

KINO

Philippine-German Cinema Relations

Edited by
Tilman Baumgärtel

SINE



**GOETHE-INSTITUT
MANILA**





illustration: Roxlee

KINO-SINE

Philippine-German Cinema Relations

Edited by
Tilman Baumgärtel

Published by
Goethe-Institut Manila
2007

Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.)

**KINO-SINE:
Philippine-German Cinema Relations**

Copyright © 2007 Tilman Baumgärtel and Goethe-Institut Manila 2007

With contributions by Jürgen Brüning, Ditsi Carolino, Lav Diaz, Nick Deocampo, Harun Farocki, Ulrich Gregor, Nan Goldin, Christoph Janetzko, Mark Meily, Ingo Petzke, Rosa von Praunheim, Raymond Red, Roxlee, Werner Schroeter, Bobby Suarez, Kidlat Tahimik, John Torres, Maria Vedder and Michael Wulfes.

Copy Editor and Translator: Gregory Bradshaw

Design & Layout: Rocilyn Locsin Laccay

Coverdesign: Tilman Baumgärtel (concept) with the help of a nameless Jeepney

Signboard Painter on Don Mariano Marcos Avenue in Litex, Fairview

All rights reserved. No part of this book
may be reproduced in any form or by any means
without the written permission of the copyright owner
and the publisher.

This book is available for download at
www.goethe.de/kinosine

ISBN 978-971-27-2025-3

Printed in the Philippines
by Cacho Hermanos (Subic) Inc.

Published and exclusively distributed by
ANVIL PUBLISHING, INC.
8007-B Pioneer Street
Bgy. Kapitolyo, Pasig City 1603
Philippines
Tels.: 637-3621, 637-5141 (sales & marketing)
Fax: 637-6084
Email: marketing@anvilpublishing.com
Web site: www.anvilpublishing.com



Table of Contents

Richard Künzel , Introduction	6
Tilman Baumgärtel The Sine-Kino-Connection Philippine-German Cinema Relations	8
Nick Deocampo Into the Light Filipino Alternative Cinema and the Neuer Deutscher Film	20
Rosa von Praunheim An Uneasy Silence	30
Werner Schroeter Scattered Mirrors	34
Maria Vedder The Only Revolution of My Life	38
Harun Farocki I Don't Think I was the Right Seminar Leader	42
Michael Wulfes We Returned to the Philippines Almost Every Year	48
Ditsi Carolino The Workshop Set the Tone for Me	52
Christoph Janetzko Experimental Film Productions in the Philippines	56
Raymond Red Musings on the German Influence	62
Lav Diaz We Were Talking About the Poetry of Cinema	64
Ingo Petzke Not Even the Taxi Drivers Could Cheat Me Any Longer	66
Mark Meily I Got My Break	70
Jürgen Brüning My Philippine Adventure	72
Ulrich Gregor Kidlat Tahimik, <i>Perfumed Nightmare</i> and Other Film Encounters Between the Philippines and Germany	76
Bobby Suarez Four Close and Loyal Friends	80
You Have to Let Your Sariling Duende Speak A Conversation between Kidlat Tahimik and John Torres, moderated by Tilman Baumgärtel	84
Filmlist	98

Preface

Soon after my arrival in Manila in early 2007 at my new post as director of the German Cultural Centre (Goethe-Institut) I had the pleasure of being invited by the Mowelfund Film Institute to speak on the occasion of the official inauguration of the UNESCO “Memory of the World” Philippine Committee. In 2001 the German film *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang was the first film to be included in UNESCO’s “Memory of the World” list, The Goethe-Institut was asked to screen it during the opening ceremony. *Metropolis* was perfectly accompanied live by a group of young Philippine musicians named *Rubber Inc.*, who had already earlier successfully composed and performed digitally generated music for other German silent movies shown in Manila. There was a panel discussion conducted by the Philippine filmmaker Nick Deocampo, whose concept was to never present a film without running an in-depth discussion in order to explain to the audience details of the form, the content and especially the film director’s personality reflecting the spirit of the time when he created his oeuvre.

That day I learned the following: (1) There is a Film Institute in Manila whose task is to cultivate the heritage of domestic and international filmmaking. (2) There is awareness among Filipinos for the necessity of intellectual discourse and intercultural exchange between artists engaged in mixed media art creation. (3) There is Nick Deocampo, who in his capacity as documentary film director, book author, publisher, and teacher – along with others – developed the independent movie culture in this country over the years, and who admits that (4) he is a member of the generation of Philippine artists whose love for filmmaking was generated by the frequent working contacts with German filmmakers invited by the Goethe-Institut to Manila during the 1970s and 80s to conduct workshops on filmmaking with black and white footage on 16mm, very often on Super-8 ! Those German filmmakers were: Harun Farocki, Werner Herzog, Christoph Janetzko, Thomas Mauch, Ingo Petzke, Rosa von Praunheim, Werner Schröter, Dorothee Wenner, Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn.

It is essential to also mention those who quickly became counterparts and even friends of their German colleges – and who initiated a true movement of young Philippine alternative filmmakers in the early 80s. Eric de Guia alias Kidlat Tahimik made one of the first independent films of the Philippines: *Perfumed Nightmare*, an essay film, which the American literary critic Frederic Jameson called “a jeepney between the First and the Third World”. Tahimik’s film was made in Pampanga and Munich and won him the FIPRESCI Award at the Berlinale, where it premiered in 1977. John Torres received the FIPRESCI Award at the Singapore Film Festival in 2006 for his digital debut film *Todo Teros*. Teddy Co, film historian and free-lance film curator, organized and accompanied several film series and workshops for the Goethe-Institut. Bobby Suarez’ Philippine B action films were co-produced by the German Leo Kirch in the 1980s. Raymond Red took part in the seminars at the Goethe-Institut; in 1991 he received a DAAD scholarship and worked in Berlin for half a year. His first feature film *Bayani* was co-produced by *Das Kleine Fernsehspiel* (ZDF - Second TV Channel) in 1992.

Another highlight of Philippine-German cinema contacts was the restoration of the extravagant film epic *Noli me tangere* by Gerardo de Leon (1963). The film was based on the novel of the same name by José Rizal, national hero of the Philippines. The novel was published in Berlin 1886. It was written in Spanish – the language of the occupants, who later executed Rizal in Manila.

The restoration of the last existing copy of this valuable 35-mm film was carried out by the Bundesarchiv (the Federal Archive) in Koblenz (Germany) in 1989. Upon completion of the work, the then Director of the Goethe-Institut Manila, Dr. Uwe Schmelter, and the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Peter Scholz, presented the copy to President Cory Aquino. On May 22, 1990 *Noli me tangere* was screened at the main theatre of the Manila Film Center (renamed “Tanghalang Gerardo de Leon”).

Being aware of the important role which the Goethe-Institut Manila played in the development of the Philippine-German cinema relations, we decided to publish this documentation containing numerous essays written by most of the Philippine and German filmmakers mentioned earlier.

I am very grateful to Dr. Tilman Baumgärtel, who established the contacts to all of them and helped us by compiling the materials presented in this book.

As can be seen from the film projects the Goethe-Institut is currently organizing - Philippine-German film productions, The Silent Film Festival and participation in the *Cinemanila*, *Cine Europa Film Festival*, inviting Nick Deocampo and Kidlat Tahimik, together with the German Embassy, to Berlin along with the newly established film festival *Asian Hot Shots* – proves that Philippine-German film relations are built on solid ground.

I wish all those who jointly put their creative energies into the exiting film projects of the past and the present times, that they may long enjoy the results of this wonderful art called SINE in Tagalog.

Richard Künzel

Director

Goethe-Institut Manila

Tilman Baumgärtel

The Sine-Kino-Connection

Philippine-German Cinema Relations

The German director has come to the Philippines to attend the First International Film Festival in Manila in 1982. After the opening ceremonies – and a dance with the First Lady of the Philippines – “Rainer” is taken to a club called CocoRico. The following conversation ensues: “They wouldn’t dare show my films regularly in this country,” Rainer complains. “Why did they bother inviting me for one night?” “Who gives a shit,” I say. “All expenses paid – *di ba?*” Chiquiting shakes his head. “Shut up, Joey. You are really *bastus*.” He apologizes to the German. “Even if we didn’t have censorship, your movies would flop in Manila. They don’t have enough action,” he explains, “and they’re full of unhappy people.”

The director, who visits Manila in Jessica Hagedorn’s novel *Dogeaters*, seems modelled after Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Fassbinder, though, never came to the Philippines. But the Manila Film Festival itself was no invention of Hagedorn, and neither are the German directors who came to the Philippines in the 1980s. The Manila International Film Festival took place in 1982 and 1983 and was one of the festive extravaganzas Imelda Marcos was so fond of. And as many of Imelda Marcos’ activities – such as the Miss Universe Pageant in 1974 or the building of the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Philippine Folk Arts Theatre – the festival was meant to both “edify” the Filipino public and to improve the dismal international reputation of the Marcos regime. For that purpose, the festival invited internationally acclaimed directors and actors such as Jeremy Irons, Peter Ustinov, Krzysztof Zanussi, Satyajit Ray, George Hamilton, George Cukor, Jack Valenti and King Hu to the Philippines. From Germany, people such as Werner Herzog, Klaus Kinski, Werner Schroeter, Kurt Raab and – last but not least – sexy starlet Dolly Dollar graced the festival.

Therefore, the character Rainer in *Dogeaters* appears more like a composite of a number of German film directors who came to the Philippines with their films that did not have “enough action and were full of unhappy people.” And while the prediction that these films would not attract the Philippine *masa* might be correct, a small number of Filipinos nevertheless felt engrossed by the works of the *Neuer Deutscher Film* (New German Cinema) of the 1970s and 1980s.

This attraction with German cinema led to a brief, but intense period in which German and Philippine filmmakers joined forces and collaborated and learned from each other. I call this hodgepodge of films and people from Germany and the Philippines, of different cultural traditions and a common medium, the “Sine-Kino-Connection.” (“Sine” is the Tagalog, “Kino” the German word for “cinema”).

This book is about this “Sine-Kino-Connection”. At the same time it is about a part of German film history that few people in Germany are familiar with. Beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing through the 1980s and into the 1990s, a number of German film directors, theorists and other movie people came to work or teach in the Philippines. Some came because the Goethe-Institut Manila invited them for workshops and film presentations. Others came at their own expense because they were fascinated by the country, which



Workshop production *Masakit sa Mata*, 1991

– especially after the People Power revolution of 1986 that ousted the Marcos-regime – temporarily exercised its own peculiar kind of magnetism to many Europeans. The workshops that “the Germans” conducted, the film screenings that they presented, were in part responsible for the emergence of an alternative film scene in the Philippines that went on to garner recognition and awards at international film festivals.

Werner Schroeter, Rosa von Praunheim, Harun Farocki, Maria Vedder and Peter Kern were among the directors who conducted workshops and film seminars at the Goethe-Institut, the Film Center of the University of the Philippines and the Mowelfund film school. Schroeter, Kern and Jürgen Brüning even made films here.

But often it was the seminars by lesser-known German teachers that spawned the most enduring results. The workshops of the animator and editor Karl Fugunt, short film director Christoph Janetzko and experimental filmmaker Ingo Petzke, by documentary filmmaker Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn and by Werner Herzog’s cinematographer Thomas Mauch, led to the production of some remarkable short films and documentaries. (Fugunt, Wulfes and Weisenborn went on to make some short documentaries on their own in the Philippines.)

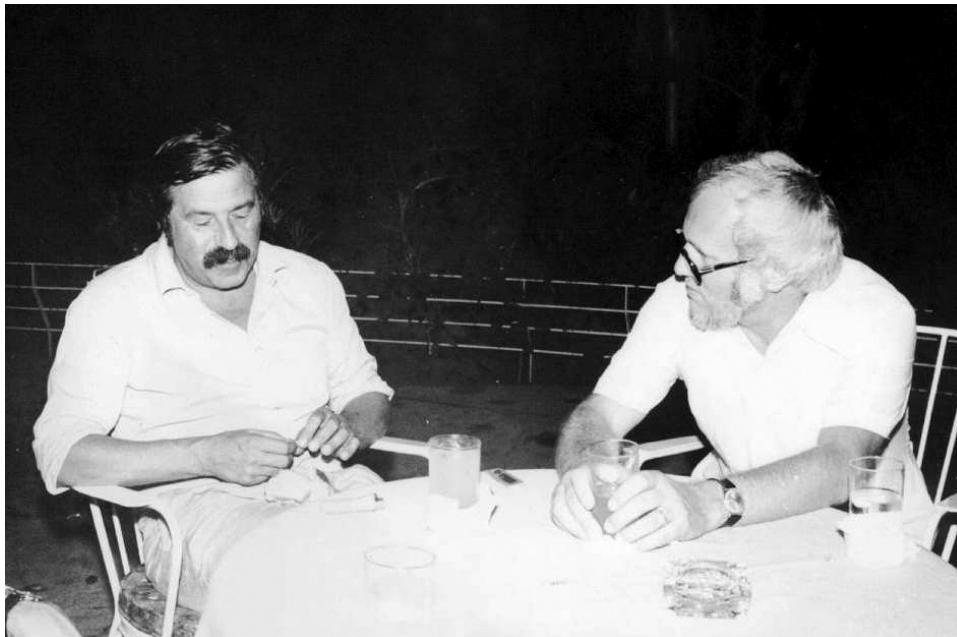
These activities played an important role in the establishment of an alternative and experimental film scene in Manila in the 1980s and early 1990s that was unrivalled in Southeast Asia at that time. Among those attending these workshops were people such as Raymond Red, Mark Meily, Lav Diaz, Roxlee, Yam Laranas, Tad Ermitaño, the brothers Mike and Juan Alcazaren, Luis

Quirino, Noel Lim, Joey Agbayani, Ditsi Carolino, Caesar Hernando, Joseph Fortin, Regiben Romana, Ricky Orellana and many others, who proceeded to establish themselves in filmmaking and/or the arts, if they had not done so already. This period of the “Sine-Kino-Connection” lasted from the late 1970s until the beginning of the 1990s, when new budget constraints after the fall of the Wall in Germany and the subsequent re-orientation towards the formerly Socialist states in Eastern Europe, dried up the funds of the Goethe-Institut Manila.

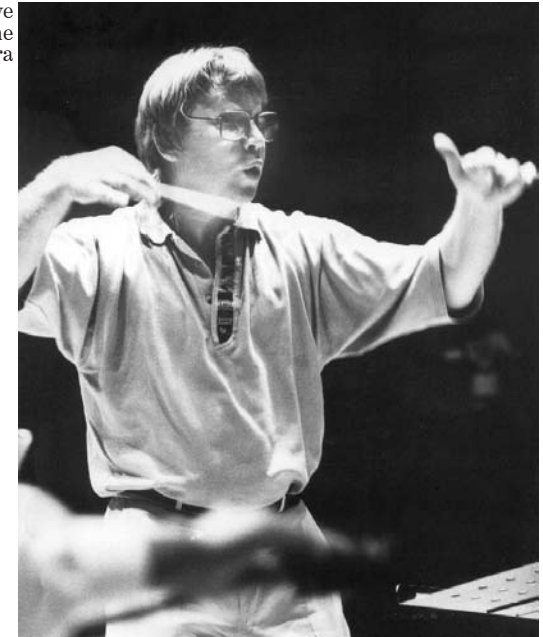
Two subsequent directors of the Goethe-Institut Manila were instrumental in supporting cinema: Gerrit Bretzler and Uwe Schmelter. The Goethe-Institut had established a media unit in the late 1970s and was eager to promote the biggest cultural export from Germany at that time: the films of directors such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders or Margarethe von Trotta.

When looking through the old press clippings on file at the Goethe-Institut, there is a noticeable change in direction around 1980, both in terms of film screenings as well as in terms of the more general orientation of the institution. Until the late 1970s, the Goethe-Institut Manila relied primarily on German cultural traditions and the relatively safe classics of German *Hochkultur*. Programming included concerts with Baroque music and opera recitals, exhibitions of Bauhaus artists and romantic landscape paintings. The Goethe-Institut sponsored the restoration of the Bamboo Organ in Las Piñas, organized lectures by German experts on occupational safety and philately and brought in the Stuttgart Dixieland Allstars. (In fact, the cultural institutions that were the pet projects of Imelda Marcos had a significant part of their programming sponsored by the Goethe-Institut. The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) featured German orchestras, theatre groups, ballet companies and opera singers that

Goethe-Institut director Gerrit Bretzler with Günther Grass in Manila in 1979



Goethe-Institut director Uwe Schmelter conducting the Manila Chamber Orchestra



were brought in with the support of the Goethe-Institut, almost on a monthly basis – a choice that seems questionable today, considering that the CCP was *the* showcase project of Imelda Marcos. The Metropolitan Museum and later the Film Center also received logistic support from the Goethe-Institut.)

It was not until the end of the 1970s that the cultural shock of 1968 and its aftermath left its mark on the *Kulturpolitik* of the Goethe-Institut and arrived at its branch in Manila. That included its film program that reeked of the cosy German *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) mentality even in the late 1970s: Helmut Käutner’s innocuous German comedy *Das Glas Wasser* (*A Glass of Water*, 1960) was shown countless times both at the Goethe-Institut and at open-air-screenings in Rizal Park in the late 1970s. (Ironically, the movie starred Gustav Gründgens, who was found dead in a room at the posh Manila Hotel – and therefore in close proximity to Rizal Park – three years after the movie had been released.)

Other films that were screened on a regular basis include documentaries on wild animals such as Heinz Sielmann’s *Lockende Wildnis* (*Alluring Wilderness*, 1969) and Bernhard Grzimek’s *Serengeti darf nicht sterben* (*Serengeti Shall Not Die*, 1959). Well-liked feature films – that seemingly were in the collection of the Goethe-Institut, because they appear in the program over and over again – were light comedies and melodramas from the 1950s such as Paul Verhoeven’s *Heidelberger Romanze* (*Heidelberg Romance*, 1951), Géza von Radányi’s *Der Arzt von Stalingrad* (*The Doctor of Stalingrad*, 1958) or Helmut Käutner’s *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick* (*The Captain from Köpenick*, 1956). Even episodes of the ho-hum German television police series’ *Derrick* und *Der Kommissar* (*The Superintendent*) were shown on a regular basis at the Goethe-Institut’s “Saturday matinees.”

Then there were the German silent classics, the films by Friedrich Murnau, G.W. Papst and Fritz Lang, which were a regular staple at the film screenings of the Goethe-Institut. (It is another odd twist in the Philippine-German cinema

relations that Fritz Lang had been to the Philippines in 1950 to shoot the American war movie *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*. Films such as *Metropolis*, *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, *M*, *Tabu* or *Faust* were shown frequently, and left a lasting impression on a number of Filipino filmmakers, including the young Raymond Red, whose film *Ang Magpakailanman* (*Eternity*, 1982) is clearly inspired by expressionist aesthetics.

Then in the late 70s, a shift in the programming of the Goethe-Institut signalled that the social democratic government under Willy Brandt in West Germany – that ruled the country since 1969 with the promise to “dare more democracy” (“Mehr Demokratie wagen!”) – finally wanted to present its version of a new, modern Germany abroad. Avant-garde artists, critical writers and experimental filmmakers, who represented this new openness and tolerance, were sent around the world to promote this new version of the West German self-image.

In January 1979, two of the proponents of this new, liberal Germany came to Manila at the same time: the *Tanztheater* of avant-garde-choreographer Pina Bausch, who was at this time still far from the international reputation that she enjoys today, performed at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in the presence of the Marcoses. And the openly gay filmmaker, activist and overall-enfant-terrible Rosa von Praunheim, whose controversial debut feature *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* (*It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives*, 1971) had been boycotted by the Bavarian TV station *Bayerischer Rundfunk*, when it was first shown on German public television.

It was the beginning of a new course in the film programming of the Goethe-Institut in Manila that gradually moved away from the post-war standards and started to show retrospectives of directors such as Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Peter Lilienthal, Werner Schroeter, Wolfgang Petersen, Robert van Ackeren, Klaus Wildenhahn and Volker Schlöndorff. There were programs on feminist films from West Germany that included works by filmmakers such as Helke Sanders, Elfi Miekesh, Ulrike Ottinger, Margarethe von Trotta and Jutta Brückner. A series of screenings of youth films presented works by Hark Bohm, Rüdiger Nüchtern and Reinhard Hauff. In other programs, films by directors such as Werner Nekes, Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, Ulf Miehe, Doris Dörrie, Christoph Schlingensief, Marianne Rosenbauer and Percy Adlon were shown. Therefore, film buffs in Manila had the opportunity to get a very thorough overview of contemporary German film at that time.

The film programming at the Goethe-Institut Manila in the late 1970s and 1980s can serve as further proof for a hypothesis that Thomas Elsaesser develops in his book on the *Neuer Deutscher Film*: that the New German Cinema was the fruit of government sponsorship for independent filmmaking, and that internationally acclaimed film artists such as Herzog, Wenders, Fassbinder et al were actually state artists, no matter what kind of anti-establishment histrionics they indulged in. The criticism of (or opposition to) German society and politics that many of them expressed in their films – that were more often than not sponsored by one public institution or another – served as proof for the new tolerance of West Germany, both domestically and abroad.

This background can serve as an explanation for why the Goethe-Institut distributed German films all over the world, which might have been acclaimed at international film festivals, but for the most part were box office flops in their own country. The Goethe-Institut treated its audience to a brand of German culture that purported to be critical, avant-garde and left-field. In Manila it was

From workshop production *Sa Maynila*, 1989, by Jo Atienza, Vicky Orellana, Vic Bacani, Alan Hirlario and Igé Alcazaren



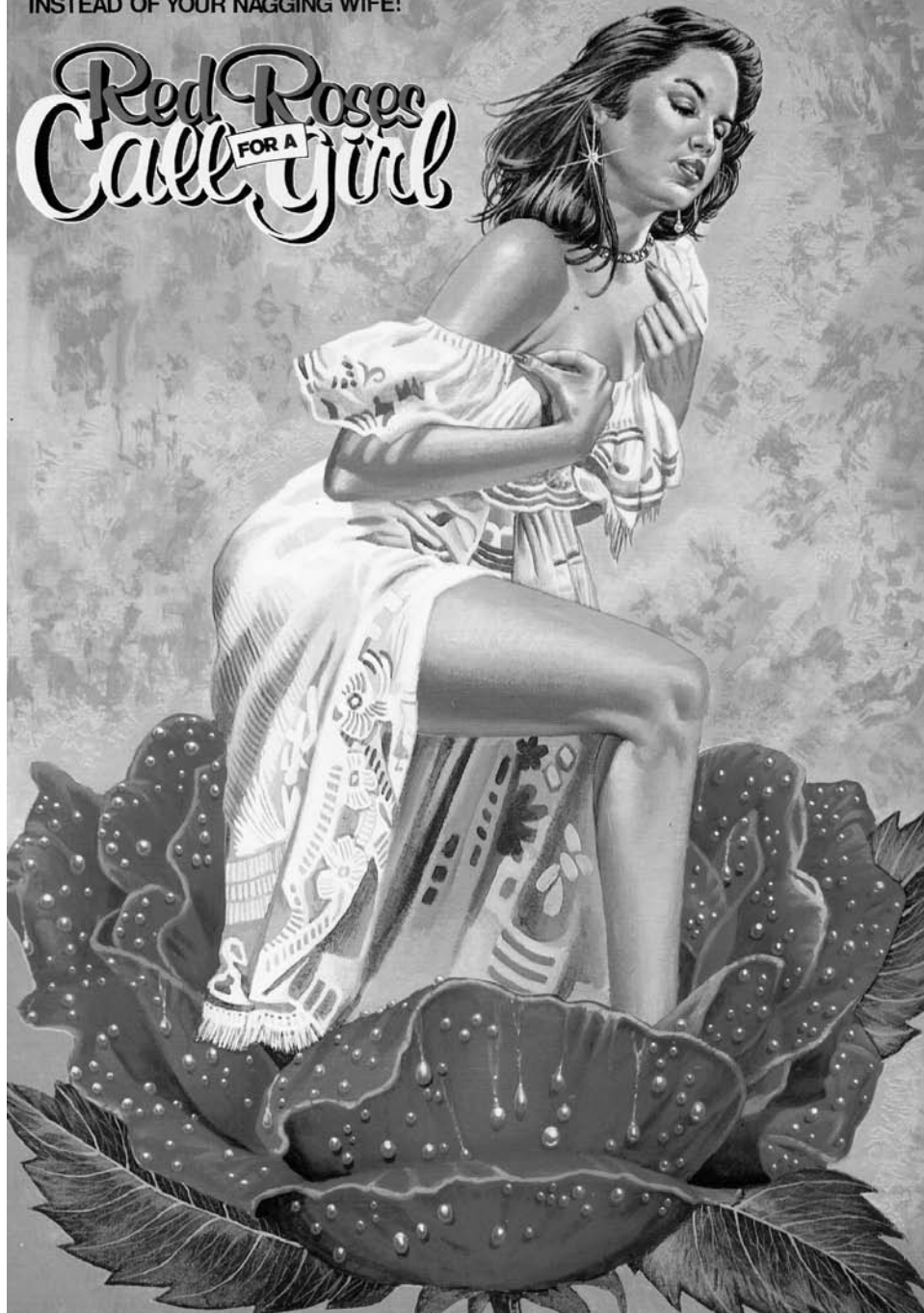
not just the films of the *Neuer Deutscher Film* which served as a harbinger of a West Germany that had left behind the totalitarianism and the crimes of German fascism as well as the frost of the immediate post-war period. German Video Art, critical video documentaries, experimental short films, and the underground Super-8 films of the 1980s were all presented in the Philippines with only minimal delay after these movements surfaced in Germany.

