THE HISTORY OF KiCHIC

I would like to share with you thestory ofhow I came up withthe idea of openingthe doors of my home, which ended up being KiCHIC. Let's begin by stepping back a bit in time telling you an essential part of this story. My story with the Peruvian North begins with my maternal grandfather, Count Zygmunt Broel-Plater. 87 years ago, -being a young man eager for adventure and conquering the world- my grandfather departed for South America full of dreams and leaving behind his native Poland. What made him think of coming to so distant and unknown lands? Europe was then experiencing the effects of post-war damages and the continent was suffering depression …and it was but his adventurous spirit that brought him here. He lived in Lima a for couple of years and this is where she met his wife, Doña Maria Rostworowski Tovar. From this union came my mother to the world. They divorced a few years later, which was rather unusual at the time; and a few years later my grandmother remarried Alejandro Diez Canseco. Alejandro died young and after a long mourning, she came back to life taking an interest in getting acquainted with her country, Peru, who she had left as a kid and to which she had returned later as a young girl. Raul Porras Barrenechea was her teacher who ingrained in her a deep love for our country and its history. She awakened a passion for the Tahuantinsuyo and was recognized as the most devoted historian to the Inca Empire, thus leaving a historical legacy and national identity ...

Maria is my maternal grandmother, and, through her, I learned that we can be self-taught if we are consistent with our deeds and actions; also, to love my country, and to deepen to find my roots, to be. It would be unfair to tell this story without telling a bit of what happened with my grandfather, Zygmunt, after their divorce. He was a light-blooded man, who in addition to being a good dancer he was an excellent pianist. In the '50s, he was offered a job managing the Cabo Blanco Fishing Club, a select club for millionaires engaged in amateur fishing in the North of Peru, and, adventurous as he was, he did not think it twice, he felt that life was offering him a good opportunity and departed. This time the framework was Cabo Blanco. A near-to-lost place in the world map which regardless, was very well- known for its fly-marlin fishing, regarded as the ultimate trophies in fishing sports and also famous among international celebrities, such as Ernest Hemingway, Marilyn Monroe, etc. And, my grandfather Zygmunt was there, living the golden years of the Fishing Club. He was an important part of these anecdotal stories that I heard so much as a girl. It was maybe because of these stories by Zygmunt and the ones told by my grandmother Maria, that the North of Peru found such an important place in my heart. Who knows if my subconscious had planted a seed…Because some years later, in 1989, when I met the father of my children and he proposed living up North, we just went there in search of a new chance in life; we did so with a sense of longing for what we were leaving behind but also with great expectation to begin a simpler and quality life. We knew beforehand that it was not going to be easy starting anew in unfriendly lands, without electricity, with kerosene refrigerators and without any comforts, but even so, we decided it was worth a try.

With the help of a partner and with a great deal of effort, we managed to build a hotel in the middle of nowhere. At that time, the challenge was greater since we fully depended on Piura; Máncora was only dunes, hills and the beach. Wherever you looked, there were no signs of civilization and it was precisely that which captivated me. This hotel is still standing, and although it has been fully remodeled, you can see the palm trees that we planted and are reminiscent of the spirit of that adventure.

We' lived ten magical years in Máncora, we didn't have any close neighbors, the closest was 3 km away and Vichayito did not yet exist. These were years of effort, but also of great adventures and awards, among them life quality and freedom.

At that time, the whole country was plunged into terror, facing attacks perpetrated by Shining Path (terrorist group); they were very tough time for almost the entire country, but terrorism never reached the north which was a blessing for us. But in 1999, when the phenomenon of El Niño struck up north, we decided to return to Lima for some time and once there, we were offered a job in Sydney, Australia.

We thought the experience would be a good opportunity for the family, to be able to know and live in a different culture; we accepted the offer with pleasure. We had never imagined that this trip would keep us away from Perú for fifteen years, and that, thanks to this journey, I personally, was given the chance to meet wonderful people who shared and contributed experiences and knowledge that were and still are the pillars of my spiritual development.

Thanks to them, I managed to find my place in the world and discover what my purpose would be in life: to create awareness.

We lived three years in Australia and, although this country cannot be compared with Máncora… for obvious reasons, to our surprise Australia proved to have also wild aspects. I realized that its people are very much connected to nature, which made the transition smoother for us; it helped us deal with the numerous changes that were still to come.

While we lived away from Perú, year after year Máncora was the meeting point for our family and the place to re-encounter our roots. It became the place to spend the holidays. It was a return to our homeland, all hungry for home and somehow, thanks to these trips, we were able to keep the sense of belonging.

