



ANOTE'S ARK

Directed by Matthieu Rytz

Sundance Film Festival 2018 | World Documentary Feature Competition

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SALES CONTACT: Bob Moore - bob@eyesteelfilm.com

PRESS CONTACT: David Magdael and Associates
Elisha Gustafson - elisha@tcdm-associates.com
David Magdael - dmagdael@tcdm-associates.com

LOGLINE

Kiribati faces the unstoppable rise of the sea, which will engulf the nation before long. The people of Kiribati will soon be the world's first "climate change refugees." Can these people survive as their country disappears?

SYNOPSIS

What happens when your nation is swallowed by the sea? With the harsh realities of climate change looming, the low-lying Pacific nation Kiribati must find a new solution for the survival of its people. With sweeping cinematography, *Anote's Ark* interweaves two poignant stories. Anote Tong, endearing president of the island, races to find options—advocating in international climate negotiations and even investigating building underwater cities. At the same time, warm and sharp-witted Sermery, a young mother of six, tackles every struggle with humour. She must decide whether to leave the only culture she knows on the island and migrate to a new life in New Zealand.

Anote's Ark captures the next evolution in the shifting dynamics of climate change—one where borders, technology, and global treaties are urgent and can change daily life as we know it. This portrait of the Kiribati people exudes strength of character and grace as they confront the inevitable change they are facing head-on.

ABOUT THE FILM

Anote's Ark is the first feature film directed by Matthieu Rytz, filmmaker and photographer specialized in visual anthropology. After initially being exposed to the plight of a people about to see their very land disappear during a visit to the Kuna Yala archipelago in 2012, Rytz decided to document the lives of the citizens of Kiribati. He thus follows the country's president, Anote Tong, on his journey through international halls of power and climate conferences leading up to COP21. President Tong attempts to get his message heard loud and clear by political and economic leaders while fighting to protect his people, as numerous citizens in Kiribati are already seeking refuge abroad. Anote's fight is thus intertwined with the extraordinary fate of Tiemeri Tiare, a young mother of six who decides to relocate to New Zealand with her family. Through both of these portraits, Rytz explores issues related to the survival of Tiemeri Tiare's family, of the population of Kiribati as a whole and of 4,000 years of Kiribati culture.

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

Kiribati is one of the most remote places on this planet. Most of the people aren't aware that this country exists and yet their story connect us all.

For the past ten years, I have travelled the world bearing witness to complex human stories. After ten years as a still photographer, I decided to shift my focus toward documentary filmmaking, after realizing the narrative limitations of photography – particularly when trying to convey deeper, and more emotionally moving stories.

In 2012, on a trip from Panama to Colombia, I visited an archipelago of more than 375 islands known as the Kuna Yala. There, I was confronted for the first time with a people whose land was about to disappear, and I decided to begin working on a photo essay, which was eventually published in the New York Times. After this trip to the Pacific, I felt both righteous anger at the injustice of the situation, and a sense of powerlessness in the face of such an inevitable outcome.

I then decided to explore this issue in greater depth and more broadly, so I left for the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Kiribati, where I spent the month of January 2014 documenting the islands.

The story of Kiribati is a story of migration; some thousand years ago some great navigator did an extraordinary journey throughout the whole pacific to reach the island of Kiribati. Over centuries they've built an incredible culture. The people of Kiribati also have a deep spiritual connection to the land they are living in; but this spiritual link deeply relies on the connection with their homeland. When any human is faced with losing their land, they also fear losing part of themselves. This is why the specific story of Kiribati is so universal. Human migration has always driven people around this planet and the link between climate and migration is ineluctable.

As it is often said, Kiribati are the canaries on the front line: what happens to them will be the fate of rest that would follow. Kiribati has one of the smallest GDP and footprints on the planet, yet they are the silent victims of a phenomenon that is not provoked by them. It is a climate justice case and should be addressed by the nations that are creating this problem.

What we are now witnessing in Kiribati is a new phenomenon that goes way beyond national boundaries and that should be addressed urgently. We are all part of the solution in a way; in its globalized system we are now all connected and responsible to

the fate of this small island nation. If we don't deeply change our behaviours, humanity is at the at brink of being ripped off the surface of the earth. The story of Kiribati is not a far off singular story. It's a big deal for all human beings. What happens to them will eventually be the destiny of the rest who will follow.

Above all, I want this film to give a voice to the people of Kiribati and to their incredible president, because I am certain that they will be able to give us a lesson in humility that will lead each of us to reason.

