

Rocaterrania

A Film by Brett Ingram

Running time: 72 minutes
Year completed: 2008
Genre: Documentary

Contact information:

Bright Eye Pictures
2410 Springwood Drive
Greensboro, NC 27403 USA
www.brettingram.org

Brett Ingram
Producer/Director
(336) 675-5698
brett@brettingram.org

Overview: *Rocaterrania* is a feature length documentary exploring the secret world of scientific illustrator and visionary artist Renaldo Kuhler.

In the last four decades, seventy-six-year old Renaldo Kuhler has created hundreds of plates for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, illustrating diverse flora and fauna for obscure scientific journals and reference books. Before the making of this documentary, no one knew that Kuhler is also a prolific visionary artist. *Rocaterrania* unveils Kuhler's astounding body of work to the world and reveals the extraordinary story of his life in the process. Among other themes, the film is about the insidious nature of conformity, the courage to be one's true self, and the redemptive power of artistic creation. Featuring an eclectic original score by Merge Records' recording artists Shark Quest.

Synopsis: Renaldo Kuhler is the only son of Otto Kuhler, a German immigrant who served under Kaiser Wilhelm in World War I before emigrating to America with seven dollars in his pocket. Renaldo grew up in the immense shadow of his father, who became a famous American industrial designer and an acclaimed landscape painter, and struggled for his own identity as an artist. Like many Germans, Otto Kuhler romanticized the American West and the freedom it symbolized. When Otto fulfilled a lifelong dream by moving his family from upstate New York to a remote Colorado cattle ranch in 1948, teenaged Renaldo found the isolation unbearable and escaped to the private fantasy world of his notebooks. What began as the illustrated history of an imaginary country called "Rocaterrania" became Renaldo's lifelong obsession – secretly illustrating the coded story of his own life in plain spiral bound notebooks.

Rocaterrania is a tiny nation of eastern European immigrants who purchased a tract of land along the Canadian border, just north of the Adirondack Mountains in New York, after growing restless with America's notions of "democracy." Despite its aspirations for egalitarianism, *Rocaterrania* began as a monarchy ruled by a sadistic woman named Catherine who snatched urchins from the street and neutered them. Over the next six decades, *Rocaterrania* saw two revolutions and the rise and fall of a succession of czars, dictators, and presidents among a cast of characters vaguely resembling Russian historical figures. But, as the film reveals, each change in government reflected a deeper meaning for Renaldo, an outsider who struggled to escape an emotionally abusive family and searched for freedom within a real nation threatened by forces of conformity.

About the Filmmaker:

BRETT INGRAM—Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor

Formerly a journalist, high school physics teacher, and electrical engineer on the Space Shuttle Main Engine Program, Brett Ingram exchanged his pocket protector for a movie camera in 1990. His short documentaries and animated films have won thirty awards collectively, screening at more than 150 festivals, museums, and cinema venues internationally.

Ingram's first documentary feature, *Monster Road*, won sixteen awards (including "Best Documentary" at the 2004 Slamdance Film Festival) and screened at more than ninety festivals, museums, universities, and cinema venues internationally before premiering on Sundance Channel in 2005. Ingram has been awarded a Visual Artist Fellowship (1995) and a Film and Video Artist Fellowship (2002) from the North Carolina Arts Council. In 2007 he was awarded a Fellowship in Filmmaking from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Ingram teaches filmmaking in the Department of Broadcasting and Cinema at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He has also taught filmmaking at Wake Forest University and at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University.

Brett Ingram is the sole founder, owner, and operator of Bright Eye Pictures.