However, it is not the intention of this publication to suggest that the generation of experimental, alternative and documentary filmmakers which emerged in the Philippines in the 1980s was a creation only of the film workshops of the Goethe-Institut. Most of the Philippine filmmakers who took part in the workshops undoubtedly would have found their way into film production with or without the support of the Goethe-Institut. Other cultural institutions in the Philippines – such as Mowelfund, the cultural institutions of the French, Spanish and British governments in Manila – played their own part in the emergence of a local independent film scene. And cultural activist such as Virginia Moreno from the Film Center of the University of the Philippines also played an important role in the creation of an alternative cinema scene in the Philippines.

Yet, the assistance of the Goethe-Institut was crucial in two ways, which were very important in an emerging country such as the Philippines. One of these factors was immaterial, the other very material. First of all, the Goethe-Institut was among the first to bring avant-garde films into a country where local commercial films, American blockbusters and Hong Kong action flicks dominated the theatres. This contribution has become difficult to appreciate in the age of comparatively easy access to international art house films via (pirated) DVDs and the Internet. But as Nick Deocampo pointed out in an article for the Australian avant-garde-film-magazine *Cantrills Filmnotes* in 1989, the films of the *Neuer Deutscher Film* were instrumental in the emergence of a Philippine independent cinema simply because they were among the first international art house films that film buffs in the country could actually *watch* instead of just *read* about in books and magazines: “While early into our birth (of the Philippine independent film – T.B.) we were very much fascinated by the names of Warhol, Anger and Deren, whose works we never saw but divined through our daydreams and our imagination – when we first sat mesmerized by the works of Nekes and Herzog – we soon realized that the time for our own moment in cinema had come!”

SHE HAS THE EARS TO LISTEN TO ALL YOUR PROBLEMS...
 SHE HAS LOVELY LIPS TO SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT TO HEAR...
 SHE HAS A SOFT, BEAUTIFUL BODY TO COMFORT AND MAKE YOU HAPPY...
 SHE IS THE DREAMGIRL YOU WOULD ALWAYS WANT TO BE WITH,
 INSTEAD OF YOUR NAGGING WIFE!

Red Roses Call Girl



Movie poster from Bobby Suarez' *Manila Tattoo*, German title *Rote Rosen für ein Callgirl*, 1988

The other, more tangible support for the independent cinema in the Philippines was the film stock and the equipment that the film workers who conducted workshops brought to the Philippines, as Mark Meily points out in his contribution to this book. 35-millimeter film stock, Super-8 material, a Steenbeck editing table, video cameras – things that were not readily accessible to young filmmakers in the Philippines, came into the country with the assistance of the Goethe-Institut. They were instrumental in the creation of the first batch of experimental films from the mid-1980s onwards. The Philippine contributors to this book – such as Raymond Red, Mark Meily, Ditsi Carolino, Lav Diaz and Nick Deocampo – will give their own account of these activities on the following pages. In addition, some of the German *direks* who came to the Philippines, such as Christoph Janetzko, Harun Farocki, Ingo Petzke, Werner Schroeter, Michael Wulfes and Rosa von Praunheim, share their memories of the time they spent here.

No account of Philippine-German cultural relations would be complete without mentioning José Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, whose controversial first novel *Noli me tangere* was first published in Berlin in 1887. It is this novel and one of its filmic versions, which were the subject of yet another Philippine-German cinematic co-production, that should prove to be of great importance.

The film researcher Teddy Co had discovered a dilapidated copy of the film *Noli me tangere* (1961) by National Artist Gerardo de Leon in the late 1980s. With the help of the Goethe-Institut, he managed to have the film restored by the German Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive). The new copy was premiered in 1990 at the Manila Film Center and is still in the possession of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Considering that a lot of the filmic legacy of Philippine cinema from that period is thought of as lost today, this was an important attempt to save at least a little part of the movie heritage of the Philippines.

Again, the Goethe-Institut was not the only trajectory for the “Sine-Kino-Connection”. Some filmmakers came by themselves, in particular Peter Kern and Jürgen Brüning, who describes his experiences co-directing his film *Maybe I Can Give You Sex* (1993) with Philippine director Rune Layumas in this book and whom we have to thank for the pictures of Nan Goldin, who accompanied him as a still-photographer to the Philippines.

And at least one Philippine director established his own “Sine-Kino-Connection” by looking for funding for his B-movies in Germany. In his contribution, B-movie-maverick Bobby Suarez describes how he secured financing for his actioners – such as *Bionic Boy* (1977), *Cleopatra Wong* (1978) or *One-Armed Executioner* (1983) – from European producers, including the Germans Leo Kirch, Dieter Menz and Horst Veit. Suarez’ personal “Sine-Kino-Connection” culminated in the film *Manila Tattoo* (*Rote Rosen für ein Callgirl*, 1988) that was co-produced with the Austrian-German film company Lisa-Film (better known for 70s-sex-comedies such as *Drei Bayern in Bangkok* (*Three Bavarians in Bangkok*, 1977) and more recently for TV productions such as *Das Traumhotel* (*Dreamhotel*). The cast of this film that was shot in and around Manila included German TV serial actors Julia Kent, Manfred Seipold and Werner Pochat. *Manila Tattoo* has been repeatedly shown on German television.

While the cooperation between German and Philippine producers was by no means as extensive as that between American producers like Roger Corman



On the occasion of the restoration of Gerardo de Leons film *Noli me tangere* (1961) by the German Bundesarchiv in 1991, Goethe-Institut director Uwe Schmelter and German Ambassador Peter Schol presented a slightly bewildered Cory Aquino with a wood sculpture.

and local producers such as Ciri Santiago (who produced dozens of cheap action movies and horror films for the American market), it existed nevertheless – Kurt Raab's trash film *Die Insel der blutigen Plantagen* (*Escape from Blood Plantation*, 1983) being the other example of a movie production that used the relatively cheap work force and the exotic locations of the Philippines for a grind house film. And then there is Werner Schroeter's *Der lachende Stern* (*The Laughing Star*, 1983), a poetic documentary about the Philippines under martial law, about which the director talks in his contribution to this book.

Today, a new generation of experimental filmmakers is emerging all over Southeast Asia due to the rapid proliferation of affordable and easy-to-use digital cameras and editing software. Once again Filipino filmmakers – such as Lav Diaz, Khavn de la Cruz, John Torres, Raya Martin, Brillante Mendoza, Sherad Anthony Sanchez or Mez de Guzman – are at the forefront of film directors, who are currently shaping the nascent independent film scene in the region. Therefore, it seemed timely to look back at the time when independent film first took root in the Philippines.

As a kind of summary of the book I invited two Philippine filmmakers from two different generations to talk about their filmmaking practice and their relationship with Germany: One is Kidlat Tahimik, who is the undisputed father figure of the whole independent cinema movement in the Philippines. He started to work on his opus magnum *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977) in Germany in the 1970s. (Ulrich Gregor, the former head of the Forum at the Berlinale Film Festival, recalls in his contribution the mirthful circumstances under which Tahimik submitted his first film to the festival in 1977, where it subsequently won a FIPRESCI award). He later headed the Filmforum, an early meeting



The wood sculpture shows film cans which commemorate important cities in the life of José Rizal, who wrote the novel *Noli me Tangere*. Rizal studied in Heidelberg, published *Noli me Tangere* in 1887 in Berlin and was executed in Manila in 1896.

point of experimental and independent filmmakers at the Goethe-Institut in Manila, and organized Goethe-sponsored film workshops in Baguio. The other one is John Torres, a young filmmaker, who belongs to the recent independent digital cinema movement in the Philippines, and whose first feature-length film *Todo Todo Teros* (2006) was shot partly in Berlin. In our conversation in Kidlat Tahimik's house in Teachers Village, these two filmmakers discuss their films, their aesthetic approach and their filmic connection with Germany. This conversation is included in this book to provide a link between the historic "Sine-Kino-Connection" and the present, with its exciting new developments in the contemporary independent cinema.

I would like to thank all the contributors to this small volume for their contributions. Their essays made this book a collection of very personal remembrances. I also have to thank Richard Künzel, director of the Goethe-Institut Manila, who kindly adopted this project as soon as I presented it to him and worked determinedly to make it happen. Paula Guevara, and the staff of the Goethe-Institut's library, was of tremendous help in researching the press clippings and the video collection in the archive of the Goethe-Institut, especially Alicia Paraiso, Arlene Gonzales and Ray Rojas. Gregory Bradshaw did a great job of proof-reading the final manuscript and translating the contributions of Harun Farocki, Michael Wulfes and Ulrich Gregor.

And I have to thank the visual artists, who contributed illustrations to this book: Roxlee, the foremost art animation filmmaker of the Philippines and a frequent habitué of the film workshops, for his cinema-inspired paintings on the inside of the cover of this book. Then there are wonderful photographs by Nan Goldin (New York), who was a still-photographer for Jürgen Brüning's *Maybe I Can Give You Sex* and Josef Gallus Rittenberg (Vienna), who was kind enough to let us use his cool picture of Werner Schroeter.

Film researcher Teddy Co was of invaluable help in tracking down information and people and giving me the low down on many of the workshops and productions from his abyssal knowledge of Philippine film. He and Nick Deocampo, whose

essay gives an overview of the manifold aspects of the “Sine-Kino-Connection,” were the main inspiration for this book. They fed me with anecdotes and stories about the “Germans in Manila” so diligently and frequently that I eventually pulled myself together to work on this collection.

I came to the Philippines in 2004, a long time after the burst of creative film energy that is the subject of this book took place here. And while I tried to paint a complete picture of this period through the compilation of material in this publication and with the tremendous support of so many people notwithstanding, it was not possible to include statements by everybody involved due to various circumstances. I was unable to track down all of the filmmakers, and some were – due to time constraints or other reasons – unable to contribute to this publication.

Therefore not every aspect of the “Sine-Kino-Connection” could be covered adequately in this book. For numerous reasons, I was not able to include a piece on the women-in-prison-film *Die Insel der blutigen Plantagen* (*Escape from Blood Plantation*, 1983), which was shot in the Philippines by a group of actors from the Fassbinder-stable. Directed by Kurt Raab, actors such as Barbara Valentin, Udo Kier and Hans Zander participated in this German attempt at a trash movie. Also, Werner Herzog, whose films have been screened many times by the Goethe-Institut and who – as a supporter of Kidlat Tahimik and a visitor to the Manila International Film Festival – was an important figure for the local independent film scene, was disinclined to grant me an interview.

A book on the “films with not enough action and unhappy people” by German directors and their connection with the cinema of the Philippines might seem as too irrelevant a topic to some, considering the dearth of literature on other, much more important facets of Filipino film history. Yet, all of this happened, and therefore it appeared to all the contributors to this book as a worthwhile task to document this unusual example of filmic globalization. I hope this book serves as a reminder of this very special episode of Philippine-German film cooperation, which is fondly remembered by many of those involved in the Philippines, but so far is virtually unknown in Germany.

Tilman Baumgärtel

Quezon City, November 2007

Dr. Tilman Baumgärtel currently teaches at the Film Institute of the College of Mass Communication at the University of the Philippines. He studied German Literature, History and Media Studies at the Heinrich-Heine-University in Duesseldorf and the State University of New York in Buffalo (USA) and has taught media aesthetics and media history at the Universität Paderborn, Technische Universität Berlin and the Mozarteum in Salzburg (Austria). He contributes regularly to German and international reviews, newspapers and magazines and has published books on Internet art, computer games and the German filmmaker Harun Farocki. As a curator, he has organized a number of exhibitions in Germany, the United States, Switzerland, Korea and Japan.

Nick Deocampo Into the Light

Philippine Alternative Cinema and the *Neuer Deutscher Film*

As I write the history of alternative cinema in the Philippines – a cinema that is opposed to the country’s commercial film industry – I make the claim that its seminal influence and inspiration came from the New German Cinema (*Neuer Deutscher Film*). I saw in the engagement by a young generation of Filipino filmmakers towards what then was an international film phenomenon in the Seventies (the new German films), a way of expressing non-conformity to the established iconographic practices born out of America’s colonization of the country (i.e. the Hollywood experience) and the native film tradition emerging from century-old filmic practices. More significantly, I saw in the new German films a liberating path that revolutionized both the visual language and filmic form, producing films that were never before seen in Philippine cinema. This essay bears witness to this cross-cultural phenomenon. It shows the effects, acceptance, innovation, and influences cast by German film culture, which produced a unique growth of films in the Philippines, starting in the Eighties.

In writing this essay, I cannot avoid being personal. This is because I found myself at the center of events when the new German films touched down in the Philippines and began to cast their influence on a new generation of filmmakers – perhaps the last of the celluloid era before the onslaught of video and digital formats. Working at the University of the Philippines Film Center in 1979, I was in charge of organizing film workshops and seminars. This placed me in an enviable position to mount training programs that, in turn, produced films.

Providing the films I needed to show in my classes were the British Council, Jefferson Cultural Center (the American cultural arm), Instituto Cervantes, the French embassy, and other cultural institutions. But while there was a plethora of choices, it was the Goethe-Institut that produced the most tangible and productive of cultural collaborations. Its films were the most accessible. The Director of the Institute, who was then Dr. Gerrit Bretzler, played a crucial role in introducing Philippine viewers to German film classics at the former Goethe-Institut on Aurora Boulevard. The nights I spent watching German film classics paid off. These films ushered me into a different world so unlike the ones I watched commercially. What attracted me most were the visual style and the dark emotions in the films. It did not matter if I could not fully understand them since they were in German, although subtitles did help. The silent film classics were the most striking ones for me. Films by Fritz Lang, Murnau, and Pabst were vividly etched in my mind. They brought out a wide range of human emotions. My appetite for German films only grew more with the coming of the *Neuer Deutscher Film* that came like a breath of fresh wind in what already was becoming a world steeped with imaginings of the German film classics.

But before the new German film invasion occurred, let me say more about how the Goethe-Institut prepared the groundwork for what would in the next decade become a swelling film movement. I fondly remember Dr. Bretzler hosting a film event that allowed local filmmakers to show their amateur films and engage the public in a discussion. The event was called “Film Forum.” It was there among the jampacked crowd that I saw my first Super-8 film shows. These amateur films provided me with a different visual diet. The films showed common faces



Self-portrait of Nick Deocampo on Berlin’s Kurfürstendamm

and native scenes. Their candidness in depicting common Filipino lives awakened a new cinematic reality in me. At times, discussions after the film shows became heated. I often found myself among the “lost” souls lingering at the Goethe-Institut’s outdoor steps long after the exhibition was over, talking about the films we had just seen. The public space created by the Goethe-Institut allowed us to discover what cinema was about. It gifted us not only with films to watch, but also the space where we could discover what cinema meant for us. I look back and remember very well, on those black nights – with only voices heard in the dark – that it was at the Goethe-Institut that a new consciousness in cinema in the Philippines began to germinate. A new film consciousness was born in the dark of night. And that night was also symbolic of the darkness that once wrapped our society in the Seventies. Fear and repression under the Marcos dictatorship continued to plague our lives with poverty and violence. For a young Filipino looking for his place in society, those nights at the GI offered me solace and time to focus my interests onto something that would play a major role in defining my own life – the cinema.

No one can imagine the delight I felt then when I was later told I was to become a local coordinator for someone whose name I had only seen in film credits and books – Werner Schroeter. I was informed that the great luminary of the *Neuer Deutscher Film* was arriving and was going to make a film in the Philippines. Young as I was, I could only gasp at the chance of meeting in person someone who to me was a living legend. There he was with his long, golden hair. The first time I saw him, I immediately felt a great sense of friendship. I became his local guide, looking for subjects to shoot, interesting persons to film, and bars to relax his tired soul in at night. What fascinated me most was his manner of making films. When he was doing a documentary, the film became reality itself. The people he met and talked to suddenly found themselves sliding in front of the camera as subjects. The dark and wayward places we visited became locations for his scenes. The themes we merely discussed by chance suddenly loomed as ponderous subjects in a film that would – I found out later – endanger the filmmaker himself and force him to leave the Philippines, for fear of a military

reprisal. Schroeter's film *The Laughing Star* (*Der lachende Stern*) turned out to be a stinging film commentary about life under the military regime and the excesses of the conjugal dictators Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. It was a modern-day lesson on Philippine political and social history. While I was out and about tugging along this legendary director, I hardly felt he was making a film at all. What I knew then was that someone of legendary stature was among us, trying to understand a way of life, *our* way of life. The lessons I learned while being with Schroeter were more than what I could learn at any film school. He taught me how to see life. Filmmaking became merely a shadow hounding the fleeting something called reality. In the years to come, I want to believe that Schroeter's influence on my theme and style of making films has manifested itself in subliminal ways.

Meeting Schroeter in person only added fuel to my passion for the cinema. I later showed Schroeter's films at the University of the Philippines, e.g. his Golden Bear winner, *Palermo*. I helped organize German Film Weeks with the Goethe-Institut, where we feasted on some of the most esoteric films of that time, e.g. Werner Herzog's *Even Dwarves Started Small* and Rainier Werner Fassbinders' *Why Mr. R. Run Amuck*, as well as films that brought us new perspectives, for instance Haro Senft's children's films, as well as the new German documentaries like those of Klaus Wildenhahn.

It was also in 1981 during the infamous Manila International Film Festival when Herzog himself came to the Philippines as a guest of Madame Imelda Marcos. I remember attending his talk in a panel and listening to how his generation established a new German film movement. What I remember most was his anecdote about "stealing" a camera to fulfill his burning urge to make films. I believed him. I felt the passion in his words.

Making an even more spectacular presence the year after was the German actor Klaus Kinski. His film *Fitzcarraldo* was shown in tribute to the genius of Herzog and the madness of Kinski. I had already been aware of these two stalwarts of the new German cinema when I first saw *Aguirre – Wrath of God*, and I could only be awed by what they could both achieve cinematically. My impression of Kinski was that he had a boisterous nature, so loud he could break even through the gates of hell with his zest for life. Kinski was life itself. The actor and the man blended into a seamless figure when I caught a glimpse of him fleeting by in a theater lobby with his arms around a woman.

But my infatuation for German films was hastily cut short when I left for Paris to study film at the end of 1981. Whereas I studied filmmaking in France, it was

Workshop film *Kidlat* by Joey Agbayani, 1986



in Germany that I nurtured the desire to make films. Right after finishing my film study in Paris, I left for Berlin to attend my first international film festival – the Berlin Film Festival. Arriving at the Zoo train station at the heart of what then was West Berlin and on a bitterly cold and snowy night, I became a wide-eyed visitor standing in front of the Zoo Film Palast, which was dwarfed by the blazing lights from the theater marquee. The sight of the blazing marquee still leaves a lasting impression on me.

Day after day, I watched the films. The experience left me wanting to make my own films. It was at the festival that I met Hagmut Brockmann, editor of *Spandauer Volksblatt* – a Berlin paper, who later became the producer of my first film, *Oliver*. It was he who helped me find my way around the swirling confusion of festival activities. I was lucky to get in and watch what would become the winner of the Golden Bear award – Fassbinder's *Veronica Voss*. I was impressed at what I saw in his handling of personal history mingled with historical events. I sought out an opportunity to meet the director in person. I found the chance when he held a press conference. I sneaked into the pressroom to listen to him and even if much of what I understood came from an interpreter, I realized by watching him that I was in the presence of a huge and temperamental talent. His fiery character scorched my mind. When years later the news flashed that Fassbinder had died of a drug overdose, I felt a great sense of loss.

Coming back to the Philippines in 1982, I knew I had to visit the Goethe-Institut. I wanted to see those new German films that were then making waves internationally. It was a wish that was, of course, granted. Films of the New German Cinema began streaming in. Through the workshops I organized, I started showing the films of the distinguished new German directors – Fassbinder, Herzog, Wim Wenders, Alexander Kluge, Rosa von Praunheim, Margarethe von Trotta, and others. Together with my students, I began to delight in the unconventional themes and visual styles of this new wave of filmmakers.

My relationship with the Goethe-Institut could not have been any better than in the Eighties, when other German film personalities started coming to the Philippines and leaving their own marks, not on the commercial filmmakers, but on emerging young film artists. I can name some of them: Ingo Petzke, Peter Kern, Karl Fugunt, Thomas Mauch, Maria Vedder, Christoph Janetzko, Christian Weisenborn, Klaus Wildenhahn, Harun Farocki, Rosa von Praunheim, Jürgen Brüning...

Ingo Petzke's approach was academic. He was among the first Germans who would create a new film language for an emerging generation of Filipino filmmakers. His influence was deep. He brought about a quiet revolution. He was tasked by the Goethe-Institut to travel to different parts of the world to spread the gospel of experimental cinema. In the Philippines, it was Petzke whom we owe the gift of a new cinema – the gift of tongue that made our young films speak a different language and see a new vision. The films he brought, which traced the history of experimental cinema, first shocked our senses, then filled us with a seething passion to destroy film in order to create a new cinema. Philosophy came with the new aesthetics we learned from Petzke. During our lessons in experimental cinema, we discovered film form, or the absence of it. Watching films that destroyed all notions of Hollywood formula, our consciousness widened as we soaked ourselves in the films of Walter Ruttmann and his *Berlin – Symphony of a Great City*. There was also Hans Richter and his abstract films. Petzke even showed us an international array of radical films from the works of the Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov to the Spanish film anarchist Luis Bunuel, whose *Un chien andalou* made us shiver to the bones when we watched the infamous razor slitting an eyelid. We also encountered the doyenne of American experimental



Tsismis by Vicky Donato, 1989

films Maya Deren and her haunting *Meshes in the Afternoon*, and the French innovator Jean-Luc Godard's films like *Breathless*. The impact of these films may be seen in that rare and exquisite collection of abstract and experimental films that were produced in the Eighties, e.g. those of Jimbo Alano, Fruto Corre, Roxlee, Mel Bacani, Cesar Hernando and several more.