-Director Matthieu Rytz

MAKING OF THE FILM

When I started working on the movie I did not have any clue of how to make a documentary. The whole story started with a random meeting with President Tong. The pilot I hired to take some aerial photographs was the uncle of the private secretary of Aote Tong. While we landed, he asked me: Have you met with President Aote Tong? I simply answered "What for?" I was not prepared to film any interviews since I did not really plan to meet such a high level person. But the pilot convinced me to meet Aote. I was with able to meet with him for a 30 min informal discussion. His charisma and life story blew my mind. I knew he was an incredible character. I simply asked him the question: Would you like to make a feature film about your incredible life journey and advocacy? He simply answered "yes" and said goodbye.

Then an incredible journey started. I knew I had to make that film, but I did not know how and where to begin. I did not start from nowhere as I had a background in visual anthropology and some experiences in photojournalism... but I never produced, filmed or directed any film before, so I had to learn everything from scratch.

So as any learning process, it was full of challenges all the way through. I have a photographic eye and a sense of storytelling that helped me a lot, but it was of course not enough to make a movie. Fortunately I had great support from people around me, first the producer Denis McCready whose help was detrimental to the writing process of the first draft of the scenario and secondly his friendship while I was feeling down and depressed, thinking that the movie was going nowhere. Then I had the incredible luck to get the full support of the amazing team at EyeSteelFilm, they pushed me hard to achieve this movie.

The other big challenge was the total remoteness of the Republic of Kiribati. This country, together with Tuvalu are the most disconnected, remote, out of the grid places on the planet. There is almost no internet connection in the capital. Almost nothing can

be bought, even in the capital. For example, on one trip I forgot to buy a backup of 9 volts rectangular batteries for one of my mic. Those batteries are very common and usually we can find them everywhere, but there were none available in the whole country. I had to order them with DHL and it arrived 3 weeks later, but I had left Kiribati already. The other big issue was that outside the capital there is no electricity at all. It quickly became extremely challenging to charge batteries and laptop to backup the memory cards. I had to find fuel to run a generator to have some hours of electricity. But sometimes there was no fuel at all, so it became a challenge just to get the gear working.

Also it was a one man show on the field, directing, filming and sound recording, sometime it was very overwhelming to deal simultaneously with all the aspects of the production. And to add some difficulties, Anotes team totally forbid to mic the president during the whole filming. I was basically following the President as a delegate. It was an amazing life experience as the government of Kiribati eventually granted me a full delegate access. Having this access was incredible, but at the same time, I was not supposed to film. During most of the official meetings like UN General Assembly, COP21, ... the media access is extremely specific in certain zones. This is why most of docs has the same images from the camera of AP or the UN themselves. If you see for example the latest Al Gore movie during COP21, the filming crew was with Al Gore most of the time, but when it comes to the official events, the only images they are showing are the one from the official news wires. As a delegate, I had an exclusive access that absolutely no media could have. For example, during COP21 each country has 5 passes granted to any president team. The Kiribati delegation was composed of the President, First Lady, The minister of Environment, The secretary of States, The head of communication, The UN Ambassador and Myself, as a special adviser... This is quite extraordinary as I had truly an all access pass, but the biggest frustration was that I was totally forbid to film in all those areas. I was still able to snap some poorly filmed scenes, mostly with a hidden camera... They appear in the movie, but I don't think people will notice the extraordinary access.

ABOUT EYESTEEL FILM

EyeSteelFilm is a film and interactive media company dedicated to using cinematic expression as a catalyst for social and political change. It was created to develop cinema that empowers people who are ignored by mainstream media, a mandate that has taken the company to explore projects, people and ideas around the world.

EyeSteelFilm was founded through making films with the homeless community. Daniel Cross' gritty street trilogy (*The Street: a film with the homeless*, 1996; *SPIT: Squeegee Punks in Traffic*, 2002; *www.HomelessNation.org*, 2003) chronicled a generation of Canadians lost to social funding cuts, political apathy, alcoholism and drug use. These films provided a template for using engaged cinéma-vérité and interactivity for empowerment and change.

For almost 20 years, Montreal's award-winning EyeSteelFilm has made an international impact with social issue documentaries such as *Let There be Light* (2017), *I Am the Blues* (2015), *Deprogrammed* (2015), *Chameleon* (2014), *Forest of the Dancing Spirits* (2013), *Inside Lara Roxx* (2011), *Fortunate Son* (2011), *Rip! A Remix Manifesto* (2009), as well as a series of films chronicling modern life in *China: Bone* (2005), *Chairman George* (2006), *Up the Yangtze* (2007), *Last Train Home* (2009), *Vanishing Spring Light* (2011) and *China Heavyweight*, (2012). In the process, it has been the recipient of over 100 international awards.

EyeSteelFilm has been frequently named as a "Realscreen Top 100" company, The Eyesteelfilm group also comprises of a full-service theatrical and multi-platform distribution company for feature documentary and Art-house fiction films, and the Creative Reality Lab, which explores meaningful interactive storytelling.

