

LUTAH MARIA RIGGS SOCIETY

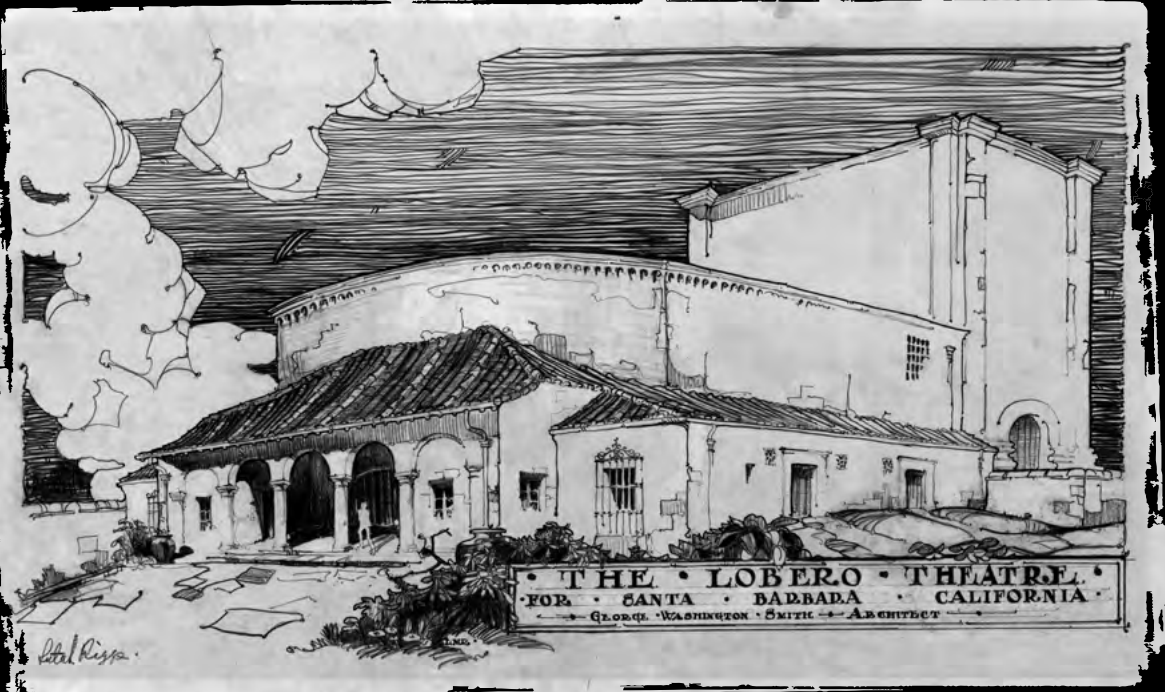
PRESENTS

A NEW FILM BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI



Lutah

A PASSION FOR ARCHITECTURE: A LIFE IN DESIGN



LUTAH MARIA RIGGS SOCIETY PRESENTS A MIRROR AND HAMMER FILMS PRODUCTION "LUTAH"
MUSIC BY TODD CAPPS EDITED BY RYAN PETTEY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RYAN PETTEY ASSOCIATE PRODUCER DAISY WEBER EXECUTIVE PRODUCER LESLIE SWEEM BHUTANI AND GRETCHEN LIEFF
WRITTEN BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI RYAN PETTEY AND DAISY WEBER DIRECTED BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI

LUTAH.ORG

IMAGE COURTESY OF UCSB ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN COLLECTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"I dedicated myself to architecture...it comes first, I come last."
—Lutah Maria Riggs

LUTAH explores the life of a little known architect who left a big legacy. She designed iconic buildings such as the Lobero Theater, Vedanta Temple, and the Botanic Garden and was integral to rebuilding a damaged Santa Barbara after the 1925 earthquake. Lutah designed exquisite homes in many styles for some of Santa Barbara's greatest philanthropists and spent hundreds of volunteer hours laying the foundation for the Santa Barbara Landmarks Commission. She did all of this as an independent woman at the turn of the 20th century.

