria

The ethic of the film-based work that Larson and Kusanovich have created continues to be based on a principle that is, at its core, an Ignatian ideal, that is, that in the most banal moments of the day can be found the most sacred moments in life. To take nothing for granted in our visual and aural realm is to take nothing for granted in the spiritual realm. We are using the art form of film to help see the world around us in profoundly different ways. We seek to find God in all things, and this project is indeed about meditating on what is sacred in the everydayness of objects, people, and in seeing how the revelatory moments of relation between us and our creator can come to pass in less defined, less proscribed spaces.

We believe in the education of the whole person, in this case through the unique convergence of poetic texts, biblical verse, contemporary drama and exploratory filmmaking. The working process that we develop will require our intellectual and aesthetic sense to be wholly informed by our moral, spiritual and communal spheres. How can we express a real encounter with God where we have been told that it is unlikely for anything of substance to happen in our lives? In the un-spaces where modern city and suburb lose their definition, in the un-time of getting off from work from a fast food job, or of waiting for a bus, for example, the most important of encounters will find us. Our job is to discover God's presence in our life by seeing and feeling and moving anew, unfettered by the customary blindness that we perhaps reserve for certain places that have become non-places, or times that are not typically deemed as sacred.

In some ways this film work hopes to defy the architectural premise that certain kinds of places hope to beget certain kinds of thoughts. What can be revealed by listening more intently, and looking between the intended landmarks presented for our contemplation/manipulation? What is happening in the un-spaces, that are also charged with presence and light, but that are merely underrepresented as such? We feel that these questions are relevant to the Jesuit vision of the Bannan Center, and that the project Noche Oscura will be a rich exploration of this philosophy.

7. Recent Grants/Fellowships Received

Arts Council Silicon Valley First 5 Arts Residency Grant for Visiting Master Artist, 2005

Bridge and Gate Culture Foundation Grant to direct Malan Flower, a collaboration with artists from Beijing and Shanghai at the Flint Center, Cupertino.

Markkula Center Hackworth Grant for "Ethics and Esthetics" A Stance in Dance" presented at International Conference on Dance, Ethics and Politics in Helsinki, 2004.

Center for Science, Technology and Society Grant and Dean's Travel Grant to assist with travel and lodging for dance and technology project at MIT Media Lab in summer of 2003 with Seymour Papert, Marvin Minsky and Jacques d'Amboise.

Bannan Grant for Book of Ruth video installation, Morning Prayers movement, music and writing intensives and performance and The Rich Boy, theatrical adaptation of F.Scott Fitzgerald's short story at Mayer Theatre.

Santa Clara University Fellowship for Technology Innovation for developing and directing International project, Dancing on the Web, Dancing over the Ocean with Senegal, 2001.

8. Publications or other results of most recent internal grant completed

Larson and Kusanovich collaborated on a film and a theatre piece that were presented at the Book of Job conference in SCU in the spring of 2005.

After receiving the Markkula Center Hackworth Grant for "Ethics and Esthetics" A Stance in Dance" for which I developed new curriculum on dance and ethics for SCU's Theatre and Dance Department, my paper on the subject was presented at International Conference on Dance, Ethics and Politics in Helsinki, 2004.

Anticipated impact of project on student learning

Supporting high-calibre works of art that speak to today's citizens and challenge audiences of all backgrounds is an important component of the Jesuit education that SCU offers. Unlike texts and online sources, performances can provide a renewed sense of spiritual awakening in an atmosphere of community, and can help facilitate the process of refinement of the spirit that is one of our highest aims as educators of the whole person. Students will have the opportunity to visit the installation, comment on it, write on it and relate their experience to course material and discussion/reflection group topics. We anticipate that students can be involved to whatever degree they are able, from planning to creating to presenting to experiencing, and that through all of these different aspects of the process they will learn more about themselves, the poetry, the nature of our world and our relations with one another in it. We hope that the project will be inspiring to students as well to create their own new stories that are informed by history and that also give a real voice to their own time and place and their sense of God's presence in the world.

Assessment plan for evaluating success of project

In addition to the self-assessment process that we engage in (in writing) after each project, we will employ some methods that have succeeded in the past. We have found that dialoging with other faculty and staff on ways to tie in our projects to curriculum have yielded great results, and it is usually through these conversations that assessment tools are developed. Faculty who have sent their classes to our previous performances of Book of Ruth, or Book of Job, for example, have assigned reflection papers and scheduled guest lectures for Mark Larson and Kristin Kusanovich to lead in their classes . This gives us a sense of how much the project really facilitates critical thinking and growth in the students. We are able to get feedback from audience members directly as well, who can speak at special audience/artist talk-back sessions or arrange to have Larson/Kusanovich as a guest speakers in out-of-class venues.

9. Itemized Budget

Income		
Bannan Institute Grant		2980
Total Income	2980	
Expenses		
Guest Director Mark Larson		1200
Lighting Design		250
Sound Design		200

Rehearsal Assistant	200	
Cameraperson		150
Equipment and Materials		
Screens	350	
Costume Materials		250
Refreshments for Reception/ Post Performance Discussions	100	
Copying/Printing for PR and Programs		240
Benefits		40
Total Expenses		2980

The poem is included here for reference:
La Noche Oscura / The Obscure Night of the Soul

*Upon an obscure night
Fevered with love in love's anxiety
(O hapless-happy plight!)
I went, none seeing me,
Forth from my house where all things be.*

*By night, secure from sight,
And by the secret stair, disguisedly,
(O hapless-happy plight!)
By night, and privily,
Forth from my house where all things quiet be.*

*Blest night of wandering,
In secret, where by none I might be spied
Nor I see anything;
Without a light or guide,
Save that which in my heart burnt in my side.*

*That light did lead me on,
More surely than the shining of noontide,
Where well I knew that one
Did for my coming bide;
Where He abode, might none but He abide.*

*O night that didst lead thus,
O night more lovely than the dawn o light,
O night that broughtest us,
Lover to lover's sight,
Lover with loved in marriage of delight!*

*Upon my flowery breast
Wholly for Him, and save Himself for none,
There did I give sweet rest
To my beloved one;
the fanning of the cedars breathed thereon.*

*When the first moving air
Blew from the tower and waved His looks aside,
His hand, with gentle care,
Did wound me in the side,
And in my body all my senses died.*

*All things I then forgot,
My cheek on Him who from my coming came;
All ceased, and I was not,
Leaving my cares and shame
Among the lilies, and forgetting them.*

translator - Arthur Symons