I would have never thought that one day I would open the doors of my home to receive people from so many different parts of the world!

After leaving Australia, we were lucky enough to live in Guatemala, Costa Rica and Chile. All this moving around made it possible for my whole family to be citizens of the world, it made us all more open-minded and open-hearted.

One fine day, I received a call from my eldest son, who was in India, inviting me to visit that great country. Without giving it a second thought, I grabbed my bags and headed off to the east. All I can say is that it was one of the best experiences I've ever had in my life, and that being there aroused in me a myriad of questions that needed answers, and since then, I have devoted myself to looking for those answers. But in turn have given rise to more. I`m sure there will always be more questions to be answered, and therefore, the search will never end.

During my stay in India I tried vegetarianism, then I became one and still am. I love how well and light I feel by not eating meat. Also, in my humble opinion one can eat wonderfully without the need of having an animal on the plate.

After so many journeys, we began to plan our return to our homeland. Little by little the idea came up to create a space where to share a good rest, change our eating habits, practice yoga and meditation, listen to good music, and connect with our own selves.

This idea emerged little by little, and became a passion. I felt that I had to open a space where to embrace people, and convey a little of what I had learned in my passage through life. Ideas brainstormed and, little by little, materialized until each piece fit into place and the projects started to take shape. The most important thing was being the gateway to a world of eating balance and peace of mind, and convey the importance of a life in harmony with the self.

I started rebuilding my house, building some walls and knocking down others; many changes took place. I did some research to rescue the native essence of the area, its materials and construction techniques; to this, I added the knowledge acquired in my studies of art, such as finishing techniques using different materials.

It was then that I started the project, rolled up my sleeves and went to work non-stop for 1 year and 4 months. I think that all this process was like making a big sculpture.

During the building period, I basically ate only fruits in the daytime, so I got the extra energy andclarity to be able to complete my project with greater wisdom. I have to admit that I was visited by many friends during the building period, and their contributions at the time were key and of great help. To each of them I thank from the bottom of my being.

Once certainty I had was that we would not fell one single free from the area to use for wood. I went to Fernandez Creek field and started to look for fallen trees; I found pieces that I consider unique. I rescue some because of their shape and beauty and worked cleaning them and always with respect. One of the ones I found with this special shape was the dry Hualtaco tree, native of the area; it is now behind the front desk.

Definitively, the site spoke to me, whispered in my ears what I had to do; the ideas were slowly emerging with warmth and respect for nature.

Let me do a parenthesis to thank the people who worked with me, for having learned how to listen to me with sensitivity and attention to then translate my ideas just as I imagined them. Thanks Carlitos, Javier, Juan, Juan Carlos, Jose Luis, Alexander, Arroyo, Cesar, Flaco, Conejo, Gerardo, Martincho, Joaquin, Alejandro Guerrero, and Master Morales who, due to his continued delays, forced me to make of the Hualtaco room his Tapestry Workshop, which let me monitor him closely to complete his work.

Many of the objects I used to decorate the ambiances were mine, they have been with me all my life, have traveled with me, and have been part of the different homes I've made. Some I found in antique shops, there are also fine crafts, works of art, both modern and antique furnishings and some others recycled. This is how it was; little by little the décor took shape; you could almost say it arrived by itself. I feel like telling you a story that, to me, only confirms how, if one is open to life, things flow and come about by themselves. One day, I was busy concerned about which sofa to put somewhere for which I had nothing ready yet but, since at that time I was not planning to go to Lima to buy anything; I spoke my thoughts out loud and said: The time will come…!

I took my car and I went to run some errands and, on the way, I run into a truck that signaled me to stop. I asked the driver what I could do for him, and he told me: "Ms. Cristina I am bringing a sofa from Lima". "What!!!" I thought. When the driver handed me the way bill, I realized that the piece of furniture came from a dear friend who had visited me a few months before and had offered to send me a piece of furniture as a gift to the hotel. I never imagined that this would arrive just the same day that I needed it! ... The stars have aligned several times, this is just an example.

At first, my idea was to name the room after herbs, for example chamomile, mint, or basil. But, even though we tried and memorize them, we could never relate with those names. Then I realized that while building, we referred to the rooms after something that distinguished them from one another in noticeable way.