This is the untold story of Lutah Maria Riggs.

Lutah navigated her way through the male-centric world of architecture and brought a fresh take to the established architectural styles of Southern California. From Spanish Colonial Revival to Art Deco, to Modernist and back to Traditionalism, Riggs mastered the art of experimentation. Her attention to detail, use of new materials, environmental concerns, and love of the natural landscape brought a unique and specific quality to her work. As one of her contemporaries said, "With Lutah, there was no such thing as impossible; it just took a little bit longer."

For 60 years Lutah blazed a trail for architects and women, relying on the courage of her convictions and a hint of eccentricity. In a time when most women's highest expectation was marriage Riggs pursued her passion and created a life of independence, an exceptional choice for a woman at that time. In addition to her buildings, Lutah also left a legacy: She was a self-made woman who boldly overcame barrier after barrier.

LUTAH offers never before seen photos and journal entries from Riggs' personal collection, and candid interviews reveal the woman behind the drafting table. With stunning footage of some of Santa Barbara's most iconic structures and a rare glimpse of private homes, **LUTAH** sheds light on true Santa Barbara treasures.



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FILMMAKER COMMENTS

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In February 2013, Leslie Bhutani and Gretchen Lieff, Executive Producers of **LUTAH**, asked me if I wanted to direct a film about a little-known Santa Barbara architect, Lutah Maria Riggs. As my deep passions lie in making social justice documentaries based in the Third World I was initially a little reluctant. However, over lunch, after hearing about this extraordinary woman, I felt that Lutah (I do feel I have come to know her very well) was someone who, through her fiercely independent approach to her work, and life in general, had been a pioneer both architecturally and for women's rights.

Lutah Maria Riggs is intriguing because she never pandered to some of the excesses demanded of women in a male-centric world of the mid twentieth century. And once I realized that, and had gathered together a terrific production team to make the film (Ryan Pettey as Director of Photography and Editor, and Daisy Weber as Associate Producer and Researcher), it was on its way! But making a film about someone who is no longer alive presents challenges all of its own. Drawing on letters, diaries and photographs – Lutah wrote all about her everyday life – I feel I have come to understand her, and hope that she would not think it forward on my part to say so. Reading and re-reading her witty and evocative diaries, often full of excitement for life and nature, revealed that this woman was an artistic, loyal, and generous person who nursed some strong commitments – to beauty, to the environment and to simplicity.

While making this film I have come to see not only the built environment, but dedication and achievement, through a new lens. From the grand estates of Montecito and the cottage of Isla Vista to the Vedanta Temple nestled amongst the rocks and the chaparral, I was taken by the craftswomanship and sensitivity with which Lutah designed. Perhaps a woman of such matter-of-factness would see a film about her architecture to be "unnecessary flubdub" – to use a Lutah-ism - but I know film is the best way to capture the beauty and thoughtfulness of Lutah's art.

"Light is the paintbrush of architecture... The subject of light and architecture is an essential subject because architecture is only revealed by light. Form and shape are revealed by light."

–Bob Easton, Architect

PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

KUM-KUM BHAVNANI (DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / WRITER) is a university professor by day at UC Santa Barbara, teaching about third world, gender and culture...and a film-maker by night. She has moved continents a number of times during her life, but has been settled in California for the last 20 years. Kum-Kum lives with her two fabulous children, Cerina and Amal, and her just-as-fabulous partner, John.

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Kum-Kum's family migrated to England from India in 1958 where she lived until her 1991 arrival in to the USA. Due to British racism, her father never had employment that was appropriate to his background, so her schoolteacher mother supported her husband and her three daughters in Southall, London. Kum-Kum became politically engaged in the UK, working on anti-racist and Third World struggles, combined with feminist and trade union issues, from the age of 18. She worked with street theatre and television and radio production, researching, writing, and narrating. Her earliest public video project, *Resist and Survive* for Channel 4, was conducted under the direction of Dee Dee Glass and aired in February 1983.

