

Film Review:  
*PastPresentFuture: Archaeology and Tourism in  
the Yucatán.*

Directed and produced by Sam Pack. 2022.  
Berkeley Media. 34 minutes.

by Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire

Sam Pack – Professor of Anthropology at Kenyon College – just released a highly relevant ethnographic film based in the Puuc region of Yucatan, Mexico, entitled *PastPresentFuture: Archaeology and Tourism in the Yucatán*. This 34-minute-long bilingual (subtitled) documentary presents an uninterrupted string of interviews with diverse people ranging from American archaeologists and Yucatec field technicians to dedicated tour guides and clueless tourists.

This series of short, interesting interviews gives a strong multivocal flair to this film, tackling several complex questions without ever really naming them: How has archaeology contributed to cultural preservation in Yucatan? Who are the different groups involved in the archaeological process in Yucatan? How do Yucatec economies, the tourism industry, and archaeology interface? To what degree do modern Yucatecos feel connected with the peninsula's archaeological heritage?

This documentary sits at a crossroad. Interviews with both scholars and grassroots archaeological professionals open a window on contrasting views about archaeology's positionality. In this, the film correctly reflects how the broader field is transitioning in terms of practice; and how the many agents participating in this transition do so in their own way and at their own rhythm.

*PastPresentFuture* also shines a light on the generational divide between the younger and older archaeological field technicians and professionals of Yucatan. Interviews with a tour guide and artisans also address the complex – and not always positive – intersections between archaeology, INAH, and the tourism industry. Amongst them all, interviews with Tomás Gallareta Negrón, Pedro Gongóra Interián, Evan Parker, Patricia Martín Morales, and José María Osorio González stand out.

Despite some technical challenges – in both sound and image capture – *PastPresentFuture* is a valuable contribution to the archaeology documentary genre. Notably, the film deftly uses archival and artistic visuals, including some artwork by Aaron Alfano taken (with permission) from the first issue of *The Mayanist*. The film’s original guitar soundtrack is also excellent. One critique I do have concerns the film’s sparse credits, where the names of the interviewees and collaborators do not appear. Nevertheless, Sam Pack’s strong multivocal and unstructured approach gives his film an impressionistic lens that adequately captures the heterogeneous – Indigenous, archaeological, and touristic – reality of Yucatan’s Maya cultural heritage. I highly recommend this film—especially to university and high school instructors wishing to infuse a solid dose of multivocality in the classroom. *PastPresentFuture*’s humanity and introspective tone will also make it appealing to the general public interested in questions of indigeneity, cultural preservation, and tourism.

This film will soon be available for purchase on the Berkeley Media LLC website: <https://www.berkeleymedia.com/>