CHARACTER BIOS

TIEMERI TIARE

Tiemeri (pronounced Sermay) Tiare, a young mother of six

ANOTE TONG

Anote Tong served as President of Kiribati from 2003 to 2016. Tong has been at the forefront of raising global awareness about catastrophic risks caused by climate change. With his atoll nation of Kiribati rising an average height of two meters above sea level, rising sea levels due to climate change pose an existential threat to Kiribati and other small island states in the Pacific. Tong directed Kiribati's purchase of approximately 20 square kilometers of land in Fiji in 2014 as an contingency refuge for his people. President Tong has been awarded leadership and environmental prizes for his work both in environmental protection and his advocacy on climate change and its effects. Anote Tong, dubbed as a 'climate warrior', pioneered the notion of 'migration with dignity' as the people of Kiribati may have to face leaving their homeland behind.

FILMMAKER BIOS

DIRECTOR, MATTHIEU RYTZ

Matthieu Rytz is a visual storyteller who for many years has added to the knowledge base around the consequences of erosion brought on by climate change. His media are photography, documentary filmmaking, and combining photography with virtual reality. *Anote's Ark* is his feature documentary debut. Matthieu also produces the World Press Photo exhibition in Montreal. His pictures, as well as those he commissions, have been exhibited throughout the world.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, BOB MOORE

Bob Moore is Co-President and Creative Producer at [EyeSteelFilm](#) in Montreal where he has produced over 25 feature documentaries since 2008, including *Last Train Home* (Lixin Fan, 2009), *Forest of the Dancing Spirits* (Linda Vastrik, 2013), *I am The Blues* (Daniel Cross, 2015), *Let There Be Light* (Mila Aung-Thwin, 2017) and *Tokyo Idols* (Kyoko Miyake, 2017). Along with his talented partners and collaborators, he has been the recipient of over 100 international awards, including Emmys, Golden Horses, Canadian Screen Awards, and festival grand jury prizes. Bob also oversees EyeSteelFilm's dedicated theatrical distribution company and Creative Reality Lab, which explores meaningful interactive storytelling. He was the subject of a Producer's

Spotlight at the Cannes Marché du Film in 2017, regularly consults with national and international film organizations, and enjoys working with and mentoring emerging filmmakers.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER + EDITOR, MILA AUNG-THWIN

Co-founder of [EyeSteelFilm](#), Mila Aung-Thwin revels in the diverse documentary joys of writing, directing, producing, editing, selling and mentoring. He has produced more than 25 feature documentaries, including *Up the Yangtze*, *Forest of the Dancing Spirits*, and the Emmy Award-winning *Last Train Home*. He served as president for 5 years of RIDM, Montreal's International documentary festival, as well as juror for the International Emmy Awards, AFI DOCS, the New Zealand Film Awards, and the Sundance Film Festival. He has also taught documentary film programs to emerging filmmakers in places such as Northern Canada, China and Myanmar.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, DANIEL CROSS

Daniel Cross is co-founder of EYESTEELFILM in Montreal, named by Real Screen Magazine as a top 100 non-fiction production company in the world. He is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, Concordia University, a member of the University's Circle of Distinction and a member of the University's Board of Governors.

Cross is a multi-disciplined award winning documentary filmmaker with a long history of directing and producing theatrical documentaries. He made his mark directing feature length films concerning issues of homelessness, *The Street: a film with the homeless*, *S.P.I.T: Squeegee Punks In Traffic*. Cross is very proud of the UN award winning website he created www.HomelessNation.Org.

Cross has won the both the Trailblazer award at MIPDOC in Cannes, and the inaugural Mentor of the Year award from the Canadian Media Producers Association. He participates in the IDFA Academy and serves on the boards of HOT DOCS, Documentary Organization of Canada and The Concordia University Documentary Centre.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, SHANNON O'LEARY JOY

An ocean and environmental philanthropist, Shannon's boards include Mission Blue, working with Dr. Sylvia Earle, WildAid, with Founder Peter Knights, the Funders' Collaborative Oceans5, and Compassion for Addiction, which supports the work of Dr. Gabor Maté. An advocate for the power of storytelling, filmmaking and photography, Shannon is Executive Producer of the documentary "Mission Blue"; Executive Producer

on “The Last Animals” and “Franca”; and Associate Producer of “Chasing Coral” which won the audience award at the Sundance Film Festival, where she supports the Climate Program.

Shannon grew up in rural Michigan and studied at UC Boulder and the National Holistic Institute, Berkeley. After college she traveled with the Grateful Dead and was blessed to live for three years in the New York home of Robert Rauschenberg, where, immersed in the visual arts, dance and creative innovation, she was inspired by his belief in the power to create change through impactful media. She now devotes herself to environmental work with a focus on climate/ocean issues and education. An avid diver and photographer, Shannon lives in Marin County, California.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, SHARI SANT PLUMMER

Environmental philanthropist and ocean activist Shari Sant Plummer is President and Founder of Code Blue Charitable Foundation, Secretary/Trustee of the Summit Charitable Foundation, board member of the Sylvia Earle Alliance, and Vice President of Seacology. Shari is also a member of the Ocean Unite, Nature’s Best Photography, and Blue Ocean Film Festival Advisory Boards, and the World Wildlife Fund’s National Council. A proponent of impact photography and filmmaking, she served as board chair of the International League of Conservation Photographers for five years, and is currently an affiliate.