Finally, it was much easier to name them according to the particular detail that defined them. This is how Barro (mud) was born, after its light and fresh walls made of mud, Hualtaco because of the line of that wood placed in front of the window that give it private quality, Piedra (Stone) because of the imposing wall surrounding the old bath tub, Elefante because of a drawing made by one of my daughters on a wall, Ki because that had been my bedroom and Ki is the name I go by to my closest friends, Himalaya because it is the only one high above, Balance because it has at both side two room equal size, Chic because Rocio and I strive to make it the most chic we could, and finally, Neem because in this little garden it has two beautiful Neem trees.

There are only nine rooms and each one of them is different, both in size and decoration. What I wanted was that my guests felt like visiting a home, more than staying at a hotel where things are bought in series or by the dozen. I wanted to make the rooms comfortable, with good beds, nice pillows and sheets, Bamboo fiber towels, alpaca blankets, fans, and … air conditioning for the most demanding.

At the beginning, we didn't want to have TVs in the rooms, but it was guests themselves who wanted them. So, I decided it was time to put one in each room, but we also gave them our touch, we dressed them with a printed cover, a suggestive print…

We have wanted to be good listeners and embrace suggested changes, to be respectful with different ways of thinking and the cultural diversity of the friends we welcome at the Hotel.

Particularly, I believe that true change lies in acceptance.

Then the issue of the name came up. Why KiCHIC? Many thoughts that it was named after me, because my friends know me as Kiki, and my close friends call me Ki. However, there is a whole philosophy behind the name. In old Japanese the word Ki, means energy, vital or universal force. The word Chic is synonym of style, but above all,
creativity. Ki CHIC is then the balance between matter and spirit, between personality and soul, between inner life and the detail of daily life. The perfect balance of our day to day.
The house has the magic and energy of the spirit, and every single corner can submerge you is peace and rest. The concept we propose is clear: to transmit a harmonious balance, without the need for luxury… we intend to speak without words, hoping that many would know how to listen…
The logo was created by a great friend of mine from Chile, sweet and patient María Jose, who designed it with a Japanese feather soaked in liquid ink. With her handmade strokes, line by line, she managed to make the circle representing an organic form that to characterizes us now.
I decided that if the environment invited us to have a plentiful and healthy life, we had to be consistent in the kitchen and not use a microwave or products that altered foodstuff and, where possible, work with organic inputs from the area. So, with the help of Swiss Cheff Linas Kesminas, we started developing our own Kichic Menu. It was kind of drastic at first because it was rawish/vegan but people wouldn't understand; so, we started adding a touch of our Peruvian taste and achieved a nice and healthy balance.
Linas taught us many things, including how to develop our own inputs such as granolas, egg-less coconut mayonnaise, gomasio, pastas, jams, bread, hummus and ice cream, among others. That is, we tried as far as possible to have a healthy kitchen, and to do so, we have also grown our own organic garden.
Little after opening the doors of KiCHIC, I realized that many people wanted to eat fish and seafood and decided it was time to create a marine Menu. Since, for me, it is important not to cook in the same space where veggie food is prepared, we built the marina bar so that each had its own space. Without realizing it, by adding this marine
alternative, once again we accomplished a good balance.

The yoga room, made with native wood, was originally the home of my eldest son. It was he who sowed each Neem tree around it and it is thanks to his loving dedication that today we can enjoy the enchanted woods it has become. The Neem tree is a native tree of India, fully compatible with the dry climate of the north, whose fruit has been used for medicinal purposes since the old times.
As a personal remark, I can only say that yoga changed my life. In addition to the physical well-being it brings with postures, it also opens by heart and gives me a deep connection. It is worth mentioning the importance of how Yoga helps us not to lose the elasticity of the body that over the years is waning.

It cannot fail to mention Rocio, my first cousin, who came into my life as an angel when I just had finished putting up KiCHIC.
I had no idea of how to handle management issues and one fine day she whatsapped me asking if I knew anybody who would like to hire her management services because she was really tired of living in the city.
Since then, it is Rocio who impeccably takes cares of my dear KiCHIC, in addition to having been an invaluable support to me in difficult moments of my life.

Thanks, Rochito …my deepest gratitude.

The only thing there is left to say is that I am so grateful to the life, for my privilege of living it simply and having daily contact with nature, which never ceases to amaze me. I am happy to see how my home has opened its doors to the world and knows how to welcome the traveler who comes from all different parts of the planet, with a desire of renewal, and to see that they find it in this space created with patience, generosity and love. Many of them leave a footprint with their valuable contributions that help us grow and improve each day. Now that you know the history of KiCHIC, I hope you enjoy my home as much as I did, and where I live happily raising my kids in liberty. I hope you can feel the magic of the surroundings, the balance of the space made for you to renew your energy, and experience a connection with your inner self.

Cristina.