Kum-Kum's first documentary, *THE SHAPE OF WATER* narrated by Susan Sarandon, weaves the intimate stories of Khady, Oraiza, Bilkusben, Dona Antonia, Gila – women living in Senegal, Brazil, India, and Jerusalem. This film shot over four years and across three continents, offers a unique view of the complex realities of the women and their passions to create a more just world.

Kum-Kum's second documentary, *NOTHING LIKE CHOCOLATE*, also narrated by Susan Sarandon, tells the moving story of the relentless and headstrong Mott Green, founder of the Grenada Chocolate Company, as he pursues his unique vision to create the best chocolate in the world, from scratch.

Kum-Kum's goal in film-making is to try to foster a passion for making change in the world, by learning how others are doing this.

"These homes were not just homes for a client. They were homes that became part of extended relationships...these homes were her children."

–Melinda Gándara, Art Historian

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LESLIE SWEEM BHUTANI (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is a passionate activist for many causes. She is very involved with Planned Parenthood, The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, and the Humane Society of the United States. She is a passionate parent of two fabulous young adults, and a passionate wife to a patient husband, Ashish. Her lovely parents have recently moved to Santa Barbara, and she is eager to share her passion about Lutah with all her friends and family! This is the second time she has collaborated with Director Kum-Kum Bhavnani; the first being *NOTHING LIKE CHOCOLATE*, an award-winning documentary in the 2012 SBIFF. Leslie is an active member of the Lutah Maria Riggs Society.

GRETCHEN LIEFF (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is the Founder of the Lutah Maria Riggs Society and is passionate about local history; she is a staunch supporter of Casa del Herrero, Lotusland, Pearl Chase Society, Santa Barbara Historical Museum, Montecito Historical Society, and the Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara. In addition to local history and architectural preservation, she is a supporter of UCSB Arts&Lectures, Planned Parenthood, Channelkeeper, Human Rights Watch, and Domestic Violence Solutions. She has worked closely with the Napa Land Trust and Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County where she was instrumental in preserving substantial open space. She has also worked with Napa and Santa Barbara Legal Aid Societies.

Gretchen enjoyed a long career in radio and TV news, culminating at KGO Radio/ABC News San Francisco. She is currently President and Owner of Lieff Wines. She is the author of "Older and Wiser" Ballantine Books, 2001. Gretchen lives with her husband Robert, in Montecito.

"She's absolutely unique because even through the entire Depression she was able to support herself using her profession. She had to go to Hollywood and do set designs, but she - for her entire life - she never compromised her profession to support herself. Which is unique in any time."

—Krishnaprana, Vedanta Society of Southern California, Santa Barbara

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RYAN PETTEY (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY / EDITOR / WRITER), a 2004 University of California at Santa Barbara graduate, has directed and edited several feature documentary films including *AFTER THE LAST ROUND* (2009) and *FROM THE DUST* (2012). His edit credits also include Kum-Kum Bhavnani's *NOTHING LIKE CHOCOLATE* (2012). Ryan currently operates Satellite Pictures, a film production company focused on story-driven commercial and theatrical content.

DAISY WEBER (ASSOCIATE PRODUCER) is a recent graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara (Double Major - Literature, History) and has been pursuing her love of history and research since graduating in 2011. Prior to working on **LUTAH**, Daisy worked as the Director of Visitor Services of the Santa Barbara Historical Museum for two years, and has tutored local high school students in American and World History for the last six years. Daisy is currently doing research for an upcoming program for the BBC America Network.

MELINDA GÁNDARA (CONSULTANT ARCHIVIST) is an independent writer and curator; she is a former archivist for the Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at University of California at Santa Barbara and is currently the historian for the Lutah Maria Riggs Society. Gándara received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from UC Santa Barbara and has lectured widely on California architecture and modern and contemporary Latin American art. She was an assistant curator for the 2012 *CAREFREE CALIFORNIA: CLIFF MAY AND THE ROMANCE OF THE RANCH HOUSE* exhibition. She is dedicated to cultivating new museum audiences, and mentors first-generation university students.