Bringing German film directors to train our young filmmakers was an ideal partnership that came out of collaboration with the Goethe-Institut. The "Golden Age of Philippine Independent Cinema" was born. The filmmakers that came to Manila, e.g. Janetzko, Mauch, Farocki, Petzke, et. al. taught our young filmmakers lessons in filmmaking, which were helpful in creating our own films. While showing German films, we too journeyed into a discovery of our own cinema. Among the filmmakers who attended those workshops are the names now enshrined in Philippine independent cinema: Raymond Red, Roxlee, Yam Laranas, Joey Agbayani, Louie Quirino, Ditsi Carolino, Regiben Romana, Ricky Orellana and many more. While serving as organizer for the workshops, I occasionally participated in them and produced a few works of my own. Karl Fugunt had a strong influence on ethnographic filmmakers like Joseph Fortin, while Christian Weisenborn taught filmmakers like Ditsi Carolino in his documentary classes.

Yet, among all of them, it was Christoph Janetzko who brought out the best of the young filmmakers' talents. In the late 80s, he came and taught a class in optical printing. I had a workshop on this subject upon seeing an optical printing machine lying around at the Mowelfund Film Institute, where I headed to teach after leaving the University of the Philippines. The experiments made by his class resulted in the production of films that were outstanding in their aesthetic quality. Going beyond simple narratives and infusing dazzling technical effects were films like Joey Agbayani's *Kidlat (Lightning)* and Louie Quirino's *True Blue American Coconut Grove*. Leaping way into nihilist territory was Regiben Romana's *Pilipinas (or: What Do You Think of the Philippines, Mr. Janetzko?)* More lurid displays of sheer anger and destruction on film came with a film made by Eli Guieb, showing Pepito Bosch cavorting naked with a crucifix and

madman Roxlee's visually rabid film *Lizard or How to Perform in Front of a Reptile*, that gave fitting company to his other maddeningly inspired films like *Juan Gapang* and *Spit/Optik*. Janetzko's workshops gave birth to a primal generation of artists who looked at nothing as sacred and divine. I was so proud to bring this harvest of films to festivals the world over, most especially to the World Congress of Experimental Films in Toronto in 1989. It was an event attended by the world's elite artists and scholars in experimental cinema, e.g. Stan Brakhage, Fred Camper, Annette Michelson, Michael Snow and many more.

It was not only the films of the New German Cinema that influenced me. I began to see how this radical film movement had unfolded. Their films were not just products of a personal revolt, but had political underpinnings too. Against the backdrop of radicalism, I found my own inspiration to rebel from the status quo of the Hollywood influence and of the melodrama gripping our local film industry. I began to study their struggles and strategies and found that their collective movement had rational and political implications. This was how I got hold of the Oberhausen Manifesto, a collective declaration of change signed by the moving spirits of the *Neuer Deutscher Film*. I identified with it so much that I too organized a Young Filmmakers' Congress in 1983, where I drafted a manifesto inspired by the rallying cry first heard in Oberhausen: "The old cinema is dead. We believe in the new." I knew that my love for film was now leaning towards activism. I advocated the collapse of the local movie industry – a tall order then at the height of the dictatorial reign of Marcos. But such a cry was in keeping with the times. In August of that same year came the killing of Ninoy Aquino. The martyr's death plunged the country into chaos and from chaos into a militant people's movement. I knew it was time for me to make my own films. I felt that nothing less than a revolution would end the tyranny. In time, I made my film *Oliver*. With films provided by my German producer, Brockmann, I made a film about a transvestite as an assault on the machismo culture that stifled me in a militarized society. The film was my personal view of the corruption engulfing our society. In the film, I hid my true identity by assuming a *nom de camera*, Rosa ng Maynila, in homage to the German director and film radical, Rosa von Praunheim, whose films on homosexuality had served to galvanize my ideas regarding sexuality and filmmaking as a political act. While showing my film in Berlin in the *Horizonte* program at the Arsenal theater years later, I was honored to see my idol Rosa breeze into the theater to watch my film. It was a touching moment for me.

As the struggle under the Marcos dictatorship wore on, what started with my first film developed into a Super-8 trilogy, documenting the cursed lives we lived under military rule. The second film was the most difficult to make. It took five years to finish. It was *Children of the Regime*, a film funded by Catholic bishops about child prostitution. Uncovering military ties with the prostitution business in Manila's red light district, I soon began to receive death threats for the coverage I made of police officers giving protection to bars. It struck me that I was following the exact same dangerous path as Schroeter. I should have known his influence on me would lead me into dangerous straits.

As these political events occurred, a new director arrived at the Goethe-Institut – Dr. Uwe Schmelter. His presence hastened the realization of a new Philippine cinema. Dr. Schmelter became the kind godfather of the country's alternative cinema. He arrived at the most exciting of times when the country convulsed with anti-Marcos radicalism. He was pushed right into the eye of the social storm – when tanks rolled into the streets and millions of Filipinos were willing to die for freedom. It was the EDSA revolution of 1986, the uprising of a people under the yellow banner of democracy. It was People Power. Dr. Schmelter helped me get my film *Children of the Regime* out of the country. Like many others, I

came under threat, as life became uncertain during the last days of the Marcos regime. Through the kind diplomatic assistance of the Goethe-Institut, my film landed in the Oberhausen Short Film and Documentary Festival. It came right in time for the downfall of the Marcos government. After the dictator had fled the country and democracy was restored, I saw myself leaving for Oberhausen – **the mecca of my dreams as a filmmaker. With my film in official competition,** I was surprised to learn that I had been invited instead to sit as member of the distinguished International Film Jury. Accepting the invitation, I stood tall beside legendary figures in the jury like Fernando Birri, the Father of the New Latin American Cinema. Being in Oberhausen was like a dream fulfilled. I could hear myself muttering, “The old cinema is dead. We believe in the new.” It was indeed an exhilarating experience.

As things got settled after the tumultuous social storm that happily resulted in the restoration of democracy in the country, the promise of a new beginning fused with the creative energy that came out of the partnership with the Goethe-Institut. Now heading the training department at the Mowelfund Film Institute – a private foundation – I found the best partner one could wish for in Dr. Schmelter. He was an amiable man, a charismatic administrator, and had the vision of an artist. Dr. Schmelter moved us out of the comfort zone, proposed film workshops that would result in new film productions. I was only too happy to accept. The German economy boomed in the mid-Eighties and there was money to spend on the spread of German culture throughout the world. We were lucky to have Dr. Schmelter push for projects that benefited young Filipino filmmakers.

The workshops normally started with a meeting between Dr. Schmelter and myself on what type of training we wished to have and who would be the facilitator. As a host partner, I had the opportunity to suggest what workshops to organize. As a result, workshops were conducted in experimental film (Ingo Petzke), cinematography (Thomas Mauch), optical printing and – our favorite subject – experimental filmmaking (Christoph Janetzko, who came to the Philippines several times), video art (Maria Vedder), documentary filmmaking (Christian Weisenborn and Michael Wulfes), directing (Harun Farocki), and festival organization (Dorothee Wenner). To them we owe the creation of a new film consciousness.

The German workshops were radical departures from Hollywood filmmaking practices. Lessons in conceptual filmmaking ran counter to the formulaic Hollywood filmmaking. Foremost among the cherished contributions made by the German collaboration was the introduction of experimental filmmaking. This brought such a radical frame of mind to the young filmmakers. One could see from their works a reworking of the elements of cinema from the standpoint of art. This was a departure from the commercial values of Hollywood and the melodramatic conventions of the Filipino cinema. The films produced by the experimental workshops were very seldom seen on local screens. They were devoid of stories to tell and this caused not a few audiences to become uneasy. The films now spoke a different language and many viewers were disturbed. From the standpoint of art, I could see the Philippine cinema convulse with the radical aspirations of these experimental films and documentaries. The films sought to uncover realities never before shown. Even the government’s film censors began to become alarmed. The spirit of true filmmaking was breathing new life into the Philippine cinema.

While it was difficult for the films to find an appreciative public in the country, the films were appreciated at the international film festivals. The Eighties saw Filipino experimental films and documentaries travel to festivals far and wide.

The appearance on the scene of a new Philippine cinema through short films and documentaries coincided with the explosion of a new film energy in Europe that saw the creation of new festivals dedicated to alternative filmmaking. Raymond Red and I traipsed to these festivals and paved the way for the international acceptance of Filipino short films and documentaries. This was how Raymond got a German DAAD grant to be an artist-in-residence in Germany. He also got a film grant from a television network ZDF, and produced his first full-length film *Bayani (Hero)*, 1992). Raymond was retracing steps made years earlier by another independent film stalwart, Kidlat Tahimik, who in the Seventies made his mark at the Berlin Film Festival where he won prizes for his film *Perfumed Nightmare*. He too became a friend of German film legend Werner Herzog. The Berlin Film Festival has since then been a gateway for future filmmakers to gain recognition and win awards. The latest among them were filmmakers such as Carlitos Siguion- Reyna for *Ang Lalaki sa Buhay ni Selya* and Aureus Solito for *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros*.

Oliver by Nick Deocampo, 1984





Lizard or How to Perform in Front of a Reptile by Roxlee, 1990

The cinema that arose from the German film influence was small and not commercial. It became a private cinema, not a public spectacle. The films became angry manifestoes, not pleasurable, disposable entertainment. The Filipino public was not yet ready for the birth of a *new* cinema. While it was in the international film circuit that the local films were first understood, appreciated... rewarded, they slowly became accepted locally when the “native” films made by unknown young filmmakers began to reap awards and accolades. They came home with stories of triumph and victory in prestigious festivals like those in Berlin, London, New York, Edinburgh, Sydney, Toronto, Tokyo, Brussels, Rotterdam, Los Angeles, and many more. Filipino audiences began to – grudgingly at first – accept the new generation of filmmakers. Of course, it was always the media that covered the rise of the independent cinema. I was vindicated for all the misunderstandings hurled at me while pushing for a new cinema, when the movie industry cited my efforts as “pioneer” in independent cinema. It finally recognized my work to train and produce young filmmakers with awards at film festivals, including a FAMAS Lifetime Achievement award and another from the Film Academy of the Philippines for my own films. When the Nineties came, all the hard work we did in the Eighties began to assume its rightful place in the public consciousness.

But Dr. Schmelter’s stay in the country had to end. So ended too one of the most productive cultural collaborations ever made by a cultural agency in recent times. With Dr. Schmelter’s departure came other directors whose interests may not have been focused on cinema. Their comings and goings coincided with the sudden downsizing of the Goethe-Institut after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Absorbing what used to be East Germany caused much of the foreign development budget to be cut. No doubt programs suffered. There were no more workshops to be expected, no more dreams to be made. Also, the *New German Cinema* suddenly became old, became a tired symbol of a generation that was no longer radical, no longer edgy. In technology, film became passé and video challenged its hold on creativity. All these changes occurred in a fast changing world.

One major highlight I wish to mention was the celebration of the World Cinema Centennial in 1995. Then director of the Goethe-Institut Dirk Angelroth was gracious enough to bring *Metropolis* as our opening film. It was a breathtaking experience. He brought a mint copy of the classic film as well as a chamber musical group from Munich to provide a live accompaniment to the exhibition. The audience was agog at the spectacular film and enthralled by the exhilarating

musical performance. It was an experience of a lifetime. *Metropolis* was shown again during the 110th anniversary celebration of the birth of cinema in the Philippines recently held, courtesy of the newly-installed director of the Goethe-Institut, Richard Künzel. This was the culmination of my German film experience – from the time I first showed films in my workshops that influenced filmmakers e.g. the young Raymond Red in 1983, when he made his film *Ang Magpakailanman (Eternity)*. Looking at where we are now, the young filmmakers have grown and a new format has taken over – the digital. What has become of the young since they have grown up? Has the new become old? Where to leads the journey we embarked on in the past? Is the cross-cultural collaboration still the path to follow and where does it lead? I cannot speak for the generation that I helped find its voice in filmmaking. I can only speak for myself. I still find myself traveling to worlds that conjure the new and the radical. As time blunts dreams and memory fades, I believe these awesome memories from the past will help us find our way to a better future!

Nick Deocampo is the director of the Mowelfund Film Institute. He studied Theater Arts at UP Diliman, Cinema Studies at the New York University and Documentary Filmmaking in Paris with Jean Rouch. The “enfant terrible” of Philippine independent cinema, he is noted in particular for a three-part documentary series of 8-mm works produced between 1983 and 1987: Oliver (1983), Children of the Regime (1985), and Revolution Happens Like Refrains in a Song (1987). He has recently published the book Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines the first volume of his history of Philippine cinema.

Rosa von Praunheim An Uneasy Silence

In 1979, I was working on a film about death and death rituals all around the world. I had embarked on a longer journey, and before I came to Manila, I had been to Bombay and Madras. Later I went on to Cairo and other places to film different kinds of death rites. Since I was travelling in Asia, I was really keen to come to Manila and do a workshop for the Goethe-Institut. I had met Lino Brocka at a festival. He was considered to be the Asian Fassbinder at that time. I was really fascinated by his works, and that was another reason why I was interested in the Philippines.

I think the Goethe-Institut originally intended to invite somebody else. But I had met Virginia Moreno, an elder woman with a furrowed face, at the Berlin Film Festival and she supported me. I liked her a lot because she was so expressive and egocentric. At the same time, there was something opaque about her.

We arrived in Manila on January 27. I found the city daft. We did not see any slums, because they were all hidden behind huge, white, concrete walls. It was Chinese New Year, so we went to a Chinese Restaurant, and then to Coco Banana, a gay disco. We also went to the Hobbit House, a bar where the whole staff were dwarves, apparently the idea of a gay American.

The workshop took place at the Metropolitan Museum. The students were very nice at first, even though I found it hard to understand people. Some of them had already made Super-8-films that we screened. We started to work on script ideas on the first day. Their ideas included plot lines involving pollution, prostitution, ghosts on the cemetery, a letter home, a religious nut and much more. In the evening, I showed my film *Berliner Bettwurst* (1975) to mixed reactions.

On the next day, I explained the camera, and we did our first shot. We filmed in the museum and outside, and played around with light and shadow. In the next days, I also filmed in a gay restaurant called Bistro with my students. We did three scenes with transvestites miming to playback. I showed my films *Leidenschaften* (Passions, 1972) and *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives* (*Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt*, 1971). After the last film, there was an uneasy silence. People were shy and did not engage in much of a discussion. One student said in the Philippines everything was freer.

After one week nobody came to the workshop anymore. I confronted Virginia Moreno, and she started to taunt me, saying that Lino Brocka had heard bad things about me from the director of the Cannes Film Festivals and that he felt I was not a top director. That's why the students lost interest in working with me. I went to see Lino Brocka at his theatre later, but he did not show up. Supposedly, he did not like me, that's what I was told. But maybe that was just another intrigue. I had come to the country quite naively, but I soon had the impression that a lot of things were going on behind my back. I don't know why the students did not come to the workshop anymore. Maybe what I was doing was too permissive for them.

Since nobody came to the workshop, my boyfriend Mike and I decided to go to Pagsanjan by bus. I remember that the boys there all left their girls behind and



Students setting up a scene at the Metropolitan Museum, Manila. Rosa von Praunheim and Virginia Moreno are sitting on the couch in the background.

ran after us because they wanted to prostitute themselves to get money. We did a boat ride down the rapids in Pagsanjan. We were told that this was where Coppola had shot parts of *Apocalypse Now*, and that Marlon Brando had the local boys give him blowjobs.

The gay scene in Manila appeared to be dominated by prostitution. It seemed very commercial and very tourist-oriented, very much for Western boy lovers. Manila had a reputation as a sex paradise for paedophiles at that time. A lot of people from the West came to the Philippines to fuck children there, which was quite easy because people were so poor that a lot of families sold their children. Many of those Westerners behaved in the most appalling way and used the people there without any scruples. To me it was repulsive how arrogantly they talked about the locals as "inferior." I met an older expat who had been living in a luxury apartment in Manila for the last twenty years because of the "boys." I found him disgusting, imperialist, and exploitative. I cannot appraise how homosexuality was considered by the society. I did not stay long enough for that.

The filmmakers I met while I was here included Kidlat Tahimik, who had made a very good independent film called *Perfumed Nightmare*. At a reception at the Goethe House, I met Lamberto Avellana and Eddie Romero – both of them friendly, older directors. And I remember that the Austrian actor Peter Kern was also in the Philippines at that time to make a film.

What I did not like about the workshop was that it was this upper-class thing. The students who attended my course came from these rich families. On the other hand you had these big, white-washed walls that were there to hide the slums and the poverty. I also talked with the students about the missing identity of the Philippines and the Americanization of the country, which shocked me when I arrived.



Members of Pina Bausch's troupe shaking hands with Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos after their performance at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The whole situation in the Philippines felt stifling. I remember that while I was in Manila, the troupe of German choreographer Pina Bausch gave a guest performance at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It was quite creepy, when Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos came in separate limousines. When they arrived, the mood turned chilly. People fell silent out of fear when they entered the auditorium.

(From a telephone interview with Tilman Baumgärtel)

Rosa von Praunheim (stage name of Holger Mischwitzky) is a German film director and gay rights activist. He has made over 40 films, including the ground-breaking It's Not the Homosexual Who is Perverse, but the Situation in Which He Lives (Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt) from 1970, that made him one of the initiators of the gay rights movement in Germany. In 1979, he was the first German filmmaker who was invited by the Goethe-Institut for a workshop in Manila.

Werner Schroeter Scattered Mirrors

In 1983, my film *Tag der Idioten* (*Day of the Idiots*, 1981) was invited to the Film Festival in Manila. I went there for two reasons: First of all, I was recovering from pneumonia and therefore I wanted to go to a warm country. Secondly, I was interested in this particular country – **yet I knew next to nothing about the Philippines at that point.**

During my stay in Manila, I was able to take a look at the country and its cultural politics. It was only the second year of the Film Festival but it was already an “A” festival. Mrs. Marcos had a whole neighbourhood torn down to build the Film Center. They constructed huge and magnificent buildings in this poor and exploited country.

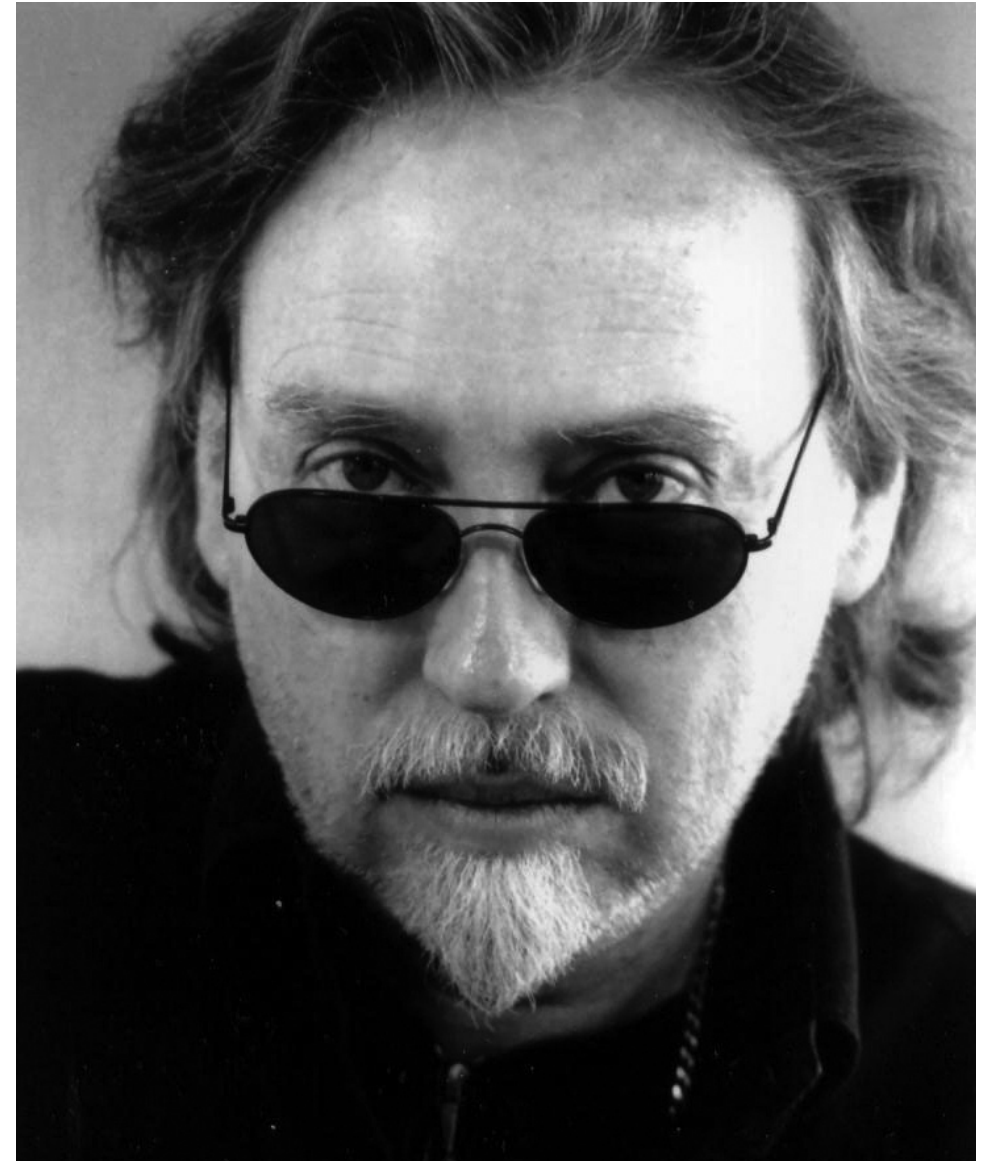
I was fascinated by the fusion of various Asian influences and this exuberant Catholicism. During the festival my friend Peter Kern was also there, and we came up with this idea to make a film. We started to shoot with a very small crew. I showed this footage to Christoph Holch at the German television station ZDF, and he decided that they would produce the final film called *Der lachende Stern* (*The Laughing Star*, 1983). In the same year, I went back to the Philippines and finished shooting. I edited the film in the summer and autumn of that year, and it premiered at the film festival in Hof. In February 1986, when the Marcos regime fell, the ZDF showed *The Laughing Star* because they had nothing else on the Philippines that they could use.

The crew was exclusively Filipino, with the exception of Peter Kern. My dear assistant was a nephew of Marcos. He was very critical about the regime of his uncle and took a lot of risks. So did I. He was able to get written authorizations from Malacañang Palace to film in restricted areas in Mindanao – **where we talked to members of the Muslim rebels – the MLF. I was also introduced to Mrs. Imelda Marcos, since she was the patroness of the film festival.** The “blue ladies,” her chambermaids, repeatedly approached me: “Would you like to meet Madame?” “I kept putting them off, claiming that I was too busy.

But I encountered her at a party at the American embassy, where I went with my small film crew. I had a battery belt and a hand lamp, and all of a sudden I saw Mrs. Marcos performing in the garden of the embassy with a band! It was really cute; she sang all these beautiful songs like *Strangers in the Night*! I ran there with my camera and started shooting until I noticed that the secret police were approaching me.

I gave the camera to my assistant and tried to disappear into the crowd. The police came over and wanted to know what I was shooting. I showed them my passport and my invitation to the film festival. They demanded the footage from my camera. I gave it to them since my assistant had already replaced it with unexposed film. That was my adventure with Mrs. Marcos. The scene in the film is quite stunning – Mrs. Marcos, that felon, singing all those lovely songs...

The Marcos family wasn’t open at all to this type of cynical criticism. It was hard for critical filmmakers in those days. They had to be careful and conceal their criticism well. Some of my collaborators were very afraid that something might happen to them. When we were filming in this massage parlour, one of them actually dropped the camera. The prostitution in Manila at this time was



Werner Schroeter
Photo: Cornelia Illius

incredible, including child prostitution. I did not want to endanger anybody and luckily nothing happened to any of my collaborators.

