

Filmmaker Re-making 'Titanic' movie with no budget

New York artist is scheduled to give museum lecture tonight the project's process, will finish in Hobbs

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SUBMITTED PHOTO For the past two years Claudia Bitran, a New York-based artist and filmmaker has been remaking James Cameron's Titanic "1997" with absolutely no budget. She uses volunteers willing to be in the project to perform the scenes in the remake. She will talk about her project tonight at 7 p.m. at the Western Heritage Museum and filming the movie's final scenes on Friday.

Claudia Bitran will be looking for actors to appear in the last 25 minutes or so of her remake of James Cameron's 1997 epic movie, "Titanic" when she appears at the Western Heritage Museum at 7 p.m. tonight to talk about her life as a nomadic movie maker. She plans to shoot those 25 minutes in Hobbs.

"No acting experience is required to win a role in the movie," she said. "I just want to meet people who would like a part and to talk with them. I especially need men to play the roles of marines, stewards and ship architect. And I need kids."

Bitran plans to shoot those final 25 minutes on Friday.

For the past several years, the New York based artist and filmmaker has been remaking the three hour movie with what she described in an interview as "absolutely no budget. It will be exactly the same length as the original, and it includes animation as well as live actors."

For props and scenery she's used recycled materials from her immediate surroundings. Using her skills as a painter, she's painted background, and she has sewed countless costumes using donated or re-purposed fabric.

Although Bitran is based in New York City, where she works as a waitress when she's waiting to receive one of the grants she applies for, she lives a nomadic life much of the time. She applies for grants that let artists do their work without worrying about most everyday expenses.

"I apply for lots of artist-in-residence grants. Sometimes I get one and sometimes I don't," she said. "When I'm working at my job in New York, I can always be thinking and planning about my project." Right now, she's the artist in residence in Roswell. It's her first time in New Mexico and she "loves the people. They're so open and participative. And it's a wonderful grant," she said. "It's for a year and it includes a house and studio and a stipend."

Bitran wanted to do a remake of Cameron's movie partly because "it was the most expensive movie ever made and I wanted to see if it could be remade without a budget. But mainly, it was because the sinking of the Titanic is something that everybody all over the world knows about. It's one of those iconic moments in history that everyone can relate to."

Bitran said her movie is "an experimental movie that will go to film festivals. It isn't meant to be a commercial movie.

Mary Lyle, education director at the museum, said Bitran is "full of energy. She'll be showing clips from her film-making and she's bringing props and costumes for the audience to see."

After Bitran's presentation, audience members will have the opportunity to have refreshments, ask questions and learn more about the filming, Lyle said.

Bitran will also go to Hobbs High School Friday to talk with students in fine arts classes about her work.

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