Shari is also a producer of documentary films including the Netflix documentary “Mission Blue” (Executive Producer), and “Chasing Coral” (Associate Producer). She is also Executive Producer on “Sharkwater Extinction”, and “Ghost Fleet” currently in production for release in 2018.

CREDITS

ANOTE'S ARK

EYESTEELFILM

in association with *documentary* Channel Presents

ANOTE'S ARK

A film by Matthieu Rytz

This film is dedicated to the people of Kiribati

Featuring (in order of appearance)

President Anote Tong

Tiimeri (Sermari) Tiare

Ato Raatati Garstang

Berenike Temarawa

Tatieru Eventeang

Ambassador Makurita Baaro

Teea Tira

Mary Meita

First Lady Bernadette Temo

Timan Te Katumara

Kentaro Ono

Akka Maroti Rimon

Raitinteang Ato

Rikamati Naare

Kaeweaa Tabare

Bereti Tamaroa

Ross Maitinnara

Pelenise Alofa

Josephine Baaro

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner

Ngeangea Tamora Narayan

Tieriin Tiata
Masayuki Takeuchi
Miria Ato
Iatnita Tiare
Rimon Rimon
Cecilia Bahkita Raatati

Written, Directed and Produced by
Matthieu Rytz

Bob Moore
Mila Aung-Thwin
Daniel Cross

Executive Producers

Shari Sant Plummer
Shannon O'Leary Joy

Director of Photography
Matthieu Rytz

Editors
Oana Suteu Khintirian
Mila Aung-Thwin

Music
Patrick Watson

Sound Design
Sylvain Bellemare

Produced with the financial participation of

Developed by Arkar Films
Matthieu Rytz, Denis McCready

Development Consultant
Vanessa Warheit

Associate Producer
Valerie Shamash

Production Supervisor
Marina Serrao

Production Administrator
Katie McKay

Production Office Assistant
Leela Shamash

Research and Rights Supervisor
Edmund Duff

New Zealand Field Director and Additional Camera Briar March

Additional Camera
Rimon Rimon
Mark Lapwood ACS

Additional Writing
Oana Suteu Khintirian
Denis McCready

Post Production Supervisor
Victor Sandrasagra

Post Production Assistants
Will Mackenzie
Julie Palnychenko
Huei Lin

Assistant Editor
Gilda Pourjabar

Translation
Otana Wellington
Tieneri Tiare
Rimon Rimon
Juri Suzuki
Naomi Taburuea
Yuki Kasai-Paré
Ross Maitinnara

Transcription
Skylar Aung-Thwin
Hanna Campbell-Irwin
Janice Mulligan

Film Sly – Sound Editing Studio

Dialogue Editor

Valéry Dufort-Boucher

Sound Effects Editors

Mathieu Beaudoin

Mimi Allard

MELS – Sound Services

Re-Recording Mixer

Luc Boudrias

Re-Recording Mixer Assistant

Léonard Vasco

Technical Support

Christophe Bertrand

Assisted by

Gabrielle Labelle Joly

Joey Simas

Yanick Gauthier

Project Management Supervisor

Ludovic Poirier

Supervisor of Operations

Annie Presseault

Image Stabilisation

Marco Antonio Luna Barahona

Visual Effects

Alain Omer Duranceau

Colour Grading, Titles, Graphics

Francis Hanneman

Research Assistants

Zachary Jama Yvan Rytz

Distribution and Marketing

Damien Detcheberry Camille Jacques

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Excerpts from "Chasing Ice" provided by Exposure Labs

Drone footage of Kiribati from "Shanti Samsara" by Ricky Kej Filmed by Sairam Sagiraju and
Amoghavarsha

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Music

Original music by Patrick Watson

Musicians

Patrick Watson - Piano, vocal Mélanie Bélair - Violin Annie Gadbois - Cello Jean-Christophe Lizotte - Cello

"Aban te raoi ma te kabwaia"

Performed by St Paul's Catholic Church Choir, Kiribati

"Aio Ngai te Uea"

Performed by St Paul's Catholic Church Choir, Kiribati

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John Sutter
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Amanda Taylor
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Alison Wall
Peter Young
Salvatore Zappala

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Sandra Kleinfeld - Senior Director, *documentary* Channel Jordana Ross - Production Executive, *documentary*
Channel

Ikon Docs

Margje de Koning - Commissioning Editor EO/IKONdocs

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