Among the people I encountered in Manila, Nick Deocampo was always the most fun. I enjoyed his wildly experimental films. I kept meeting him later in Europe because he was invited to several festivals here. I also met Lino Brocka, a highly intelligent man. I got along very well with Ishmael Bernal, a soulful person, a free spirit – **but, at the same, very self-effacing and quiet.** Kidlat Tahimik also showed me some of his work. Then there was Marilou Diaz-Abaya. We brought her movie *Karnal* to the Women’s Film Festival in Paris. Another very important person for me was Virginia Moreno, then the head of the Film



Werner Schroeter in 1978

Photo: Josef Gallus Rittenberg

Center at the University of the Philippines. Virgie also ran this café where the most diverse bunch of people met, including her brother Pitoy Moreno, who designed the wardrobe of Imelda Marcos.

I was fascinated by the fact that these people were able to create so much under such difficult circumstances. I think the worst crime of the Marcos family was the embezzlement of the Filipino people's money. The limited freedom they gave to artists and the support for film was really only a way to improve their reputation abroad. The freedom afforded to the people included sexual libertinage. There was no sexual repression at all at that time. If you close all the valves, the danger of a revolution becomes imminent. The Marcoses afforded their people some liberties in order to preserve their oppressive system. Decadence and poetry were weapons against this stultification. I feel that in a situation like that, decadence is a possibility to express yourself and a better one at that than killing yourself in despair.

It so happens that I have worked in three countries where European influences were introduced with brute force: the Philippines, Mexico and Argentina. In all these countries Catholicism and other European influences destroyed the original culture. But, at the same time, these countries developed their own kind of resistance. They created a new culture which is authentic despite its being a hybrid. I always found this more fascinating than the homogenous, the clear-cut (which is mostly an illusion anyway).

As a European I gained a lot from these experiences, and I enjoyed this exchange back and forth tremendously. For instance, I did the Mexican premiere of Richard Strauss' *Salome* at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. I also worked in Argentina. There I learned a lot about what stays of one's unique identity after this colonial shock treatment. What has been processed in a positive way? What was the ethical certainty at work? Another concept of freedom? Or did it actually crush the people and abuse them to an extent that

nothing of their identity remained? In the Philippines a lot remained despite the fact that they were even denied any kind of education for a long time. Yet the people in the Philippines have retained a self-respect that one can only wish for in Germany where the people do not live under such poor conditions.

The foreign influences are internalised, but the original substance has not been destroyed. Colonialism did not lead to a depletion of the roots. Mexico is very similar because it went through a comparable process. If these countries did not perish, they also gained something. They became more modern. It would be even more colonial of me to expect the Philippines to celebrate its indigenous culture forever. Because of the Western influences these countries also became more accessible to us. I call these countries "the scattered mirrors."

Of course I do not wish to justify any intervention into another culture. And I generally detest any kind of power that rules by creating fear. But since the colonisation of the Philippines is an irreversible fact, I tried to look openly at the hybrid identity of this country. That was also what I set out to do with *The Laughing Star*. I have made a number of documentaries that are poetic and very subjective reflections, and this film is one of them. *The Laughing Star* tries to look at the situation without lambasting the evil colonizers. It rather shows the sensitivity that nevertheless emerged from the colonial history of the Philippines – **the mentality and the poetry of the people**.

When the film was eventually shown in the Philippines, it was a strange experience. The technical circumstances of the screening were not good, and I think my point of view and the poetry of this special film did not sit well with what the audience, as my collaborators had expected. But it was received in a friendly manner nevertheless.

(From an interview with Tilman Baumgärtel)

Werner Schroeter has been an important and influential proponent of the New German Cinema in the 1970s and 1980s. His major feature films include Palermo oder Wolfsburg (Palermo or Wolfsburg, 1980), Tag der Idioten (Day of the Idiots, 1981) and Malina (1990). He also works as a theater and opera director in Germany, Italy, France, Austria and Mexico. He lives in Berlin and is a member of the German Academy of the Arts.

Werner Schroeter shooting *The Laughing Star*, his documentary about the Philippines.



Maria Vedder

The Only Revolution of My Life

My stay in the Philippines was quite unusual because I blundered right into the People Power Revolution in February 1986, the only revolution of my life. Therefore, the seminar did not happen at all as planned. Before I flew to the Philippines, the Goethe-Institut in Munich asked Uwe Schmelter, the head of the Goethe-Institut in Manila then, for his assessment of the state of affairs in the Philippines, as they already knew that the situation was tense. Mr. Schmelter told them that it was safe for me to come.

The defection of the Minister of Defense, Juan Ponce Enrile, and General Fidel Ramos, that initiated the revolution, happened only after I had boarded the plane in Germany on February 22. On that evening, Enrile and Ramos announced at a press conference that they felt Ferdinand Marcos had stolen the election. Therefore, they declared that they could no longer support Marcos and that Cory Aquino was the rightful president. We did not hear anything about that on the plane, and only when we were about to land in Manila, the pilot announced that the airport of Manila was open. We were quite surprised – why should the airport be closed? In fact, the airport was closed five hours later and we were among the last passengers to land there for some time.

Enrile and Ramos had barricaded themselves in two military camps: Ramos at Camp Crame, the Headquarters of the Philippine National Police and Enrile at the Ministry of National Defense in Camp Aguinaldo. Both camps faced each other across the major road Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA). Both had only a couple of hundred fellow soldiers with them, and there was the apprehension that they would be attacked by Marcos-loyal troops. I was deeply impressed by what happened next. The catholic radio station Radio Veritas aired a message by the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin. He told the Filipinos to come to the aid of the rebel leaders by going to EDSA. Basically, he asked people to serve as human shields for the rebel soldiers.

I was picked up from the airport and was taken to the house of the director of the Goethe-Institut. It had been decided that it would be too dangerous for me to stay in the hotel that they booked for me since it was close to the palace of the Marcoses, Malacañang. Therefore I stayed at the private home of Mr. Schmelter for the next couple of days, while we waited to see if the situation would turn into a bloody revolution or if things would stay peaceful. Schmelter himself wasn't even in Manila. He had had to attend a conference somewhere else in Asia. So I stayed with his wife. We set up a basement room that was safe from ricochets. I remember that I woke up the first morning because military helicopters were circling over the house of the Schmelters and I saw the shadow of one of these helicopters on the wall of my bedroom. I was born after the Second World War and I never had been in any battle situation, but somehow it tied in with some of the things I had heard about the war in Germany. It was very scary.

We had no idea where things were heading, and therefore we quietly stayed in this basement room for the next couple of days. We sat in the half-dark and listened to *Radio Veritas*. The Catholic Church was very powerful in the Philippines at that time. It had eventually disassociated itself from them the Marcos regime after the last elections that had obviously been manipulated. They used their radio station to inform the public. And they kept playing this old American song *Tie a Yellow Band around the Old Oak Tree* as a reference



Maria Vedder and Nick Deocampo at the Film Center of the Philippines.

to the yellow that was the colour of the opposition in the Philippines.

What I found most remarkable was that this whole revolution would not have been possible without electronic mass media. There was *Radio Veritas* and then all of a sudden all these pirate stations by Filipino citizens emerged and also called for people to come to EDSA. A contingent of rebels took over one of the government television stations, Channel 4. The station was renamed to “TV Filipino” and started to broadcast in favour of the rebels.

I was also very impressed by the fact that the people went out to protect the soldiers from the revenge of these dictators. When we finally ventured out in the streets, I noticed that there were a lot of women and nuns among the protestors. Many of them were wearing yellow: yellow t-shirts, wristbands and bandanas. Women were tying yellow ribbons around the arms of soldiers and hugging them. I remember that very vividly.

So I experienced what might have very well been the world's first non-violent overthrow of a dictatorship by the population three years before the East Germans peacefully brought down the wall in Germany. I was able to witness this only from a distance since I was out of the country at that time. But I noticed that even the slogans were similar. The Filipinos shouted “People Power,” the East Germans, “We are the people.”

Marcos was taken out of the country to his exile in Hawaii. Then it became obvious that the military would not interfere anymore. We went out in the streets and there was sheer rapture everywhere. My presentations were planned exactly for the time of the EDSA revolution so they did not take place at all because everybody was afraid that a civil war would break out. But once it became clear that there would be no violence, I moved into my hotel and the experimental

filmmakers started to attend to me. They showed me around in Manila and took me to the Film Center and the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

I remember that they showed me some of their works. I was very impressed with the quality of their films. The artists were very nice and accommodating, but, at the same time, very self-confident about their works. It is telling that I do not remember if I showed them any of my own video art pieces at all. It was a two-way exchange between artists. There was no aloofness and nothing official about it at all. I was very taken by the fact that they took their time to meet me, considering the events that had just happened, which we all thought were of world-historic importance.

(From a telephone interview on October 10, 2007 with Tilman Baumgärtel)

Maria Vedder has been working as a video artist since the 1970s. Her video works and her photographs are in the collections of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, Tate Gallery Liverpool, Fukui Culture Center, Tokyo and others. Since 1991 she has been teaching media art at the Universität der Künste Berlin. She is the author of one of the first books on video art in Germany, Kunst und Video (Art and Video, 1983), a reference book on video technology.

Harun Farocki

I Don't Think I was the Right Seminar Leader

In the autumn of 1986 I was invited on short notice to lead a two-week film workshop for the Goethe-Institut in Manila, since the intended leader, Eberhard Hauff, had cancelled. I accepted thankfully because I really needed to earn money. During the past two years I had worked on the feature film *Betrogen* (*Deceived*, 1985), and prior to that as well as thereafter on *Wie man sieht* (*As You See*, 1986); for both projects I received as good as nothing and they demanded so much from me that I had no time in between or on the side to work on a few other projects that earned some money.

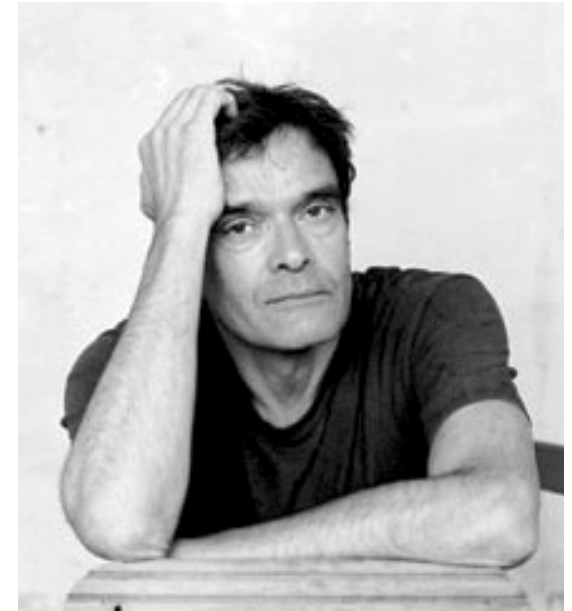
I arrived in Manila at around noon and was picked up from the airport by the Goethe-Institut director, Dr. Uwe Schmelter. I was amazed by the width of the highways, which had almost American dimensions, as well as by the size of the commercial and trade buildings. It appeared to me that there must be a lot of money in this place. I had a little bit of time for myself in the hotel and was glad I could turn off the air conditioning there and open the window. There was also a pool that smelled a little foul.

In the early evening there was a meeting at Dr. Schmelter's official residence to which five or six Filipino filmmakers had come. Among them was Kidlat Tahimik, whom I had met fleetingly in Berlin a few years previously. I learned that in addition to local filmmakers, others from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore were to take part in the seminar. On the way back to the hotel Dr. Schmelter told me he believed the more prominent Filipino filmmakers probably would not attend the seminar the next day, not wanting to assume the role of students if they took part in the seminar. His assumption turned out to be true.

The seminar was held in a low cement building surrounded by a little garden. It was a kind of film school or film center, which the Goethe-Institut had helped to set up. A Super-8 film developing machine stood in a corridor. Kodak had just abandoned developing Super-8 film in the Philippines and had given the apparatus away. Those filmmakers who continued to work with Super-8 sent their film to Hawaii to be developed. In the next few days I saw that Manila had more video rental shops than West Germany. Video rental shops operated even in areas where the people lived in make-shift shanties and a movie cost the equivalent of 50 pfennigs per rental.

We spent the first days getting to know each other with words as well as by showing each other our films. One Malaysian filmmaker showed us a work in many parts that had been shown on television in his country. It was a ghost story with "supernatural forces," according to the author. There were all kinds of magical tricks in the three-part film he had worked out himself. The leading man was his father; a well-known pop singer.

Two people from Thailand were there, an actor and a director. If I remember correctly they showed parts of films that one had made or the other had acted in. Or perhaps they showed the films in their entirety, but I shortened them in my memory since I am sure that I didn't have the courage to leave the room during the presentation.



Harun Farocki

The films kept showing a car of brand A stopping at a house in front of which stood a car of brand B and then another one of brand C. A man wearing a Polo shirt got out of the car and walked towards the house. The ringing of the doorbell or the knocking at the door and the opening of the door and the entering of the house were not shown. The man walked immediately up to a table, which was supposedly in the house, at which a man and a woman sat. The man wore a blazer; the woman wore a cocktail dress. The man in the blazer poured from a bottle of VAT 69 into the glasses of the woman and the guest. Then the guest said something, the woman something, the host something, the guest something. This continued for about 30 identical takes.

Since I couldn't understand the dialogue I paid attention to the little interruptions, for example the way a man rolled back his sleeve and bared a golden Rolex, reading the time with effort and concentration as if he had just learned to tell time yesterday. Or when one of the men lit a woman's cigarette with a gold lighter as if in an instruction video.

In these films, which one could call infomercials for consumerism, the performer from Thailand wore a smug expression on his face. He sometimes relaxed his facial muscles and smiled appealingly. He also displayed smugness to us in the seminar room. But when he came back from doing his shopping and opened his bags showing us his new shirts, ties or pieces of jewelry, he only paid attention to the objects and forgot to keep on his mask. We learned that between 15 to 30 such films are made annually in Thailand. In some years the director in our seminar had turned out five such films.

A young man, Garin Nugroho, had come from Indonesia to show a few of his documentary films. He went on to become one of the most important independent filmmakers of Indonesia. I remember his name because he told me his father had named him after the Soviet astronaut Gagarin. He had changed his own name to avoid being suspected as a communist in Suharto's Indonesia. Garin showed a film about the last remaining Warans who live on an island near

Java. The British English commentary of his film was spoken by a bass whose voice rose and sank as if he were reading a Christmas story out loud or in the way the narration of a BBC cultural film is read. I remember telling Garin that he did not need to cater to the audiences abroad.

The films of the Filipino filmmakers were a lot more interesting. Nick Deocampo, with whom I had some conversations during my two-week stay, showed us a simple video film about male prostitutes. Nick told me about the many German filmmakers who always kept coming to Philippines to satisfy their erotic sexual needs. He also mentioned Gründgens. I remembered Gründgens had taken leave from the theater in Hamburg and embarked upon a world tour and met his death in a bathtub in Manila. A local man had been there too, which had surprised me at that time.

Then I saw a few of Raymond Red's Super-8 films and was inspired. He made his first film when he was 17. Even at that time his style displayed a great degree of confidence. His short film was silent and had insert titles. He used an interesting technique I had never seen before. The story was set in everyday modern-day Manila, but the actors wore costumes from the 1920s. The film succeeded in completely enchanting contemporary Manila. Red was quiet and difficult to approach. The only thing I learned about him was that he watched certain videos again and again at night. He wanted to discover the essence of a film that lay hidden behind what one saw. At that time, he had taken on a Science Fiction Film by Spielberg. I had the impression that Red had a primordial talent for filmmaking-if such a thing exists or can possibly exist.

I also showed a few of my own works. When I showed *Ein Bild (A Picture, 1983)*, a film about how pictures are made for the centerfolds of *Playboy* magazine, the Thai director commented that the first thing that counted is to show this – he pointed to his chest, – and then this – he then pointed to his crotch. A seminar participant objected that we were dealing here with a documentary. The director was flabbergasted. I assume that nobody in the room had ever seen a documentary before that showed how something is made without a narration.

I discovered that the Filipino participants had a high degree of film literacy. The Goethe-Institut had shown many films in the last years and invited many German filmmakers. As a result nobody knew Godard but everybody knew Fassbinder. No one had ever heard of Bazin and the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, but they knew the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* critics like Günter Pflaum. One of my films *Zwischen zwei Kriegen (Between two Wars, 1978)* was presented in a local movie theater. Only a few spectators attended probably because a curfew had been declared for that evening which was not lifted until the following afternoon. There was some fear and even indications that the military was preparing a coup.

I enjoyed roaming around the streets of Manila. It was almost impossible to walk on the streets at night. There were barely any streetlamps and there were slabs of rock lying on the sidewalks as well as meter-deep gaping holes. I took buses instead of taxis so I could experience everyday life in Manila. I often went into the food stalls at the bus stops to drink a coffee or a beer. I sat down at a bar. Up to four girls were dancing topless, usually to the sound track of Modern Talking. They made obscene gestures, pointing to their crotches while making a thrusting movement with their index finger. At the same time, they looked completely detached and apathetic. Nick told me that in many of the faces of the people on the street you could see that the Philippines belonged only half to Asia, the other half belonging to the South Seas. When I observed their faces it seemed to me the South Sea faces were more mysterious than the Asian ones.

Most evenings I spent alone at the hotel. I sat on a cement terrace in the white neon light and ate something, and then I read for several hours. By the way, I read books about who knew when what was going on in Auschwitz. I also read a political thriller in which an American discovers a Swiss conspiracy to take over the world. He escaped to California, but Switzerland held onto its domination of the world.

On one Saturday a reception was given in my honor at the Schmelters' residence. The archbishop was there and the director of the symphony orchestra as well as the German ambassador. The latter asked me what kind of films I made. I suppose I gave a rather brash reply to his question because it was asked in such a way that implied: why had he been invited to a party for a director he had never even heard of? When I asked Mrs. Schmelter about her dress she told me she had had it sewn from bed sheets. She said she couldn't stand any other type of material on her skin in the tropics and that she had almost exhausted her supply of the bed sheets she had inherited. I wondered if she had also used up the tablecloths.

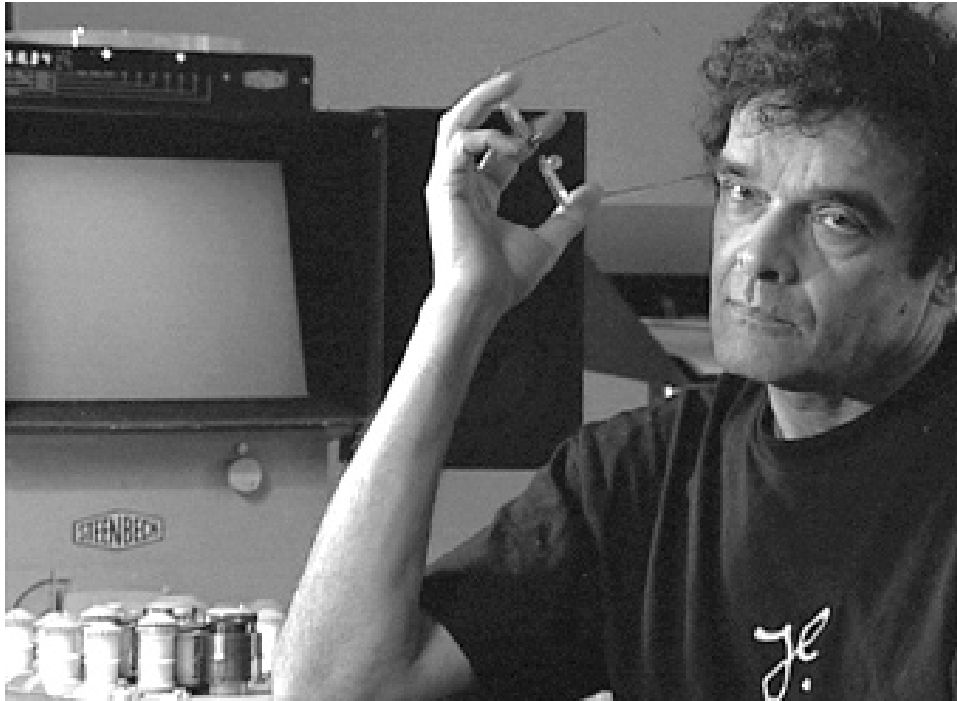
The reception took place around noon. We stood on the lawn and servants in white uniforms served refreshments. I had attended such receptions with my parents as a child in Jakarta and loved them. Many things in Manila stirred up surprising memories from my childhood in the tropics. For example, when at noon the rain broke loose and immediately thereafter the sun shone again drying the ground so quickly that it steamed. Then, the smell of rotting plants came from the drains the way the trees in the jungles of Java smelled when we picked orchids.

I also went to the movies a few times. A ticket cost the equivalent of ten pfennigs. The theater halls were large and very bright. The spectators talked to each other and constantly went in and out. They barely looked at the screen on which films that were half to three-fourths pornographic could be seen. The actresses in the films did a better job at feigning sexual desire than the girls at the bus stop bars, however the directing of the films was even worse than the music of Modern Talking.

One film stayed in my memory. You saw all the scenes that were shot in location A, then all the scenes in location B. The clapboard had been cut out, but the takes had not been put into sequence. Nobody in the theater seemed to notice. I enjoyed playing an imaginary game of rearranging the rough cut in my mind. As it happens, there was something in these films I had seen in a film on the Reeperbahn when I was a pupil in Hamburg and hadn't seen again since then. There was a woman for whom sex was something unimaginable and extremely reprehensible. If you surprised her in her sleep or removed her clothes when she took a bath, she became overcome with animalistic lust.

Next to the film center where the seminar was held, there was a school with openings in the walls where windows should have been. I often heard the children chanting in unison, parroting their teacher the way they used to do in elementary schools in Jakarta.

I think we spent two days watching a video copy of Louis Malles' *Atlantic City* at the workshop. Apparently, the seminar participants had never before watched a film sequence-by-sequence, take-by-take, which is probably why they had so little to say. I talked until I was blue in the face. It was difficult for me against such indifference and resistance to insist that we keep going back to a detail earlier in the film. I also suggested that we recut the film and rearrange all the scenes by their locations, the way I had seen it done in the bold flick, but they



Harun Farocki on the Steenbeck editing table

couldn't see the point.

After that I decided to transition to some straight-forward, directing exercises. Today, you would just use a video camera, but they weren't available then, so we made ourselves a frame out of paper, which we used like a viewfinder to border each selected image. I came to class in the morning with a little plot and two or three participants made themselves available as performers. None of the foreign participants had volunteered and from the Filipinos only two or three ladies.

It was often difficult to find someone who wanted to do the directing. Almost all of the foreigners spoke very little English, the locals switched back and forth every few words from English to Tagalog. The director from Thailand went to work as if he were trying to break a record. He went on the set, dissected the scene into three or four takes, took the matte in one hand and directed the performers with the other, corrected the eye line of the woman or performed the role of the man who was supposed to fall over. I remember thinking this man reminded me of a filmmaker from the Griffith-era, who made a film every day and that he would be finished before lunchtime. The actor from Thailand condescended to play the role, looking smug or stretching his facial muscles into an appealing smile.

Most of the participants didn't know where to begin with these exercises. It didn't help a bit when I told them you could use what you learned from filming a story, even when making a film about the last Warans. For example, people who write for newspapers can also use what they learned from reading Shakespeare or studying the novels of Flaubert. It all depended on how much background knowledge you had. I don't think I was able to reach the participants with such speeches.

We understood each other a lot better during our occasional conversations. During the breaks, the Filipino and Indonesian filmmakers told me that there was a lack of awareness about their own cultures and they had no choice but to refer to the United States or Europe. They also told me that Coppola had left behind a backdrop city when he filmed *Apocalypse Now*. Now local filmmakers were using these backdrops and a whole new genre had arisen. I would like to have seen these films.

I don't think I was the right seminar leader. I constantly wanted to convey something that couldn't be communicated in words. I had similar experiences in Berlin. I became insecure when I wasn't among people I knew well, people who seemed to understand without words who I was and what I stood for. When I showed the Malle film in Manila, I suffered when some participants appeared not to appreciate what made this film so special. And when some of the seminar participants liked the film, I was afraid they only liked it because it reminded them of other films I didn't think much of.