"Her beautiful sketches and renderings are what first told me that she was an artist putting architecture on the ground, not just completing buildings."
– Isabelle Greene, Landscape Architect



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TODD CAPPS (COMPOSER) is a film and television composer, songwriter, and studio recording artist based in Santa Barbara, California. His scores have received national critical acclaim, and include award-winning films officially selected in festivals from Sundance, Toronto, to Santa Barbara. His work as a songwriter and recording artist includes several internationally renowned projects on the Fat Records label.

CHRISTINA MALAVENDA (STORY CONSULTANT) received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University and her M.F.A. from University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. Her films have screened at many festivals, including Sundance. She has also received numerous awards, including the Caucus Foundation grant, and is a Film Independent Project: Involve fellow. She is currently writing, directing and editing for the Hallmark instant streaming company SpiritClips.

LYDIA KAESTNER (PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERN) is a student at UC Santa Barbara, graduating March 2014 with a B.A. in History of Art and Architecture. She is writing her Honors Thesis with Professor Jeanette Peterson on Inka monolithic stones and their relation to the ideal and sacred realms. She also interns at the UC Santa Barbara Art, Design and Architecture Museum and the Architecture and Design Collection. Lydia is currently the Vice President of the Art History Association at UC Santa Barbara and currently works at the Maritime Museum, as well as having interned for the Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara and studied film at Santa Barbara City College. A Santa Barbara native, Lydia is eager to broaden her knowledge about the history of her hometown.

"Lutah wanted her buildings to be seen among others as good buildings, not as a pretty good building by a woman. She wanted the buildings to speak for themselves."

—Rose Thomas, Architectural Historian



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CAST LIST

KUM-KUM BHAVANI	Director / Producer / Writer
LESLIE SWEEM BHUTANI	Executive Producer
GRETCHEN LIEFF	Executive Producer
VON ROMBERG HOUSE (1938)	Associate Producer
DAISY WEBER	Associate Producer/ Researcher
RYAN PETTEY	Director of Photography /Editor/ Writer
MELINDA GÁNDARA	Consultant Archivist
TODD CAPPS	Composer
CRISTINA MALAVENDA	Story Consultant
DAVE JENKINS	Color Grading (Dajen Productions)
DOM CAMARDELLA	Sound Mix (SB Sound Design)
LYDIA KAESTNER	Public Relations Intern

"She was very committed to the relationship between the building and the land. No house she could have ever made could have ever been planted on another piece of ground because it started with the ground."

– Joe Knowles, Architect, Lutah Maria Riggs Firm

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Interviewees and Homeowners

MARC APPLETON

ANONYMOUS

BHAVAPRANA

CASA DEL HERRERO

BRAD DUNNING

BOB EASTON

PETER EDWARDS

SHEILA ENELOW

JANET FRIESEN

MELINDA GÁNDARA

ISABELLE GREENE

DEMING ISAACSON

JOE KNOWLES

KRISHNAPRANA

CLAUDIA LAPIN

STAN LARSEN

LOBERO THEATER FOUNDATION

SARAH JANE LYND

HIDEKO MALIS

OZZIE DA ROS

MARGI SNYDER

SANTA BARBARA BOTANICAL GARDEN

JANET AND RICK STICH

THT TRUST

ROSE THOMAS

VEDANTA SOCIETY

REVEREND PAUL VIT

VRAJAPRANA

VOLKER M. WELTER

JOHN WOODWARD

DAWN SOPHIA ZIEMER

"A home is ... shelter from the elements, a place of retreat and rest, a place of happiness, if possible, and a home should have enough beauty to provide a lift for the spirit."

—Lutah Maria Riggs, Architect

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