

México DF 30 mayo 1986

Dear Mr. Durniok :

Although working in many things at the time, we haven't forget your HUMBOLDT propositinn.

The trip to Habana last march was very useful; I found many books unavailable in Mexico, I had time to have a good look in many of them and take some notes; some friends sent me more material and also here in Mexico we've found more books and articles, so by now we have enough material to give a lecture on Humboldt and hopefully to make a script and a film.

We still find it difficult though, to go further than the enormous amount of anecdotes and do something else than an "adventure film" due to the lack of real conflict in his life. It's easy to see an amusing and even spectacular film for children (wich might be not such a bad idea, after all) but it seems more complicated to go deeper that that.

We still think that the combination with Carpentier's world and books would give a much more interesting approach.

As you may remember I have an option on "Concierto Barroco" and a contract with Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía to write a script based on the same book. This contract was signed on the Alberto Isaac period and we thought with Alberto of the possibility of dealing both with Humboldt and Barroco in the same script, and -with Alberto- chances were we could have had also production support from the mexican side.

With Alberto's departure things became more complicated.

We already finished a "Barroco" script (without dealing with Humboldt) and gave to Inat. Mex. de Cinematografía since we were tied up by that contract. It seems obvious that the new Director of the Instituto is not interested in producing it so we're trying to get our rights back in order to be able to deal with you on a clear and legal basis.

...

As soon as I have news in this matter, I will, of course, let you know. In that case we could go back to your Berlin contract proposition and sign between us a "coproduction" for the script: A "Barroco-Humboldt" script; 3 hours for TV and a film at the same time.

In Habana I spoke with Walter Achúgar, whom I understand you know, of this project and he is interested in participating, possibly with Radio Televisión Española. I'm enclosing a letter he sent me, and that I showed together with yours, to Enrique Soto Izquierdo, as you remember the new boss in the Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía, with not too much of a success.

(I'm enclosing also a press-clip on Soto Izquierdo.

Nobody seems to be doing anything with him..!)

In Habana I spoke of the project with friends of Venezuela, Perú and Ecuador. And in April I spent a few days in Rio de Janeiro and spoke with Avellar from Embrafil about the same issue. So I feel rather optimistic of the possibilities of replacing Mexico in production terms.

So as soon as we can arrange our contract problems with Soto Izquierdo I'll let you know.

I wanted to write you about all this as to keep the Humboldt project alive, but there is also another purpose in this letter.

If everything goes fine, I think that what's left of 1986 will be needed to get rid of contract problems and to write the HUMBOLDT/BARROCO script. By the end of the year we could have a script and discuss it (together with production) during Habana or Rio film festivals. In any case, that would mean shooting not before the second half of 87 even if everything goes fine and smooth.

So in the meanwhile I have, of course, other projects. Specially one, and I want to tell you about it hoping you find it interesting enough.

There is a book published by Gallimard in French, called "L'espace d'un cillement" written in 1959 by the Haitian writer Jacques Stéphen Alexis (killed in 1961)

.....

I read the book last year and been working since in the possibility of making a film out of it.

I also spoke with Alberto of that project and at that time the original idea was to make a coproduction with Embrafilm shooting in Brasil with a mexican crew. (I'm enclosing copies o f both mexican and bradilian letters of intention signed last year)

Since then some things have changed in the project: since February the political situation in Haiti has changed; Alberto resigned, although I can replace his participation using an offer of mexican production by the Universidad Nacional that in this case could solve the problem, and third, although I've been looking for actor's in Brasil and Cuba (a couple of very fine black actors is required). si far I've been unlucky in finding them. So chances are we will have to bring this 2 actors from the US.

On the other hand, before starting the shooting I have to pay Gallimard around 25 000 USA dollars (200 000FF) for the copyright.

At the beggining it was a simple coproduction: Brasil would use cruceiros (or cruzados, now) and Mexico would pay in mexican pesos. We didn't need foreign currency.

Now we need dollars for Gallimard, 2 actors (not necessarily well known and expensive, but still, paid in dollars) and eventually a few extra dollars to shoot some pick ups in Haiti.

So we need a third coproducer.

Would you be interested?

The story takes place during the Holly Week, and popular festivities during that time of the year are an important part of the background, so we shduld be ready to shoot by march/april 1987.

I would have in a couple of months a readable draft (in spanish) that I could then send you, but I would like to know if you could be interested as soon as you may.

It's a very difficult book to resume, since almost anything really happens : in fact is a very simple love story between a prostitute and a worker in Port au Prince.

But the way is told in the book, and should in a film, makes it quite unique and beautiful.

The book is divided into 7 chapters: The sense of sight, the sense of smelling, the listening, the taste, the touch.. the 6th sense and a "coda". Most of the action takes place in a cabaret called "The Sensation Bar".

It's an extremely sensual description of a love affair in the context of the Caribbean atmosphere within a very precise, though only suggested, political context.

I can't avoid thinking of Buñuel's Age d'Or since it' also deals (in a different manner, of course) with "amour fou", love and social order, and "prise de conscience through love"

And how can you synthesize "Age d'or"?

I could send you a photocopy of the book in Spanish (since its out of circulation in the Mexican version) if you can't find it in French, and of course, as soon as its ready, a copy of the ~~xxx~~ script.

But since the time is running in this project, I wish you would let me know, as soon as you may, if it sounds interesting to you or not at all.

Hoping for a positive answer, I remain

yours, Paul Leduc.