Once some of the Filipino filmmakers invited me to a party. The party was held in an empty house that belonged to a woman by the name of Lorelei. The house stood next to a river or canal and was illuminated by a full moon in a cloudless sky. Both Nick and I agreed such a house belonged in a Joseph Conrad novel. We sat on the floor of a spacious anteroom with a stairway with beer and lots of lemonade and chips. At the foot of the staircase stood a larger than life statue of Mary wearing a kind of wedding dress that was very dirty although it had been shielded in a kind of aviary made of screen.

Nick, who sometimes spoke of quitting films to write a novel, told me Manila had had a glorious past of which nothing remained. Hardly anyone remembered the time before 1945. I myself didn't know about the connection between the Philippines and Magellan. The first time I had heard about the inhabitants of the Philippines was in the novels of Raymond Chandler. These Filipinos worked as house servants in California. Nick alluded to the fact that the man who was in the car with Murnau when he died was believed to have been Murnau's play thing and was said to have been performing a sexual act on him in the car when the accident occurred.

Nick now wanted to flee present-day Manila's triviality by learning Spanish.

Harun Farocki is an acclaimed German filmmaker from the generation of the Neuer Deutscher Film directors and at the same time a "68er". He has made over 90 short and long films, the vast majority of them experimental documentaries and essay films, including Inextinguishable fire (Nicht lösbares Feuer, 1969), Videograms of a revolution (Videogramme einer Revolution, 1992) and The Creators of Shopping Worlds (Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten, 2001). He taught at UC Berkeley from 1993 to 1999, and is currently a professor at the Art Academy of Vienna, Austria.

Michael Wulfes We Returned to the Philippines Almost Every Year

My close friend and colleague Christian Weisenborn and I were invited to come to Manila in November 1983. At the time, we had been partners for five years in a film company we jointly owned (Nanuk Films). We undertook this journey to several Southeast Asian countries within the scope of an event for the Goethe-Institut. At each of our stops we showed a package of German films (“Location Germany”) in the rooms of the Goethe-Institut. Thereafter, we supplemented the films with information and held discussions with the audience. We had just been to Singapore and Bangkok.

From the beginning we requested to be allowed to stay longer at one of our stops in order to conduct a hands-on filmmaking workshop for young local filmmakers. It was only logical that the Philippines, or more precisely Manila, was chosen since the film scene there at that time of such economic need was the freest, most active and enthusiastic. Neither Christian nor I knew the country, which made us all the more look forward to working closely with young film enthusiasts and imparting a bit of our film knowledge to them.

The workshop was organized by the Goethe-Institut’s home office in Munich, under the supervision of Dr. Bretzler. We acted in an advisory capacity and helped to find German sponsors who could supply the necessary film equipment and materials. Our goal was to produce a 16-mm documentary film, which, of course, was no inexpensive undertaking. At that time most Filipino filmmakers shot on Super-8 film. However, we thought it was important to do our film on a format that was the international standard. The workshop was to be held over four weeks, plus an additional three weeks for postproduction. It was further divided into two or three parts. In the first part we wanted to familiarize the participants with the equipment we had brought with us (a 16-mm Arriflex (SR) camera, a Nagra sound-recording machine and a set of Janibeam lamps). We also wanted to introduce them to the fundamentals of making documentary films. In the second part we were to research topics and present them to the participants. Thereafter, we would collectively select a film topic. Finally, we wanted to shoot the film and edit it at a later date (May 1984) in a cutting room in Baguio. All of the equipment was to be handled by the participants themselves. We were to stand aside in an advisory capacity.

Neither Christian nor I knew what to expect in Manila, but we really wanted to throw ourselves into a new adventure. Shortly after our arrival, the Goethe-Institut handed us a detailed list of things we should not do in this megacity. A member of a German symphony orchestra had just recently been recovered lying on a park bench. His pockets had been emptied after he had been knocked out by a tranquilizer. I can nevertheless confidently say that we did everything on that list we were warned not to do and no harm befell us. Our first accommodation was in a radio station compound not far from the institute. But we felt so caged up and misplaced there. We eventually got the director’s approval to move to a hotel on Roxas Boulevard. From the first day on we were completely amazed by the exuberant friendliness with which the Filipinos on the street greeted us. “Hey Joe!” here, and “Hey Joe!” there. We almost felt like celebrities. At that time there was such a fanatic admiration for American film stars, which quickly turned Christian into Clint Eastwood and me into Bruce Willis. Things could not have been any better for us.



A break form editing *The Spark of Courage* in Baguio: Michael Wulfes, Eric Caruncho, Rowee Caruncho with her two children, Ernie Enrique, Owen Gonzales, Christian Weisenborn and Joseph Fortin (from the left)

The Philippine political situation in November 1983 had reached a decisive turning point. The hopes of all those who wanted democracy had been placed on Ninoy Aquino. He had been assassinated a few months beforehand on the tarmac of the Manila airport upon his return from the USA. Indeed Ferdinand Marcos and his wife still held onto power; but the people in their desperation had lost a bit of their fear of the dictator and his henchmen. A massive people’s movement was spreading and it seemed unstoppable. The scene was dominated by the yellow color of the opposition and yellow ribbons fluttered from every tree and every jeepney. There were constant demonstrations and rallies of support for the slain “Ninoy,” and against the dictator and the USA that backed him. Even the girls in the nightclubs of Ermita danced in yellow bikinis. The country was in flux as it had never been before. Naturally, it was the youth who had the highest hopes for political change. All of this was tremendously exciting for two people who came from a quiet, stable and wealthy country like Germany.

What we naturally did not understand was the mentality of the Filipinos. The first day of the workshop was supposed to begin at 9 a.m. The venue: a room at the Goethe-Institut. However, a good hour and a half elapsed before the first participant showed up. It was Boy Yniguez, who later became the country’s most successful cameraman for commercials. Slowly the others trickled in and we learned our first lesson. It would be absurd to expect German punctuality here. The second lesson was not long in coming. We both came from the ‘68 school of German films and naturally we believed we could all sit down together and work out collectively what we wanted to learn in the workshop. We did not want to come across as all-knowing university professors, but rather we wanted to exchange ideas and know-how on an equal footing. The title “German specialist” made us feel uncomfortable and came across as a bit arrogant. We wanted to work in partnership with them. However, we soon learned the young people wanted exactly the opposite. They wanted hierarchy and conventional learning. They wanted to be “spoon fed.” We gave in to them relatively quickly, especially when we found out that individual participants were reluctant to take an active role and preferred to keep a low profile. The ideal we Europeans have of an encounter with people from another culture is not necessarily their ideal.

Ironically, the contempt and arrogance associated with colonial ways lies in failing to respect this fact, and not in establishing a hierarchical relationship. There was also no need to give homework, as one of my colleagues no doubt did in Manila.

We soon decided not to impose our German or Western criteria on the participants. On the one hand, we were very curious to see what would happen. On the other, I think we had enough restraint not to push too hard. But cultural differences aside, there was only one behavior we could and simply would not accept. The Filipino participants did not have the courage to criticize each other. They thought everything presented to them was “wonderful,” or they pretended to at least. Without criticism the film scene will ultimately produce amateurs (sorry!) who call themselves “independent artists,” and nobody will contest them. The courage to criticize – **I hope this issue has been settled once and for all!**

Our relationship with students quickly developed into a very personal one. We broke the ice by constantly poking fun at each other’s cultural peculiarities. The participants’ reasons for attending the workshop differed greatly. Some seemed more or less to drop by out of boredom. Others believed they were laying the foundation for a career in filmmaking. Aside from the aforementioned Boy Y, others also became successful, even back then. For example, there were Joseph Fortin and Ernie Enrique, who later became professors at the U.P. Film Center, among other things, and have remained our close friends.

After lengthy discussions and a vote on the suggested topics, we began to shoot our film. The film focused on the socio-political situation during this critical period in the Philippines. It portrayed the fate of some individuals who represented the millions of poor and oppressed people. A family that earned their livelihood by recycling garbage on Smokey Mountain. The wife of a detained union leader. A squatter family whose earthly belongings were surreptitiously loaded onto a truck on Imelda’s orders and transported out of the city to a place where there was no work and no hope of survival. The climax and the conclusion of the film is a huge demonstration in Rizal Park, where Cory Aquino addresses the crowds.

Very few of the participants had brought any practical experience in filmmaking to the workshop. So the shooting was a very demanding and thrilling business

Owen Gonzelas, Christian Weisenborn and Joseph Fortin



Baguio 1984, on the way to the editing studio: Ernie Enrique, Joseph Fortin, Eric Caruncho and other workshop participants



for them, as well as us for us. We were confronted with real people who had such profound and moving destinies and we wanted to do them justice in our filmic work. The fact that the finished film, entitled *The Spark of Courage*, ultimately succeeded in this endeavor is shown by the fact that it received kudos from all sides and was later shown at a number of festivals, including the Oberhausener Short Film Festival in 1984. Naturally, mistakes were made. It took a while to learn how to handle the big and unfamiliar camera and the heavy Nagra IV. Nevertheless, or perhaps for that reason, the film radiates with integrity and compassion for its protagonists. Alongside the film work, the encounter with these young people and a foreign country was very important to us. We quickly fell in love with the cheerfulness and the vitality of the Filipinos. It is not surprising, therefore, that we returned to the Philippines almost every year in the following years. The workshop prompted us to undertake our own film projects in the Philippines for the youth and evening programs of the various ARD broadcast stations. Our 1983 workshop participants often stood by our side and helped us in these projects.

The 16-mm film material we made during the workshop was developed in Manila and the working copy also originated there. We then returned to the Philippines in May 1984. The Goethe-Institut’s editing equipment had been set up in Baguio, where we edited the film together within three weeks. Again, this was a totally new experience for the participants who had only worked with Super-8 film, where the sound was not edited separately from the original. In the meantime, we all became good friends. We worked in close quarters in a relaxed manner and were actually happy that a respectable film emerged from the material.

The Goethe-Institut workshop was ultimately such a success that it experienced a remake eight years later when a film about Manila’s street children was produced. *Masakit sa Mata* was selected the best Philippine documentary of 1992 and brought forth another batch of young local filmmakers who also “made it” in the film world. Up to this day, we still have friendly ties with the Philippines and with our old friends and there are even some vague plans in the works to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our first workshop in the Philippines next year. What a great pleasure that would be for me!

Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn collaborated on a number of documentaries, including Die Profis (The Pros, 1979), a film about the German national soccer team. They both live in Munich, and produce documentaries for various German TV stations.

Ditsi Carolino

The Workshop Set the Tone For Me

I was in the workshop with the German documentary filmmakers Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn that was organized by the Goethe Institut and Mowelfund in 1990. We produced a documentary called *Masakit sa Mata* (*Eyesores*) on street children in Manila. Prior to the workshop, I had gotten interested in working with images from a photography workshop at one of the development agencies. We did slideshows on the living conditions of farmers and fisher folk and tribal communities in the Philippine countryside.

After that, I was drawn to moving pictures and worked in my favourite investigative news show *The Probe Team*. I learned the ropes of production as a production assistant there, but I soon realized that I was not really cut out for TV. There was only one week allotted for a 15-minute segment of the show. I can understand why they had to do it like that because resources were so stretched and everybody was multi-tasking all the time.

At *The Probe Team*, we would shoot one person who was pro this issue and one who was against it, and then we would shoot visuals to illustrate what they said. Then we edited a so-called “audio bed,” which was an editing script with the best sound bites and narration to make the interview bites flow, before we would edit the pictures based on that “audio bed”. It was almost like a holdover from radio because there were so many words. You had all those talking heads and narration. Things cannot just unfold and that’s all you ever saw on Philippine television news magazines. You do not really see the difference to real documentary film making until you see other examples like Cinéma-vérité.

So even though it was exciting to be in the thick of television, I realized I wanted to do documentaries where you spend more time with the subjects and to develop the story. That’s how I ended up in Mickey and Christian’s documentary film workshop at Mowelfund in 1990. The approach at the workshop was very different from what I knew. There was a lot of time for location research and to look for subjects. We really started with the images and we did the interviews last.

The editing process also was a revelation for me because it showed me that you did not need to begin with sound bites, but that you can just edit the scenes, and then, if you needed to add more information about what was going on, you could include interviews and commentary. You saw what the film was about in the interaction between the different subjects rather than in what was said, so it was more cinematic. We really had time to move things around and tinker with the structure. That is how I make my films now. I remember seeing Mickey and Christian physically cutting and pasting 16-mm film strips on the Steenbeck, and I thought: this is real filmmaking – putting images together.

At the workshop, we broke off into groups. In each group they decided who was the director, the cameraman, etc. We decided to do a film on street children because I had found this group of street children. Then the other groups also gathered material on this subject. Michael and Christian were really working



The street children roaming the city. Joseph Fortin is filming the kids, while Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn shoot a “Making of” of *Masakit sa Mata*.

documentary filmmakers, so it was very hands-on. We went out to shoot, then we brought back the material and worked on it. We got practical input on shooting. Then we were left on our own. We really had to come up with this film.

We held our meetings under the big trees at Mowelfund, near the swimming pool. It was a very relaxed atmosphere. We were outside a lot and handled the cameras right away. One of our classmates, Joseph Fortin, was very adept in handling the 16-mm camera because he had done other films before. Even if our final film was just a workshop film, the cinematography was very good. And because I had experience in working with marginalized groups, I had a rapport with the children. I think that also shows in the film. Also, our soundman, Bubut Tan-Torres, was competent with location sound. I think we did really well as a production team.

There was one cross-cultural conflict at the end. Christian and Mickey insisted on the English title *Eyesores*. The original Tagalog title *Masakit sa Mata* means “eyesore,” but the literal translation is “painful to the eyes.” So there is this nuance of empathy for the subjects, the street children. *Masakit sa Mata* was fine with us as the original title, but *Eyesores* as the English title was not. We argued for a more culturally-sensitive title, but the Germans insisted on *Eyesores*. I felt that this was not right because that was not how we looked at the street children at all – especially after we had spent time with them.

I met Christian and Mickey again in Germany 15 years after the workshop. When Nana Buxani and I showed our film *Bunso* (*The Youngest*) – which is about children in jail, and some of them also used to be street children – in 2005 at a film festival in Munich. Christian and Mickey came – you could see how



Michael Wulfes, Christian Weisenborn, Ditsi Carolino, Joseph Fortin, Ferdie Manolo, Jimi Hobro and Bubut Tan-Torres (from left) with a street child, one of their protagonists

proud they were that their former students had gotten so far. They presented the film during the screenings. They were very kind. Mickey offered us accommodation in Munich and Christian brought us around. Both were really hospitable, treating us to dinner and lots of beer!

Their workshop really set the tone for me to get out of this television mindset and make more cinematic films. I never went back to television. I started to make documentaries for NGOs and development agencies about social issues. Many of them won awards in festivals here and abroad. Now I rarely do commissioned works, focusing instead on self-assignments and films on stories that I find important. I think my films had some influence on television documentaries here in the Philippines – especially my film *Children Only Once* (1996) about child labour.

In this film there is a narrator, but this narrator is not this objective, authoritative reporter. The commentary is very personal and subjective. It won a Gold Medal for Social Issues and Current Affairs and the Grand Prize for Documentary at the New York Festival For Television Programming in 1999. When it was shown on television here on primetime Saturday night, it rated high in viewership and the station was able to sell the entire commercial load. So it was both successful artistically and commercially. It broke the notion that you had to have very quick edit cuts, that you cannot have long shots or scenes because otherwise people would switch channels. Now there are several in-depth documentary programs on local television that work along the same lines. I find it interesting that independent filmmakers can create something that inspires TV documentaries to go beyond the established formulas and do things differently.

Ditsi Carolino is an independent documentary director-producer. She studied sociology at the University of the Philippines and film directing at the National Film and Television School in Great Britain. Her documentaries are often about the lives and struggles of the poor and include Riles (2003), selected as the best documentary at the Cinemanila International Film Festival, and Bunso: The Youngest (2005, with Sadhana Buzani), which won Best Director at the One World International Film Festival in Prague, the Grand Prize at the EBS International Documentary Film Festival in Seoul, and the Youth Jury Prize in Perspektiv: Nuremberg International Human Rights Film Festival.

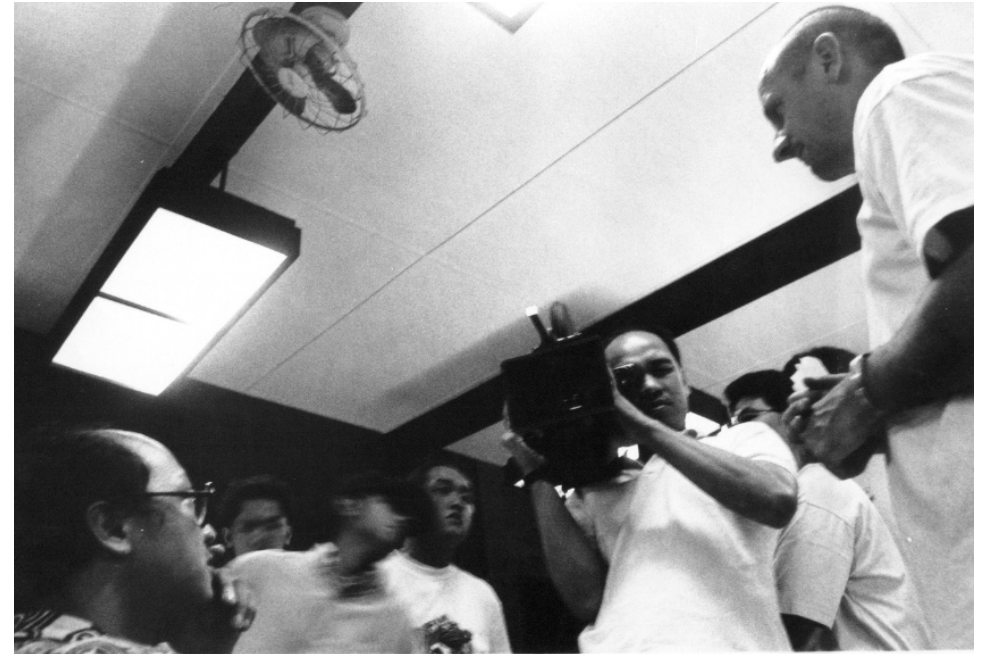
Christoph Janetzko Experimental Film Productions in the Philippines

I would like to trace my involvement in experimental films, and eventually in these workshops, to the development of the film genre in my country, Germany. The experimental film (some name it art cinema) reached its climax in Germany during the 1980s when it became almost a staple in many art galleries, museums, “off-screen-cinemas” and similar venues. It was only about a decade earlier in the late 1970s when the experimental film was introduced as a new medium in the area of fine arts. Many art schools incorporated “Experimental Film” as a medium in their curriculum on an equal footing with the traditional arts such as painting, sculpture, and the like. Most art academies developed this film course to professional standards, in most cases in the 16-mm format.

By the end of the 1980s, the experimental film attained a very open form. Films of various configurations appeared. There were films with narrative structures, some placed emphasis on fiction while others emphasized the documentary, while some were totally conceptual and abstract. There were animation, found-footage films, and still others that combined more than one of these styles into one film – a new trend which exists up to this day.

It was at this peak of the German experimental film that Dr. Uwe Schmelter, the former director of the film department at the headquarters of the Goethe-Institut, integrated experimental film in their worldwide activities. Indeed the Goethe-Institut played a major role in the global dissemination of the German experimental film. It initiated and sponsored many experimental film workshops and forums, and was the major financial supporter of these activities. Without such considerable assistance, none of the workshops I conducted in Asia would have been possible. The first exhibition of German experimental films was presented literally all over the world through the Institut’s worldwide network. The films were introduced and discussed by an expert, in most cases a filmmaker, whose film was part of the program. Experimental films continue to be part of the program of the institute to this day.

It was also Dr. Uwe Schmelter’s conviction that the open and free structure of the experimental film offered an ideal platform to invite artists, film students and others to experience and discover a film language of their own, in their own cultural environment and not only copy familiar commercial Hollywood formulas. He strongly promoted film production workshops wherever possible. The conduct of the film production workshops depended on a few factors, namely: the local film infrastructure, the availability and interest of local partners, a liberal censorship and finally, the interest and commitment of the local Goethe Institut directors who certainly had to go through all the headaches, which are much like those which film producers have to go through, involved in organizing such a workshop. In the following discussion one would note that my workshop in Manila is described in more detail. The reason for this is that the Manila workshop provided the strategy and structure which I kept as a model for most of my subsequent workshops, even if some aspects had to be modified to suit different local conditions. Basically however, the concept of the Manila workshop has proven to be feasible and successful.



Christoph Janetzko (right) with Tad Ertimaño (left) and Ruben Lee (behind camera)

It was in Manila in 1998 that I had my first experience in presenting experimental films and conducting a film production workshop in Asia. Manila was an auspicious venue because here were several factors which were essential to a project of this scale. Among these were: 1) the presence of a local and experienced partner in film-education and production: the Mowelfund Film Institute; 2) the existence of a state-owned local film laboratory at the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), which strongly supported the workshop; 3) a mixture of participants ranging from beginners to those with some experience in independent film production including a few which already had some experience in experimental film; and finally 4) an environment that guaranteed freedom of expression (in contrast, due to strict censorship regulations, only about half of the films of the same program could be shown in Singapore and Malaysia).

The Film Institute at Mowelfund (or the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation) was integrated in an organization funded by the local film industry. In the early 1980s, the Film Institute acquired Super-8 cameras, editing facilities, projectors and related equipment. With this resource of low budget film facilities, the Mowelfund Film Institute organized film production workshops and seminars which gave young artists the chance to experience film as a medium of art. The institute became a learning venue which nurtured many young filmmakers and it continues to be a center and a home for them.

By the early 1980s, Manila boasted of an exceptional output of alternative films, mostly in super-8 format. By this time, well-known filmmakers such as Raymond Red and Nick Deocampo had achieved international recognition at various international film festivals. By the late 1980s, the Super-8 started to disappear due to the development of light and cheap video equipment. Kodak closed its Super-8 laboratory in Manila. Fortunately, Dr. Uwe Schmelter became the director of the Goethe-Institut Manila at this time. He took an active role in supporting different kinds of film production workshops, with new concepts and strategies, mostly in 16-mm.



Christoph Janetzko explains the camera to (from left) Lav Diaz, Larry Manda, Lois Quirino, Ian Victoriano, Cesar Hernando, Patrick Purugganan, Teddy Co and At Maculangan.

Mowelfund was the main venue for the workshop. It also chose the workshop participants. Over thirty participants were chosen. They were then divided into five groups to correspond to the original plan of coming up with an output of five completed short films. The workshop sought to achieve the following main goals:

- a) to finish the targeted amount of films up to the stage of a presentable final screening print so that they can be shown to a wide audience.
- b) to give the workshop participants a fundamental practical training in professional film production, starting from film conceptualising, scriptwriting, storyboarding, and extending hands-on camera use, lighting, organizing shooting, sound design, editing and printmaking.
- c) to serve as a forum for the free and open discussion of film concepts that would give the participants as much creative freedom to express their ideas and discover a style appropriate to their individual talent, interest and sensitivity.

The workshop schedule had five phases, namely:

1. Preparation of the workshop (two months)
2. Instruction on the theoretical and aesthetic aspects (one week)
3. Instruction on practical and technical aspects, story boarding (one week)
4. Shooting (two weeks)
5. Post-production (two weeks)

1) Workshop preparation. About three months before my arrival, the Mowelfund started to select the participants and organize the groups. It had

also begun to screen selected experimental films regularly in order to expose the participants to the genre and provide them inspiration for their treatments. The films exposed the students to a variety of film forms which were innovative and unusual. Thus the students were already well prepared upon my arrival.

2) Theoretical instruction. In the first week I showed films which represented certain trends, genres or forms. In regular meetings, we analysed and discussed the different conceptual approaches, aesthetic and technical aspects which influenced the development of each film sample.

3) Practical instruction. The second week was mainly devoted to practical training, like cinematography, editing, sound design and related skills. After learning the most important tools of film design, each group was asked to make a detailed storyboard prior to the shoot. The storyboard is important in many ways. The feasibility of each script could be illustrated by the storyboard. Since the Goethe-Institut could not rent fancy Hollywood studios, the storyboard can help in locating alternatives. Indeed, it allows the filmmaker to get the best control over the desired design and visual appeal of the film. It brings to view repetitions, similarities, camera movements and perspectives, pacing, lighting and much more. It clearly shows whether aspects of the story are properly plotted and blocked. Thus it helps achieve the filmmaker's desired look. The storyboard strategy is particularly helpful in low or 'no budget' productions, i.e., where shooting ratios are extremely low. It became even more necessary in the workshop, because early on the five groups had started to split from the original five to fifteen groups as a result of the nature of the experimental film in which the individual and personal style is challenged, which resulted in even lower shooting ratios.

4) Shooting. None of the groups received all the negatives they needed right away. I decided to distribute the film stock in small quantities and to view and discuss the daily work prints with all the participants during the regular sessions. This "step-by-step" strategy allowed the correction and improvement of many aspects of the quality of the footage during the production process. As a supervisor, I attended the shoots as much as possible. This turned out to be valuable because as a director/cinematographer, I could give many practical tips. Regular discussions with all participants created not only an atmosphere

A merry group of filmmakers including (clockwise) Cesar Hernando, Uwe Schmelter, Donna Sales, Lois Quirino, Teddy Co, Roxlee and Cristoph Janetzko.





Messing around with footage

of mutual inspiration and allowed the exchange of ideas but also productive and cooperative competition.

5) Post-production. The groups' performance varied. While a few groups had finished shooting as scheduled and hence were able to start the editing process soon afterwards, other groups were still in the production stage. As an experienced professional editor of some years, I was able to supervise the process of editing and sound design during the last phase following a professional approach. Unlike in most conventional films, editing an experimental film is a very complex and creative process. The students were also encouraged to experiment with their own images and sounds as far as their imagination could take them. During this process, the students learned how their material would finally fall into place, and more importantly, they recognized mistakes when things did not come out the way they were originally imagined or expected. Experimenting with a different order; juxtaposition, pace and so on during editing can contribute greatly to the process of understanding film language. Many filmmakers call it montage, a technique similar to collage in the more conventional art forms.

Fifteen short films, which were technically in good quality, were finished within a reasonable delay in the schedule, and they were ready to be presented to a general audience as 16-mm film prints. I believe that the open structure of the workshop was an important strategy in producing films of this variety of style and form, but each one possessing an unusual, fresh and catching appeal. The films were a variety of unique, innovative and attractive productions

ranging from *The Caretaker* (made in a documentary style), or *Studies for the Sky* (with a narrative poetic approach), or *Magakakahoy* (a radical elliptic narrative, reflecting environmental problems), or films focusing on political or moral issues like *Kidlat* (dwelling on censorship), or *Eulalio...Huling Sigaw* (provoking religious values). Among them were also experimental animations and abstract experimental films.

Soon after, the Berlin International Film Festival invited a selection of these films in a ninety-minute program presentation. The success of the presentation and the enthusiastic response of the audience surpassed everyone's expectations. Most of the films were eventually invited to a number of international film festivals and many of them returned with awards and recognition.

The success of the Manila workshop motivated the Goethe-Institut based in other countries to propose and organize similar workshops.

Christoph Janetzko has been making experimental films since 1979 (On Ludlow, M., Rivercolors and others). He works as a director, cinematographer and editor for television, films and advertising and teaches film production at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Braunschweig and the Hamburg Media School. He lives in Berlin.

Raymond Red Musings on the German Influence

I have always considered our generation of emerging independent filmmakers in the 1980s – mostly working on the smaller Super-8-mm and 16mm film formats – as the real beginnings of this current revolution in alternative cinema, which we are witnessing today as the so-called “digital filmmaking revolution.” Although our generation had been influenced and inspired by earlier prominent independent filmmakers such as Kidlat Tahimik, Mike De Leon, and Lino Brocka to name a few. It was in the early 80s that a movement truly emerged, when individual filmmakers became aware of each other, and when the established institutions started recognizing and supporting the significance of such a movement. Amongst these supporters were the foreign cultural institutions, and most active then was the German Cultural Center or the Goethe-Institut.

Through the institute, we were exposed to seminars and screenings on German cinema from a very diverse spectrum that included classic, expressionist, New wave, current, and experimental “underground” films. We had the rare opportunity to learn from, and directly interact with, invited German filmmakers and resource speakers. We cannot deny that the influence was indelible, and that it somehow moulded the psyche of the individual filmmakers.

Raymond Red's *Study for the Skies*, 1989



But what was very progressive in the experience was that the German mentors did not really impose their ideology and approach to filmmaking, but rather encouraged us as Filipino filmmakers to stand our own ground, and look deep into the core of being Filipino.

What emerged was a cinema that is deeply rooted in our Filipino realities, whether these were of genres, or of uncommon forms of shorts, animation, documentary, and formalist experimental film. The German mentors acted as catalysts for igniting the already burning passion of the young independent filmmakers then.

And it is this passion that has continued with us, and hopefully will pass on to this present generation of “indies” working now on the digital format.

Raymond Red has been at the forefront of independent filmmaking in the Philippines. He started to make Super-8 films in the early 1980s, and gained international attention immediately. In 1990, he spend half a year in Germany with a fellowship of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). His first feature-length film Bayani (Heroes, 1992) was produced by Das Kleine Fernsehspiel of the German tv station ZDF. In 2000, Red became the first Filipino filmmaker to win the the Palmd d'or of the Cannes Film Festival for his short film Anino (Shadows).

Lav Diaz We Were Talking About the Poetry of Cinema

I attended the Experimental Film Workshop with Christoph Janetzko at the Mowelfund Film Institute. Before that I had been to another workshop at Mowelfund in 1986. And I had made a short film then. It was three minutes long, and it was called *Banlaw (Cleansing)*. It was about this guy who hanged himself to protest against what is happening in the world after watching a monk burning himself on television. Before that, you see him walking around naked in Quiapo among the beggars. It was a protest against Martial Law, but it was not very vocal, rather symbolic. I stole the film from Mowelfund, before I went to America, and I lost it in New York.

At this first workshop I met Larry Manda, Mel Bacani, Patrick Purugganan, Ricky Orellana and others, and we became this group of film enthusiasts. It was an ambitious group of people, and many of them went on to become artists in their own right. Every time there was a workshop at Mowelfund, we would stay there. Mowelfund was like this hole then, where we would hang out together. We could smoke, watch films or talk about films and drink and play music. We even slept there sometimes. It was a good place to jam. But at the same time, there was this dearth of cameras. We had only a few Super-8 cameras, and one 16-mm camera. So it was difficult to actually make a film.

It was a very free cinema culture. We were talking about the poetry of cinema. We discussed Bergman and Antonioni's *L'Avventura*. We were fascinated with this medium, with the magic of this moving piece of plastic approximating life's movements. There was even magic in waiting, and we had to wait a lot, because it took so long to have the film developed, not like with digital video today, where you can see immediately what you shot. Sometimes we had to send our films to Japan or Australia to have it developed, and it would come back two months later, and then you would watch it and go: "Wow!"

We were all very excited that there was an experimental film workshop with Christoph Janetzko, this experimentalist from Germany. The workshop was about 16-mm. There was no digital then, so we all had to look at this one camera. I got to hold the machine only once. Janetzko was preaching the gospel of 16-mm film at this time. When I started to shoot *Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino (Evolution of a Filipino Family, 2004)* in 1994, I used 16-mm. I was using b & w Kodak stock No. 7222, a very beautiful and crisp stock with a very strong grain. I think that this was an offshoot from that workshop. *Ebolusyon* was a protracted shoot. It took me more than 10 years to finish this film. In the beginning, I was using 16-mm film, from 1994 from 1999. But 16 mm stock is so expensive. One roll is around 80 dollars. Now you can buy a MiniDV tape for 100 pesos, and it lasts an hour. 40 percent of *Ebolusyon* was shot on 16-mm, the rest on digital video.

During the course of the workshop I was almost always absent. I was a young father, and I had to raise my family and earn money. At that time I was a beat reporter for a newspaper. I would go to the police stations and write about



Lav Diaz (left) at a reception at the Goethe-Institut in the late 1980's

the cases there, and see dead people and stuff like that. And I was writing for *Komiks* magazines and the now-defunct *Jingle* music magazine. I was also writing some television stuff. I was just starting out, crawling to find something. I always knew that I wanted to make my own films some day, but at that time I was still trying to find my way.

I was always late, and I was trying to catch up. Larry was already working for Mowelfund, and some of the others were rich kids, so they were able to stay there for the whole time. But I always came in late, and asked Larry: "What happened, what happened?" That's why I was not able to finish a film. I became close with Janetzko only when I came to Berlin in 2000, when I showed my film *Hubad sa Ilalim ng Buwan (Naked Under the Moon, 1999)* at the Berlin Film Festival. I brought the three actors, Klaudia Koronel, Joel Torre and Richard Joson. And Mother Lily was also there. I'm not sure if he remembered that I was one of his students. But then he was very kind, and took us around in Berlin, to the historical landmarks and to the discos, where the girls were.

(From an interview with Tilman Baumgärtel)

Lav Diaz is the internationally best-known director of the group of filmmakers, who have been producing digital, experimental films in the Philippines in the last couple of years. In his monumental, epic films, that often last more than ten hours, he addresses the social and political malaise of his country. After directing a couple of movies for the commercial movie studio Regal, he had his international break-through in 2004 with his film Evolution of a Filipino Family, that took him 11 years to finish. He went on to direct Heremias (2006) and Death in the Land of Encantos (2007).

Ingo Petzke Not Even the Taxi Drivers Could Cheat Me Any Longer

Manila has long since dissolved into a haze. The haze of age, of fading memories. Even though notes tell me I spent seven turns there between 1984 and 1991, my memory is patchy and vague. But what remains of those weeks and months still radiates fondness for the country and gratefulness for having been allowed to help with something that was bound to happen and grow – the independent Philippine film scene.

This all was way back in the golden days when Goethe-Instituts were still run by true characters with an insatiable thirst for experiments in culture. In Manila's case, these portal figures were Gerrit Bretzler and Uwe Schmelter. Truly different personalities with different approaches but identical goals: infusing ideas, lending a helping hand, strengthening the young sprout of alternative culture.

Filmwise, the Philippines was the first third-world country I ever encountered. The smog was heavy, the traffic pure chaos, the climate suppressing. Nothing seemed to work properly. Improvisation was the order of the day and in retrospect I am inclined to believe this to be the true reason why experimental film was so wholeheartedly embraced – **improvisation and experiment being close relatives.**

Still, people were patient and of a pleasant disposition. Virginia Moreno, then Director of the Film Centre at University of the Philippines, tried hard to make me feel welcome, even conducting a Sampagita tree-planting ceremony in my honour. She was a towering personality though physically of rather petite stature. To her minders she was extremely strict, bordering on harshness. Her status was based on rank, not material riches. The only apparent luxury was a car with a chauffeur. But a car so old the chauffeur constantly had to fix it to keep it running. Definitely in collision with all regulations of working

Super-8 workshop in 1985



Virginia Moreno from the U.P. Film Center and Ingo Petzke

hours he was at her personal disposal all hours of the day and night. And he was used as a token of friendship. I remember vividly when Moreno sent me out into the Manila night life with Nick Deocampo, her second-in-command. The chauffeur slept in the car when we woke him at 4 a.m. to drive me home all the long distance from Ermita to Quezon City where I was based near the university. But despite all justified criticism of her behaviour she was respected as an authority. This utmost loyalty to me was one of the most striking features of Philippine society.

Beyond formalities and diplomacy, Nick Deocampo was the driving force of the independent short film scene. A dedicated filmmaker himself – everybody seemed in awe of his docu *Oliver*, about the Spiderman impersonator – he was an academic who had written the first-ever book about Philippine short film history. Likewise he was a highly talented organiser. This became immediately apparent once the workshops were relocated from University of the Philippines to the Mowelfund Film Institute. This was a kind of self-governing structure which was run by Nick. Or so it seemed. I remember having the – **doubtful – honour to be introduced there to an actor and up-and-coming Philippine president** whose major reason for fame was the fact that he openly had nine mistresses. Or maybe just seven, I don't really recall.

Nick and I got along well and were on friendly terms once it became clear we both shared a passion for film experiments but had quite different intentions in Manila's burgeoning nightlife. I loved to take the ride to Ermita with him, though, encountering his growing enthusiasm for the 'sisters of the night'. But once arrived we would split up and only meet again in the wee hours of the morning. He liked to chat and I loved his gossip about foreign filmmakers in Manila. Later I was able to help him with a few screenings in Europe but I still feel a certain sadness that we lost contact along the way.

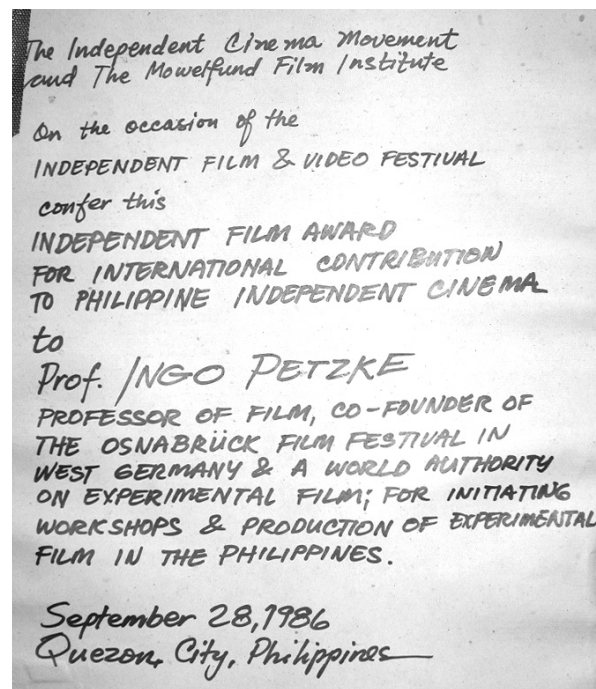
The concept of experimental film fell on fruitful ground in Manila. My credo had always been that nobody could hope to successfully compete with Hollywood on Hollywood's own turf because their resources could simply not be beaten.

Instead, it was not a bad idea to tell one's own stories in ways based on one's own cultural background. In this respect, the experimental film was the perfect choice of genre with its inherent freedom of expression and flexible form. With its extremely low shooting ratio and its no-budget character, experimental film was particularly suitable for countries with a less-developed film industry and artists living in poorer conditions than in industrialised countries.

The Goethe-Institut had sent out filmmakers before but they had been into documentaries, particularly interested in street children, prostitution or the famous Smokey Mountain garbage dump. And here I came, screening Richter and Ruttmann, Nekes and Wyborny. The enthusiastic reaction to the films among the audience at the University of the Philippines could virtually be felt. Gerrit Bretzler immediately responded by announcing a practical Super-8 workshop for the next year which I conducted as well. We brought in the film stock from Germany but for processing they had to be flown out to Australia as Kodak had just stopped doing this locally. The results looked a bit bumpy but definitely worth another try which was to be done in 16-mm.

If I remember correctly, this was the first workshop at Mowelfund, a much more pleasant location in a more urban area. And it was the first to be conducted three-fold: one week on concept and pre-production, then a break for me while shooting was going on, and then another week postproduction. I can still feel the thrill when for the first time we watched the "rushes." Formal experiment was almost always tied to a political and/or social content – probably a reflection of the Philippine situation. Vicky Donato and Luis Quirino stick out as names. But the one film I will never forget was Jimbo's: for several days he had walked the tumultuous EDSA boulevard to come up with a marvel of structural film in single-frame shooting.

There were more workshops to come but inevitably they got less exciting for me. The technical instructions would always be needed but I felt conceptual



Independent Film Award for Ingo Petzke



Sampagita tree-planting ceremony at the University of the Philippines

input, different thinking from other filmmakers was needed. And that was the way it went, which was good.

For me personally, the Philippines became more and more interesting, and the breaks in my work between pre- and post-production turned into major attractions. Twice I visited Pagsanjan, the location for the finale of *Apocalypse Now!*, my all-time favourite film. There I learned about the devastation Coppola's crew had brought about – something to this day never related in any of the many books about him and the film. I experienced the beauty of Boracay when it was still a sleepy backwater of an island - omelettes with magic mushrooms on the menu. I even ventured all the way down south to magical-sounding Zamboanga – a place of political resistance to the Marcos regime, fed from many different sources. I still harbour fond memories of the weeks after the People Power Revolution with so much enthusiasm in the air. And I am still proud that eventually I was able to travel virtually everywhere in Manila by jeepney, the way the locals do. Not even the taxi drivers could cheat me any longer with their manipulated meters. I had arrived.

Over the years, some of the filmmakers made it to Europe for screenings - with or without my help: Nick Deocampo, Luis Quirino, Cynthia Estrada. And it always felt good to get together again. But despite several attempts and offers of free study places, no prospective film student ever made it to my university. This feels sad but in all likelihood is due to non-existing funds on the Philippine side to cover some of the expenses involved.

Today, my students will find a framed document on my office wall: the *Independent Film Award for International Contribution to Philippine Independent Cinema*. This was handed to me in a ceremony in 1986 – just after the revolution - by Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Dr. Victor M. Ordoñez (thanks to Nick and Teddy!).

A piece of paper and a haze of memories is all there's left. But enough to once in a while remember a time to be proud of.

Ingo Petzke is an internationally acknowledged German (film) scholar, filmmaker and author. Since 1983 Petzke has been Professor for Film at the Design Faculty of University of Applied Sciences, Würzburg-Schweinfurt. He lived and worked several turns in Australia.

Mark Meily I Got My Break

In 1988, Uwe Schmelter was the director of the Goethe-Institut Manila. I had just finished my Basic Film Production workshop and I was glad that the Goethe-Institut was organizing a Super-8 workshop under an experimental filmmaker named Birger Bustorff. It was my first time to participate in a workshop organized by a foreign cultural organization.

Honestly, I was more interested in the free Super-8 Kodachrome stock that we were going to shoot with than in the lectures on experimental filmmaking because the classes were...experimental! There were not that many lectures on filmmaking techniques as film screenings. Rather than doing an exercise film, I shot a 5-minute narrative short about a man who cannot sleep because of a propaganda song that mysteriously keeps playing on the radio. Part of the workshop took place in Mt. Makiling, which was nice because we got to work in a totally different environment. Regiben Romana, another filmmaker who also acted in my short film, did a performance art presentation when my film was made at the Goethe-Institut. His live piece was a continuation of the role he acted in my film.

The best workshop I attended that was organized by the Goethe-Institut was the 35-mm Cinematography Workshop. It was quite impressive to have Werner Herzog's cinematographer, Thomas Mauch, as our teacher. I learned so much about the need to improvise techniques in lighting and camera operation through him. Our project was also the most successful exercise in the workshop because we made again a 5-minute short film called *The Sentry*.

I wrote the script and directed it and it is through this film that I got a nomination for a Urian award and won first place at the CCP Independent Film

Thomas Mauch (right) during his seminar in Manila



Mark Meily

Competition. The film became my portfolio that got me a French Government Scholarship. It might sound clichéd, but the rest is history. I got my break directing TV commercials and eventually a feature film because of these events and the generosity of the Goethe-Institut.

Mark Meily studied Fine Arts at the University of the Philippines. He learned filmmaking at the Mowelfund Film Institute and received a scholarship to study film in Paris at the Ecole Sup. d'Etudes Cinematographiques. After returning to the Philippines, he directed TV commercials and music videos. Crying Ladies (2003), his first feature film, won six awards at the Metro Manila Film Festival including Best Picture and Best Director. He lives in Manila with his cinematographer-wife Lee Meily and their four children and is currently working on a remake of Lino Brocka's Ang Tatay Kong Nanay (1978).

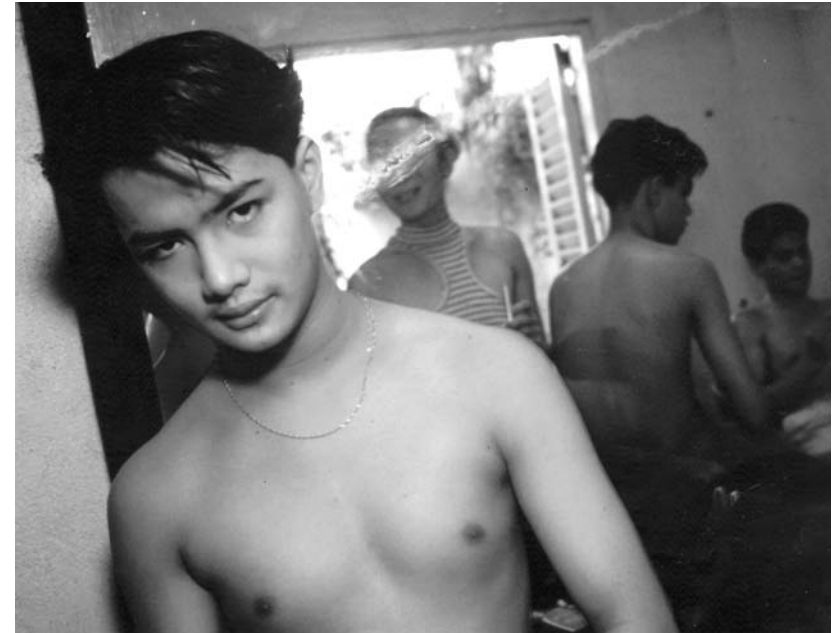
Jürgen Brüning My Philippine Adventure

Years ago I got attracted to Asia. I don't know why. Maybe in gay terms they would call me a "rice queen." You can call me a racist for that if you want to. What about men who like blondes with big tits? OK. They are sexist. But what about women who like big dicks and big money? They are smart.

So I think my first taste of Asia was Japan, more precisely Tokyo, when I got invited there to present a program with short films at an experimental film festival. At another festival soon after I met Nick Deocampo, the promoter of independent films in the Philippines in the 80's and 90's, who was part of the Mowelfund Film Institute. Somehow he invited me to show films in Manila and got the support of the Goethe-Institut. I was not the first one to come. Werner Schroeter had been there and had made a fabulous film. Also Rosa von Praunheim, Monika Funke-Stern, Christoph Janetzko. The latter two had done workshops at the Mowelfund Film Institute supported by the Goethe-Institut. I met Raymond Red and other filmmakers. Raymond was in the process of becoming the rising star with his films produced by Das Kleine Fernsehspiel and screenings at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival.

I don't remember how I got the idea, but I proposed to the film fund here in Berlin a project concerning the construction of sexual identity – meaning homosexuality – in two different countries. One was the Philippines, which

Jürgen Brüning (left) with his Filipino collaborator Yam Laranas



Production still of Brüning's and Laranas' *Maybe I Can Give You Sex*
Photo: Nan Goldin

had been colonized by the Spanish and Americans and had to suffer under the strict morals of Catholicism brought in by European missionaries. The other one was Thailand, a country never really colonized and with a different religion: Buddhism. What I had in my mind was that because of these differences, sexuality would be constructed differently in both countries.

My proposal was perceived by some decisionmakers at the film fund in Berlin as an application to finance my sex tourist dreams, of going there to fuck every moving human being. But, astonishingly, I got some financial support to do research for the project. So I went with my Canadian friend Penelope Buitenhuis to discover something which changed my biased perceptions drastically. My concept was to find two filmmakers, one from Manila and one from Bangkok, with whom I would work on this subject. What a dream!

With the support of Nick Deocampo I had already made some contacts in Manila, and it was not so difficult to find a filmmaker; a gay filmmaker – Rune Layumas – to work with. In Thailand, homosexuality was so taboo at this time that it was even hard to find people to talk to. Penelope and I worked hard, experiencing the heat, the transportation, the smog, the urban chaos in Bangkok. But, of course, we had fun too, which is inherent when you work as an artist. You meet people, you exchange ideas, you try to be open and all this with a Western artist's naiveté. Of course, I was perceived as a Western cash cow who enabled a local person to work on a film and to make some money, which, compared to local standards was pretty high. There was even the prospect that I would come back to shoot a whole film giving work to more people working as production manager, catering services, etc.

To be honest, I was shocked by the huge disparity between poor and rich. In Manila, the rich would all live in fancy houses in compounds with big walls around them, with servants and big dinners in fucking expensive hotels. On

the other side for my film project I would go to hidden sex places where young boys would perform and offer their services for little money. I was tempted but I resisted. I didn't want to fall into the cliché of the sex tourist. After all, in Berlin the funding people had already assumed that this was the only reason I wanted to come here.

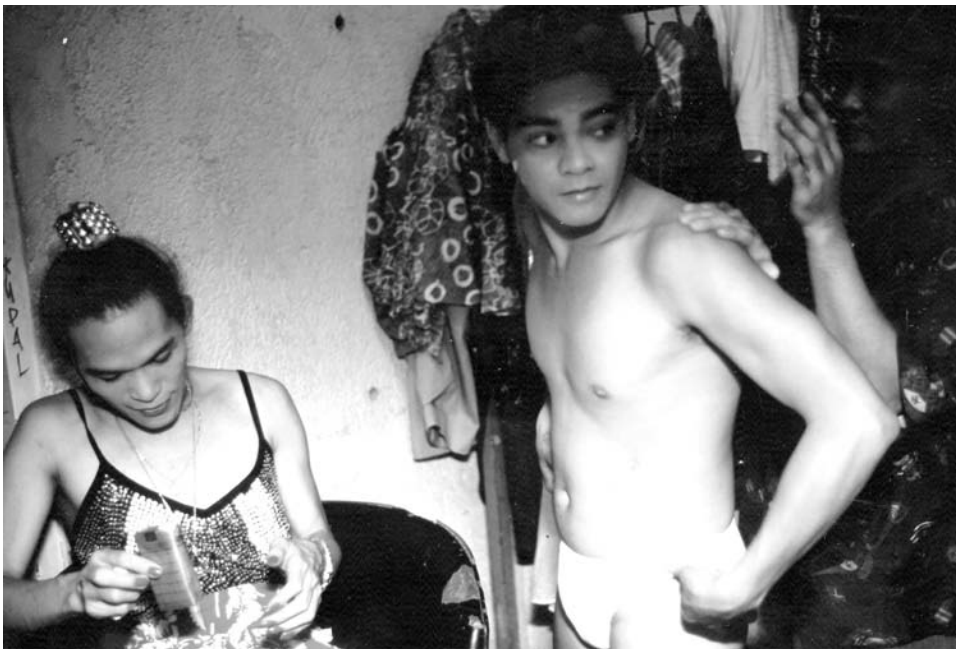
Anyway, what I saw was with how little money the Mowelfund Institute tried to encourage young filmmakers to do films, and this was reason enough. After a month of research we returned. I wrote another proposal based on my research and the funding people were impressed. No sex tourism! Instead I had come up with a treatment for an interesting documentary project. I got the money for making the film *Maybe I Can Give You Sex*?

I collected a diverse range of artists to come with me on a two month trip to Southeast Asia: Nan Goldin, the famous photographer from New York, Penelope Buitenhuis, an independent filmmaker from Canada doing the camera work, and two flamboyant guys doing sound and make up. The rest of the crew I hired locally in both places. As usual we had to endure the kind of difficulties which you always have when you shoot a film. Maybe they are different depending on the place where you shoot, but they are still inherent to filmmaking. We had no electricity for hours in Manila, the extras didn't show up, the locations weren't available when they were scheduled. In retrospect, this made it even funnier. We had a great time with our local crew. I hope we both learnt something from each other. I know that I did.

The outcome: I had a great deal of difficulties to bring Rune Layumas to Berlin to edit his part of the film in Germany. I can't image how difficult it would be now when it was already so hard 15 years ago. I succeeded and we both worked on finishing the film in Berlin. Nan Goldin had taken a lot of photographs and made a book called *The Other Face*, which became much more famous than my

Maybe I Can Give You Sex

Photo: Nan Goldin



Maybe I Can Give You Sex

Photo: Nan Goldin

little 75-minute documentary. Unfortunately, I couldn't show the film in Thailand because no institution – not even the Goethe Institute – wanted to touch the issue. In Manila, we had a small screening at the Mowelfund Institute.

In the passing years I have lost contact with Rune Layumas. Occasionally, I meet Nick at a festival or see the New Wave of filmmakers like KHAVN showing their films which he produces quickly on DV Video. Luckily, this format got invented and gives more chances to young filmmakers to do films. Film always was and still is an elitist medium but, hopefully, we will see more films coming out of the Philippines.

Jürgen Brüning is an independent filmmaker and film producer from Berlin. His films include Er hat 'ne Glatze (He is bald, 1994), West fickt Ost (West fucks East, 2001), and Saudade – Sehnsucht (Longing, 2003). Since 1989 he has produced all the films by Canadian filmmaker Bruce LaBruce. He is the co-founder of the Eiszeit cinema in Berlin and the founder of the Schwulesbische Filmfestival Berlin, the production company Wurstfilm and the Pornofilmfestival Berlin. In 1992 he created the documentary Maybe I Can Give You Sex in cooperation with Filipino director Rune Layumas in the Philippines.

Ulrich Gregor Kidlat Tahimik, *Perfumed Nightmare* and Other Film Encounters Between the Philippines and Germany

End of May 1977 – we were just in the final phase of preparations for the 7th International Forum of Emerging Films when the telephone rang at our home. It was 7:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, unusually early for such a telephone call. Erika went to the phone. A young man's voice answered. He said he was a film director from the Philippines and that he had just finished a film that he wanted to submit as an entry to our festival, the Berlinale Forum. At that time, we had just finished making the selection of films for our festival. We weren't willing to, nor could we really accept any further entries, as the deadline for registration had long since expired. However, something in the voice of this young man moved us to make an exception and view his film, if he could arrive by the Tuesday after Pentacost. He came.

It was a 16-mm film with magnetic grooves on the margins, the usual format at that time for independent productions. The film had an exotic title: *Mababangong Bangungot* (*Perfumed Nightmare*). We viewed the film although our program was already full and the deadline had long elapsed. Lo and behold, all of our colleagues and we ourselves were so enthusiastic about *Mababangong Bangungot* that we decided to throw out all the rules and make room for this entry. With great effort we were able to clear the last possible slot for the film. Lo and behold, then came the next surprise: the film became a phenomenal success, almost a sensation. The film took center stage at the festival and was hotly debated on a daily basis. The film's director was constantly interviewed and, as a result, all of the film clubs and cinematic theaters absolutely had to show it. You could say that *Perfumed Nightmare* opened up a glorious career as an independent filmmaker for Kidlat Tahimik.

The film's success was partly due to Kidlat Tahimik's presence at the festival and his unusual appearance, as well as by his eloquence, quick-wittedness and humor, all of which came out in the discussions that were held after every presentation. However, the film's success was due ultimately to its inherent qualities; a mixture of realism and fancy, exoticism and irony and a witty narration. Of course, we were also fascinated by the film's preoccupation with the German cult figure Wernher von Braun, which to our pleasure, was treated with vigorous irony and detachment. At the same time, the film gave us lots of information about life in the Philippines, which we had hitherto only known about through films like those of Lino Brocka. We also learned about the phenomenon of Philippine Jeeps – a cheap form of transportation made from reconstructed U.S. Army jeeps.

The film's popularity reached its highest point when an underground cinema in Berlin (which existed for several years) named itself *Perfumed Nightmare*.

Kidlat Tahimik's film caused a wave of enthusiasm and interest for the Philippine cinema in Germany, as well as in our forum. We became acquainted with the school of short films in the Philippines and invited the director Raymond Red



Ulrich Gregor

to come to Berlin on a DAAD scholarship. In 1989, the Forum organized a special screening called "Cinema in the Philippines," featuring the films of Chito Roño, Lino Brocka and many others. Later we also showed the films of Manny Reyes, Nick Deocampo and finally, Lav Diaz, who for me is the most significant representative of the Philippine cinema at present. In 1988, we also showed Christian Blackwood's gorgeous documentary film *Signed: Lino Brocka*.

I later encountered Kidlat Tahimik again on various occasions. On one occasion we wandered through Tokyo together looking for a place we could show his



Kidlat Tahimik at a reception at the Goethe-Institut in 1988.

film *I Am Curious Yellow*. Curiously, there was no place in Tokyo that offered playback equipment for U-matic cassettes, although this was a widely-used international format at that time. Whenever I met Kidlat Tahimik and he told about his latest films and projects, he seemed to me to be an almost mythical embodiment of the Philippine cinema, and a cinema enthusiast par excellence.

Another Filipino film activist I often met at festivals was Teddy Co. I first met him in Hong Kong. When I visited Manila in 1988, he showed me a copy of Gerardo de Leon's *Noli me Tangere* (1961 – a film adaptation of the Philippine novel by the Filipino revolutionary hero José Rizal, who temporarily lived in Germany, where the novel was published appeared in 1887). Teddy Co thought this would be an interesting film to “rediscover.” Unfortunately, it turned out that the copy of the film was damaged and needed restoration. Teddy managed to have the film restored and recopied, with the help of the Goethe-Institut and the German Federal Archive and Film Archive. In any case, I wanted to show it as a “rediscovery film” (or more accurately as a “discovery film”), since it had never before been shown in Germany. However, I found out that all the material as well as the newly restored copy had been sent back to the Philippines, or so according to the Federal Archive. But where is it now? We are still waiting to “discover” this film in Germany...

Ulrich Gregor was the director of the International Forum of Emerging Films of the Berlinale from 1971 to 2000. From 1981 to 2000 he and Moritz de Hadeln were the directors of the Berlin Film Festival. Since 1970 he has organized retrospectives and thematic programmes as well as seminars at the Arsenal Cinema, which he helped to establish. He is also the co-founder of the Friends of German Cinematheque.

Screen shot from Kidlat Tahimik's film *Perfumed Nightmare*



Bobby Suarez Four Close and Loyal Friends

I first met Dieter Menz of *Atlas Films GmbH* in the mid 60's when I was the Managing Director of a movie distribution company based in Hong Kong which I established with Miss Terry Lai and which was called *Intercontinental Film Distributors (HK) Ltd.* Our company acquired the Far Eastern rights of international movies co-produced by Italian, French and German companies. If I thought these movies had earning potential in the Far East then I had the producers dub them into English and then I would buy the South-East Asian or Far Eastern rights for the movies and distribute them through my Hong Kong company.

In one of my sorties to Germany on my way to Paris and Rome, I met Dieter who was interested in screening two Hong Kong-produced Chinese martial arts movies for which I had acquired the European rights and which had been dubbed into English. This was the first time that a European producer and distributor had shown an interest in Chinese martial arts movies dubbed in English.

It took only two hours in the screening room for us to make a distribution deal. The titles of those first two movies (if I recall correctly) were *That Man From Hong Kong* and *The Crooked Fingers*. Dieter made a good profit by releasing those two movies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and that was the beginning of our mutually successful business relationship, which – after two years or so – turned into a sincere friendship, which we still enjoy up until this day.

The second German gentleman I had business dealings with, was Horst Veit of *Veit Films GmbH*, who purposely came to Manila in the early 1970's to

Bobby Suarez reunited with Marrie Lee, the star of his film *Cleopatra Wong* in Singapore in 2005

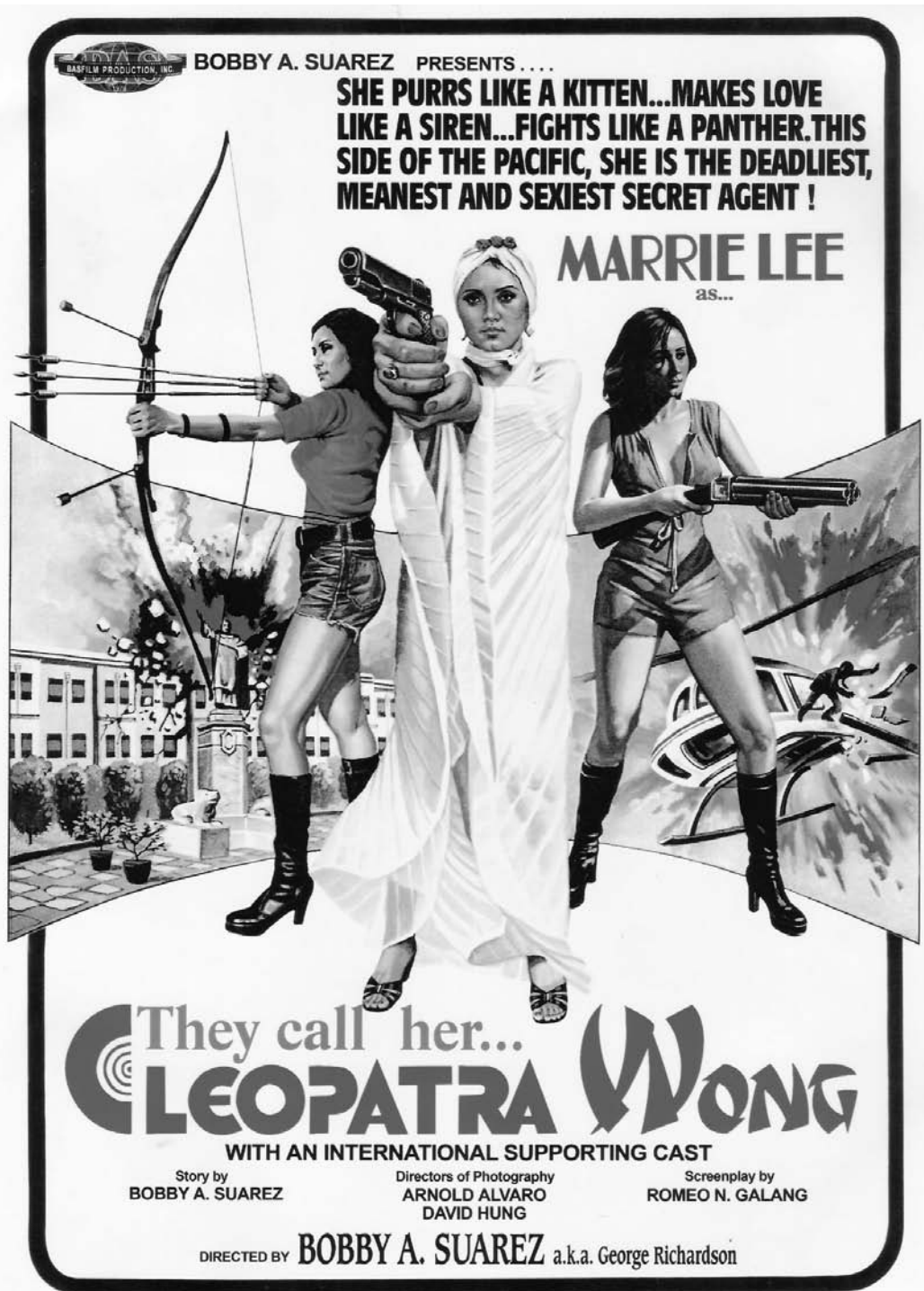


Poster for Bobby Suarez' *Obsessed*

look me up and meet me. At that time I was shooting a comedy-martial arts spoof called *They Call Him Chop-Suey*, starring Filipino actor Ramon Zamora playing opposite an Indian-Indonesian flight stewardess whom I “discovered” in Hong Kong. Horst wanted to see the raw, unedited rushes of this movie, which I showed to him. Upon seeing the rushes Horst immediately did a deal with me and acquired the distribution rights of the movie for Germany, Austria and Switzerland. We also made a contract for my next two movies before they were even in production.

I later discovered that it was Dieter Menz who had told Horst about me and told him to look me up in Manila. Dieter and Horst were close friends. So from that time onward, I had two personal and professional German friends who were interested in acquiring all my future movies for the German-speaking markets. They had an agreement between them about who would distribute the movies in Germany and who would handle the other German-speaking countries and usually did it on an alternating basis.

On one of my trips to the Milan Film Festival, someone told me that a certain Mister Leo Kirch wanted to meet me in the lobby of his hotel. At that time I did not know that Leo was the biggest movie producer-distributor in Germany and owned a couple of cable TV stations there. At the meeting, Leo told me that he was interested in acquiring the all-media rights of my movies. Naturally I told him that I was already dealing with two other close German friends of mine,



Poster for Bobby Suarez' *Cleopatra Wong*

namely Dieter and Horst. Leo told me that he had no problem competing with his two friends and was more interested in acquiring the TV and video rights not for Germany, Austria and Switzerland, but for other European countries such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

So, I did my first deal with Leo for the TV and video rights of my movies. When I mentioned a contract, he insisted that our agreement should be the same style as with Dieter and Horst... business done with only a handshake! If Dieter and Horst had trusted me for such a long time, then who was he not to trust me. So thanks to my dear German friends Dieter, Horst and Leo, during the 1970's and 80's I did not need to invest my family's hard-earned money in my movies.

I was also helped at that time by a Danish distributor who also later became a very close friend. His name was Just Betzer of A.S. *Panorama Films of Copenhagen*, the producer of the Oscar award-winning foreign movie *Babette's Feast*. Unfortunately, Just died in 2005, shortly after spending two weeks with my family and me in Manila. We had done a lot of business together twenty years earlier but in 2005 when Just visited me he wanted me to make a "comeback" and form a new business relationship and create a new Manila-based company with me to be called *Panorama Films (Far East) Inc.* which would fund all my future movie projects, producing two or three movies a year. In a cruel twist of fate, Just died before we could form the new company. It was through Dieter, Horst and Leo that I first became acquainted with Just.

So, in my more than thirty years in the international film business, I can honestly say that I only ever had four business associates who also became close and loyal friends, namely, Dieter Menz, Horst Veit, Leo Kirch and Just Betzer. And in the cutthroat, rat-race business of movies, friends are a rare commodity indeed.

Roberto "Bobby" A. Suarez is a Filipino film producer, director and screenwriter. After working in the Hong Kong film industry for almost a decade, Suarez wrote, directed and produced several English-language action B-movies with Philippine crew for the international market in the 1970s, including Bionic Boy (1977) and Cleopatra Wong (1978). His films are currently being rediscovered by a new generation of B-movie aficionados and some of them have been reissued on DVD.

You Have to Let Your Sariling Duende Speak

A Conversation between
Kidlat Tahimik and John Torres,
moderated by Tilman Baumgärtel

Kidlat Tahimik's *Perfumed Nightmare*, a film about the cross-cultural trip of a jeepney driver who goes to Europe, won him the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlin Film Festival, where it premiered in 1977. John Torres received the FIPRESCI Award at the Singapore Film Festival in 2006 for his digital debut film *Todo Todo Teros*.

But Kidlat Tahimik and John Torres have a lot more in common than this film critics' prizes. Both are independent filmmakers from the Philippines who were successful on the international festival circuit. Both create loose and improvised narratives, often with themselves as the protagonist in their films. Both have received no formal training in filmmaking, but rather started to create their works out of a spontaneous impulse. And both Kidlat Tahimik's *Perfumed Nightmare* and John Torres' *Todo Todo Teros* were partly shot in Germany.

Kidlat Tahimik is the father of independent cinema in the Philippines, if not in the whole of Southeast Asia. His first feature *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977), that he shot partly in the Philippines and partly in Germany, is a masterpiece of "Third Cinema." It does not look as dated as many of the post-colonial films from Latin America from the same period seen today. His birth name is Eric de Guia. His pseudonym Kidlat Tahimik means "quiet lightning" in Tagalog. His debut *Perfumed Nightmare* was released in the U.S. through Francis Coppola's now-defunct studio Zoetrope and has become a staple in American university classes on post-colonial studies. After Tahimik returned from Germany to Baguio in the Philippines he continued to make films such as *Turumba* (1981), produced by the German television station ZDF, or *Why is Yellow Middle of Rainbow* (1994). With the support of the Goethe-Institut Manila, he conducted a couple of film workshops in the Philippines and organized the Film Forum, a monthly meeting of independent film makers during the early 1980s.

John Torres started his film career with a couple of very personal short films. One of these early films got him invited to the Berlin Asia Pacific Film Festival. It was during this trip that he shot a lot of the footage that went into his first feature film *Todo Todo Teros*. Together with Lav Diaz, Khavn de la Cruz and Raya Martin he is part of a new generation of independent filmmakers in the Philippines who work predominantly on digital video and who are currently making the rounds at international film festivals. He is working on his second feature film *Voices, Tilted Screens and Extended Scenes of Loneliness: Filipinos in High Definition*.

In the following interview these two filmmakers from two different generations compare notes about their work. They discuss independent filmmaking then and now, aesthetics, globalization and their relationship with Germany.



John Torres and Kidlat Tahimik

Tilman Baumgärtel: Let's get this started with a simple question: Do you know each others' films?

John Torres: Of course! I am seated beside one of the filmmakers I admire most. Kidlat Tahimik had a deep and profound impact on why I became a filmmaker. He influenced me to take up the camera.

Kidlat Tahimik: I can very much relate to what I saw in your film *Todo Todo Teros*. In fact, I would like to see more of your films. I have not seen your short films yet. But I think your originality is in a class of its own.

Tilman Baumgärtel: John, where did you first encounter Kidlat's films?

John Torres: *Perfumed Nightmare* was shown in a mall once and he had an open forum after that. I approached him and I remember I only had a business card. He signed the back of the business card and I was soooo happy. I was running around all over the place.

Kidlat Tahimik: (laughs) Be careful when you say you saw my film in a mall. Everybody will think they show my films after *Batman* here. It was actually in a festival called *Pelikula Katipunan*, that Nick Deocampo and the Mowelfund Film Foundation organised. They were able to get one mall cinema for a week and show films à la cinematheque. But my films would never, ever have a run at any other regular cinema in the Philippines.

John Torres: His influence made me realize that you can make films in a way that is not the traditional, linear way. But I already knew that I wanted to make films in high school. I took an experimental practical arts course in Ateneo High School that included some film appreciation classes. But it took me a long time to actually make my first film – seven years after I finished college! I was lucky because we had equipment at home. My father used to invest in things like editing suites and cameras. He is a photographer, but he is a serious film hobbyist. So he wanted to spend on technology. When I was in high school, I had the advantage to get my hands on technology and to practise in school. But I felt



Film posters for *Perfumed Nightmare* by Kidlat Tahimik and *Todo Todo Teros* by John Torres

I did not have anything to say. After I saw Kidlat's film I was dumbstruck, I was in awe. Because I knew that this was the kind of film that I wanted to make.

Kidlat Tahimik: I'm always surprised when people know what they want to be in high school. When I was in high school, I did not know what to do at all. I was about to go to university, and I took a course in engineering because my father was an engineer. I ended up in Speech and Drama, but I still did not know what to do. I ended up going for an MBA in the US and I went on to work as an economist in Paris at the OECD. When I finally knew what I wanted to do I was 33 – like Gauguin, a doctor who did not know what he wanted to do until he reached a mature age.

Tilman Baumgärtel: John, are you saying that you wanted to be a filmmaker because your father let you play with his equipment?

John Torres: Yes, I think so. When I was a child I was really reserved and shy. I would always withdraw from the crowd and just observe a lot. So the way I remember things is through images that are really stored in my memory, like short films. Sometimes I would imagine dialogues in conversations which I observed from afar. Fortunately, with the digital cameras of today, you can just shoot and shoot and play around with the images. You do not have to set up anything. You do not have to talk to people. Of course, you have to tell them about it afterwards and get their permission to use their images. But that possibility freed my mind! I did not have to start with a script or with a dialogue, I shot whenever I felt the need to and then started to edit small things together without really knowing where I was going or what I was doing.

Kidlat Tahimik: You seem to have aimed your sights and then you went for it. I drifted into the art form of filmmaking. I never had any interest in the business side of it even though I was trained as an economist. While I worked at the OECD, I tried to write a theatre play. I had gone to Norway one summer with a friend and worked in a farm pitching hay in the morning and writing my play in the afternoon. But I felt I had to take a sabbatical. I did not have very much savings at that time. Then I heard about the Munich Olympics. I saw the

chance to make a quick buck so that I could retire for one or two years to write my play.

During the Olympics they make these Olympia mascots and that year it was the "Olympia Waldi". That's how Olympics make money. Everybody can exploit their logo and their seal, for key chains, pillows, t-shirts, etc. But you have to give 15 percent of your profit to the Olympic Committee. I made my mascot out of Capiz shells, or *Perlmutter*, which were welded together.

That's what brought me to Germany - Waldi! Sales of the Waldi shell wind chimes went very well in the first week. Then this whole episode with the Arab-Israeli hostage taking happened, and the second half of the Olympiade was dampened. I got stuck in Munich with 25,000 Waldis. I had no money to rent a place so I ended up in an artists' commune. I assisted a crazy filmmaker named Werner Penzel. He was a film student at the Hochschule für Film and I always drove him around with my Jeepney.

Tilman Baumgärtel: The Jeepney, a popular mini-bus-like means of transportation in the Philippines, is an important motif in your film *Perfumed Nightmare*. How did it get to Munich in the first place?

Kidlat Tahimik: That was also part of this Olympic thing. I was able to make a deal with the Olympic team from the Philippines. They were going to send a container with their equipment to Munich and I told them, "Why don't you just roll the jeepney inside and put all your stuff in it and you can use the Jeepney during the Olympics?" Even when I was in Paris I had always wanted to bring a colourful Jeepney to Europe. Imagine Rent-A-Jeepney in Cannes! It was kind of a nationalistic feeling, kind of like: You people don't know what we have at home. But it was during the Olympiade that I decided that I wanted to be a filmmaker. It became a catalyst. The Jeepney made people in the streets come alive. I wanted to film that.

Tilman Baumgärtel: Paris has the Cinematheque and a lot of art cinemas. Have you been there? Are there any influences from filmmakers of that time in *Perfumed Nightmare*?

Kidlat Tahimik: I went to the Cinematheque a lot, but I did not really "see" films there. I am so slow in reading subtitles, especially in French. Yet these films made me curious. Another thing in Munich exposed me to filmmaking: This one student had an "Übung," an exercise, on a Saturday and he asked me and a Brazilian girl to act in his short video. Video was very new back then and very bulky - a big camera and a big tape machine. That weekend his teacher got sick. The substitute teacher was Werner Herzog. So we did our 10-minute thing and after the exercise Herzog approached me and asked me, "Are you a professional actor?" I said, "No." And he said, "Gut, gut, gut. I don't like to work with professionals." In the winter of 1973 he included me in the cast of his film on Kaspar Hauser (*Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle – The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, 1974). That was the first time I was in a film production.

I was already shooting material for my first film in Paris and Germany. Then, there was another film student, Hartmut Lerch, who was also trying to finish his "Abschlussarbeit" his thesis film, and he agreed to come with me to the Philippines. He took the equipment under his name because he also wanted to do his own film. So we shared the equipment and I got my shots for *Perfumed Nightmare*. The rest was sneaking into the cutting room of the Hochschule at night. Whenever the students were sleeping already, they let me take over. That's how I finished my first film.

Tilman Baumgärtel: John, what were the other influences on you as a filmmaker, apart from Kidlat's films?

John Torres: In high school I was bombarded with American mainstream movies. I did not watch a lot of good films then. When I took this film course in college, it really blew my mind. Even though I wanted to be filmmaker, it wasn't until much later that I made my first film. It took tremendous heartbreak in my personal relationships, in the relationship with my father, and financial difficulties. I was actually contemplating going to the States for good and I started to study to be a certified IT professional – can you believe that? I started to forget my dream to become a filmmaker. I just wanted to start anew. It was really that tough. Everything I had was broken into pieces. I was in a long relationship with my first girlfriend, and she broke up with me...

Kidlat Tahimik: But you were already part of the computer generation?

John Torres: Yes. I remember in 1995 I was fascinated by the sound of the dial-up and with being connected to the Internet. It was something I was really comfortable with: the tools that we had at home. I remember my father had the most advanced computer editing system. Representatives from Singapore would come here and visit the TV stations ABS-CBN, GMA and my father. They would come to our house just to upgrade our stuff.

I was working as a web designer in Makati and my mindset was to have a stable relationship and save up money for a future family. Filmmaking was really very distant from what I was doing. I could have just lived that life, if it wasn't for this unexpected turn of events. So I actually applied for a visa, just a tourist visa, but I knew that I could not stay there. Then I got denied and I stayed here. I quit my job and I did not know what to do. But that got me thinking: Maybe it is time now. I had some stories to tell. I found my voice and I jotted down a lot of ideas. I processed a lot of things which I could share. Not really with strangers

John Torres' *Todo Todo Terros*



yet, but more with my friends. I started to shoot around Manila, and I made these *Kamusta* videos. So when my friends asked me, "How are you, John?," I just would show them this film. It was just a three-minute film. It captured how I felt and the feeling that I had that something was going to happen.

Tilman Baumgärtel: So it was not for public screenings?

John Torres: No. When I finished this three-minute film, I felt like I could die then. It was just this simple joy of mine. I did not care if the world saw this film.

Kidlat Tahimik: I always tell my sons that the process is the most important thing. If they are working on a documentary or on a painting, I always tell them that the process of creating something is what counts. For me it's a bonus if it gets shown or sold. But if you get a bad critique or nobody looks at it, it does not matter because you can always fall back on the memory that you did it with all your heart. I know that a lot of artists get depressed when no gallery takes their work. I myself had a lot of festival denials before *Perfumed Nightmare* was shown at the Berlin Film Festival. But you always have the final consolation that you did it with a lot of love, and nobody can undo that.

John Torres: Exactly! What also fascinated me when I made the film was that I did not know exactly where I was going. And I just realized that I have to rely on the hope that the unknown would be discovered.

Kidlat Tahimik: That unknown is the known inside you. That's what I call the *sariling duende*, the unique esprit inside you. I usually associate it with a naughty spirit, a playful spirit. When I talk to younger filmmakers, they often question like, "How does one become a world class artist or filmmaker?" Not by copying your idol! You can copy Kurosawa's films shot by shot, but that will not make you an artist. You have to let your *sariling duende* speak. And the *sariling duende* is the special combination of what you are. You grew up in a mountain tribe? Or in a plush village here? Your father was an engineer? Or an artist? Or you are a heathen or a staunch Catholic? If you combine all those influences, that is what gives you a special framing of the world around you. That is different even from the *sariling duende* of your twin brother. The way you frame your film or your painting or your novel – that's what the world is waiting for. Not for your version of Spielberg's or Kurosawa's *sariling duendes*.

Tilman Baumgärtel: One parallel between your two films is they are both centered around a character who has a lot in common with you as the respective directors. In *Perfumed Nightmare*, the main figure is a Kidlat Tahimik who goes from the Philippines to Europe, just like you did. In *Todo Todo Terros* the protagonist is an artist who travels to Berlin, just like John. I keep hearing the saying, "In the Philippines everything is personal." Is this the reason for the autobiographical bent in your work?

Kidlat Tahimik: Maybe *Perfumed Nightmare* was the stage where my *sariling duende* had to come out. I remember that a lot of critics would see this film, and they would relate it to me. I complained bitterly, "No, I am not a Jeepney driver. I never was a Jeepney driver. It is a *story* about a Jeepney driver." But in the long run I realized that it was also about me. It was about this American dream that most Filipinos have and that I also had, which was the reason why I went abroad to study and to work. I might have stylised it into this story about the village Jeepney driver. But all the elements of my love-hate-relationship with America came out in this film.

John Torres: When I went to Berlin, it was my first trip abroad alone. The last time I had travelled outside of the Philippines was ten years earlier and that was with my family. I did not know what to expect. But I found myself telling the people I met about my country. It made me aware of being a Filipino and I was proud of being a Filipino. At the same time, I encountered a number of very interesting characters. Of course, I retained one, which is Olga, one of the central figures in the film. She was a volunteer at the Berlin Asia Pacific Film Festival, where I was invited to show my short film *Tawidgutom*. She toured me around the city and I just fell in love with Berlin and with what she told me, about life...

Kidlat Tahimik: It is quite obvious from the film that there is some chemistry between the subject and the one behind the camera.

John Torres: (laughs) Originally, I just wanted to make a simple love story about this person and me. I came up with this idea of an artist being a terrorist and how terrorists put bombs into the people that they love, not strangers.

Tilman Baumgärtel: To some, the film borders on the exhibitionistic because of the strong emphasis on this relationship...

John Torres: Yes, but I hope that people are able to see beyond that. The film is really about so much more than this personal relationship. It is about finding a sense of home, about how you hurt those who you love the most. It is about forgiveness, about hope...

Kidlat Tahimik: To consider this type of filmmaking exhibitionistic is a Western point of view. The Philippines is a tropical country and many people here still live in Nipa huts. There is very little privacy. Everybody knows what is happening to everybody else around him or her. Even here (*points to the open windows of his house*) the private is open to the public. I think in Europe, especially in Northern Europe, with its winter-proof stone houses, that physical habitat breeds a *kultur* where people tend to be more privacy-oriented – and thus perceive filmmakers who bare their souls as “exhibitionistic.”

I think that the video medium also caters to these very individual ways of self-expression. I remember in the 1970s the video company JVC used to hold competitions to encourage these very personal and often confessional works: video diaries, video letters, essays... promoting new social uses of video for spontaneous personal messages.

Tilman Baumgärtel: Talking about technology, I see another parallel in your respective works. They were both facilitated by new and more flexible media technologies of their respective time. In the case of Kidlat, it was 16-mm film. For John it was digital video. Could you comment on that?

John Torres: Today with digital video it is so easy to capture anything and to just shoot, shoot, shoot. You just mount a camera in one corner of the room and you borrow another camera from a friend and just run around and get more coverage out of everything, without worrying about running out of tape after three minutes. A digital camera is so lightweight, portable and unobtrusive. You don't have to set up a lot of lights. And also subjects before the camera are used to being filmed by such small cameras so it is not too alien for them. If you have a film camera, they will behave very differently – very self-consciously and not very naturally.

Kidlat Tahimik: Maybe it seems easy to accumulate material because you

just have to push that button. You don't even have to synchronize sound. But because it is so easy to record material you might get an overdose of material. There is a danger you will drown in all these images once you start to edit the material. Then again, when I saw your film I was wondering if you could ever accomplish that particular flow that his film has with traditional film, with a camera where you have to hand crank the spring for a 25-second shot, and the sound on a separate machine and cassettes limited to three minutes. How would you get your free flow?

John Torres: With digital video the challenge is that you have so much material which in the end you have to choose and select. 80 percent of the time when I edit my films, I sit in front of the monitor and stare at the blank screen, not knowing what to do. Then again, you can just leave one shot on the desktop for weeks and you can think about it and where you want your story to go. It is also very easy to manipulate colours with one click of a button or to rearrange all your shots, play stuff backwards, play around with the sound. It is a playground for me, but it is also a challenge. You have to have a lot of discipline.

Kidlat Tahimik: I am not sure I can call myself a *disciplined* filmmaker. I am very impulsive, so I never kept a book like a lot of other filmmakers, with archival codes and stuff like that. But it takes a certain kind of obsession to pull out this five-kilogram camera and load the spool and get your shots. You have to be careful not to overheat your machine in the Manila weather and refrigerate your material as soon as possible.

I once was invited to a video festival in Japan. I told them, “But this is not video. My film was shot in 16-mm.” They said, “We know, but watching the whole film feels like video.” I think they had a point there. At first I thought it was just camera angles. But now I think it is also the spirit that is actually closer to video than to film. The spontaneity of my Bolex shots in *Perfumed Nightmare*, like the one of the truck that has bumped into the *kalesa* – I just shot it from the hip. So in a way, that is much closer to what they are doing today with digital video.

John Torres: When I was shooting my first films, I just chose a second-hand, first-generation Japanese mini-DV camera. It is so light and you can hide it very easily. Only around 30 percent of *Todo Todo Teros* was shot with a high definition camera that I got half way through the movie. And it was bulky! Man, I felt really limited compared to before with the way I moved. I just did not feel comfortable with such a high-profile camera. When people see the camera, they immediately think television so they start to behave differently. That's why what Kidlat did is so amazing. To think to work with what he had back then in the 1970s! When I saw his film equipment, I thought maybe I am not a filmmaker after all. I have never used a real film camera. I don't even know how to properly handle it. (*laughs*)

Now when people see me on the street with my broadcast quality camera, they wonder where my crew is. They ask, “Is this for *TV Patrol*?” It is a different mode of filmmaking now. I shot my second film entirely on HDV and I can just imagine how much more obtrusive a film camera must have been.

Kidlat Tahimik: Well, today there are so many cameras around and people are getting increasingly used to them. So it might not be as obtrusive as you think. Today, I find it hard to carry a 16-mm camera around. And then I think, how will I develop it? Send it to America? Since the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) closed their studio two years ago, there is no place to develop 16-mm anymore in the Philippines. The PIA was the last refuge for 16-mm filmmakers. That's where all of the independent filmmakers used to meet: Raymond Red, Roxlee,

etc. We went there for editing or for negative matching or for sound mixing.

I have avoided the video scene for a long time. But lately I am being “osmosised,” and it keeps me in touch with the younger generation. My son has finally convinced me that there are so many advantages with digital because of the editing. I have one of the last 16-mm Steenbacks in the Philippines. Thanks to the Goethe-Institut, I was able to bring that in. But since I am moving to Ifugao, I guess with laptop editing it will be infinitely easier to share the filmmaking with the village people.

Tilman Baumgärtel: Why did you resist digital video for so long?

Kidlat Tahimik: Maybe there is this unconscious conservatism. You know, you learned your art form. It is now a dinosaur technology, but you learned to do it with 16-mm. Of course, in addition to that, all my equipment is 16-mm. Everything from the flatbed-editing table – to my Bolex – to the sound transfer machine. It costs a lot to shift to video. The whole idea was to maximize self-sufficiency, to be able to do most of the post-production work up in my house in Baguio before going to the studios in Manila for the final mix and the final negative matching.

Tilman Baumgärtel: In *Perfumed Nightmare* the Jeepney seems to be a metaphor for a certain “Third World approach” towards technology, which arises from the fact that technology is not so easily and cheaply available as in the West. You used expired film stock for *Perfumed Nightmare* and the way the whole film is edited is not quite the way a film should be “properly” put together. Your film seems to be knocked together like a Jeepney, out of spare parts and scrap material. Do you see a relationship between film form and the use of 16-mm material on the one hand, and the subject matter of the film on the other?

Kidlat Tahimik: For low budget filmmakers it was normal to use 16-mm in those days. I did not think of it as a “relatively Third World” form of film. It was the easiest way to tell my story. It was a way of having my *sariling duende* come out, without having to fall into the clutches of Mother Lily (*Philippine film producer Lily Monteverde – T.B.*). Then you have to shoot in 35-mm and have a camera loader and this whole battalion of people working on the film. But it is interesting what you are saying. I never thought about it before – that the jeepney is both a metaphor for a certain approach towards technology and for the way I made the film. And I was simply enchanted by the Jeepney factory.

Tilman Baumgärtel: Another trait that your films share is that they are both about the dealings between different cultures, between Germany and the Philippines. Were you trying to make a statement about cultural and social globalization?

Kidlat Tahimik: Well, I happened to learn filmmaking while I was in Germany. This land of technology gave me access to 16-mm cameras (*laughs*). When I went to the Hochschule für Film in Munich, I could not believe my eyes. So many Arriflexes! Here at the University of the Philippines they had one Bolex and they guarded it like it was a god! Because I was in Germany, access to filmmaking equipment was much easier than it would have been here.

Tilman Baumgärtel: How about *Todo Todo Teros* – is that a film about globalization, or about Germany?

John Torres: Well, I must admit, it was originally meant to be just a simple love story. But I know that something was evolving because I was in this mode where



Kidlat Tahimik films John Torres with his Bamboo Camera

I was really questioning who I was as a Filipino, about issues we have at home, etc. And it was underlined by the fact that I had to go to Berlin and had some distance for a while. It was critical, of course. It just so happened that in Berlin I learned a lot of new things. I enjoy this process, this conspiracy of grace, when you make a film and you admit that you do not know where you are going. You try to say something, but then other people will provide input and see things that I did not see before...

Kidlat Tahimik: I think you have to be open to cosmic suggestions and interferences and don't just stick to your beloved script. Your detours might be so consistent that they turn into the real thing...

John Torres: I really identify with that. Something goes on unplanned and you know that there is this detail that will make sense in the end. And you just have it stuffed into one folder on your computer. And later, when it makes sense, you can insert this scene with great ease.

Kidlat Tahimik: When editing, you have this whole ocean of images. But it is like having a very messy room. If you really need something you just know where to find it. Even when I was working with film and I wanted this one insert I remembered that that particular shot was in can number 74. It's messy, but it works, *diba*? The industry is all about efficiency and that's why they stick to this route that the script provides them with. They need this game plan because they have this army to synchronize. But if you use a digital camera, you can be your own one-man-band and create your own symphony and you will be able to loosen this kind of straightjacket.

Tilman Baumgärtel: Could you give an example of the process you described in *Perfumed Nightmare*?

Kidlat Tahimik: There are many cosmic things you will do as a filmmaker and only later people will point them out to you. There is a part of the film when they put up a Zwiebelturm (*onion spire*) on a church tower in a Bavarian village and you hear the old men say, “That will be the last handmade Zwiebelturm in Germany.” And in the next shot you see the fibreglass vent pipes on the Centre



Kidlat Tahimik's *Perfumed Nightmare*

Pompidou in Paris. Those are motifs in the film that related to the way I was thinking about high tech. I shot these giant structures independently. But they got edited in to complement each other.

That particular sequence was shot at the time when I became a father. That was an important time for me, and I wanted to celebrate that moment. So while the onion dome is being lifted “so easily into the sky,” I do a parallel cutting of the stylized birth drama of my wife in labour in the Jeepney. When I showed it to people they would say, “It is a nice sequence. It is cute. Your baby is cute. But the trip to Munich is distracting. You should get straight to the point,” etc. I did not want to take it out because it is such a rare moment. So I showed the film to Werner Herzog on the *Schneidetisch* because I wanted his opinion. And he said: “Kidlat, you are best in your detours.” (*laughs*) *Ay salamat!* I found a way to justify this sequence.

After one year of editing I still did not have a finished film. In fact, I did not even have the whole space motif and the Wernher von Braun fan club in the film. It was just about the young man from the Philippines who wanted to go abroad and make it out there. Then what happened was that over Himmelfahrt (*Ascension*) we had a four-day weekend, so we decided to go to Paris. And when we arrived there that weekend they were raising those air vents on the roof of the Centre Pompidou. When I shot this sequence I was about to run out of film, so I shot frame-by-frame, thereby creating this stop-motion effect. It looked like flying saucers. That gave me this idea to give the whole film this space-age framing and to make it about the astronaut dreams of a Jeepney driver. I started to change my soundtrack. I looked for NASA broadcasts. I created this whole sequence with the Wernher von Braun fan club. So it was a mad

obsession to justify this sequence with the Zwiebelturm because I thought that if I included these pipes the sequence would not stick out like a sore thumb. At least there are two of these mechanical liftings. In the end, that transformed the whole film – in its second year of editing!

Tilman Baumgärtel: Frederic Jameson has called *Perfumed Nightmare* a “Jeepney that ferries back and forth between First World and Third World”. So that was not the original idea at all?

Kidlat Tahimik: Well, it was about this central character who wanted to go out into the world. But he somehow had to get this Jeepney to the West. So he had this saviour, this liberator, who supports him and wants to bring him to America, eventually. In the film I never made it to America. We stayed in Paris because that’s where I was based. I only had the means to bring the Jeepney to Europe. But, luckily, there is a statue of liberty in Paris. So I could still make that American dream come alive in the film.

Tilman Baumgärtel: Is *Todo Todo Teros* a film about the relationship between Europe and the Philippines, or the so-called “global South”?

John Torres: In the film I play around with the metaphor of the artist as a terrorist. In order to affect the other person you have to have an intimacy. You need to know the person well. That’s why I put all these travel advisories into the film. That is my way of attacking and mocking the way the West perceives us – how they warn people not to get to know us and to stay away from our country. I also inserted some shots from this New Year’s celebration in Manila that are really chaotic, especially from a Western point of view. I tweaked the audio to make it even more booming, and put in a lot of chaotic shots in order to tell them: “Yes, maybe that is what you are afraid of.” (*laughs*) I feel that you have to erase the distance and go beyond those labels.

Tilman Baumgärtel: So, who is the audience for this type of film? Is the audience in the Philippines? Or is it geared towards the West? Towards the festivals?

John Torres: Actually, I don’t decide whether it is for the West or for the East. I screen my film and whoever wants to see it goes and sees it. It is not focused either on the West or on the East. It does not matter.

Tilman Baumgärtel: The reason I am asking is that a lot of filmmakers from Southeast Asia encounter the situation where more people in the West get to see their films – at festivals and the like – than in their own country...

John Torres: Oh, of course, may more people in the West have seen my film than here in the Philippines. It was screened at festivals here, but, hopefully – when it gets a regular run in August - more Filipinos will get to see it. It is interesting to see, though, that younger people are more open to the film and more patient with alternative forms of narrative and experimenting, rather than having big name starts and sticking to formula. They are more adventurous and more open – surprisingly. And that is pretty consistent both in the East and the West.

Kidlat Tahimik: I do not believe in this whole stuff about the *bakya* crowd. *Bakya* means “wooden shoe,” and it is a condescending term for the lower class audience. But I think that there is an intelligent audience out there. Maybe they are conditioned towards certain formulas – the repetition of sexy bodies, the repetition of *Bang! Bang! Bang!* in order to keep them awake. But I think, in general, producers use that *bakya* taste as an excuse why their next film has to

be about sex and violence again. If you have the freedom to tell the stories that you want to tell, then you don't think about audiences anymore. It is the story that has to come out.

Yet, in a way I always envied Lino Brocka. I always hoped that I could somehow get a small part of his audience just so I could continue making films and buy my next 16-mm film roll. But then you have the producer tell you that your next film has to be a box office hit and, therefore, you have to compromise this and compromise that. There is nothing wrong with compromising, but if the efficiency is measured by the profits that you generated and not by the story that you are telling, you put the cart before the horse.

John Torres: I am also challenging some things. I needed to do that to communicate better, to develop my own film language. It is very apparent now that I am doing my second film and I am framing things in such a way that is not very conventional. The film is about my personal hero, which is very difficult. It is a very personal film again and he does not know about it. (*laughs*) But I have to shoot him and my excuse is that I am taking practise shots with my digital camera. For this film I tilt my camera sideways. So I frame not landscape-type, but more like a portrait. And I experiment with the screening of the film, having multiple projection and multiple angles, because I want to have that spirit of fun - not only in making the film - but also when screening it to audiences. Each screening will be a bit different from the other. By doing that and being more personal and more active, it is a different experience.

I know that a lot of people won't really be comfortable to have this non-traditional way of screening films, but what the heck. If it challenges some people to see things differently and offer an alternative way of screening and making films, so be it. A lot of festivals will not even bother screening this type of film, but I don't care. I abandoned all those things because I know I have a story to tell in this way.

Kidlat Tahimik: I don't like interfering so much with the projection, but I often do a post-screening appearance. Categorically I don't do *performance* because to me that is a very loaded word. I do *performing* after my films. It is as if I come out of the screen – like in this film *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Woody Allen. Very often I do that because the film is yet unfinished, so you get to see these crazy filmmakers as a kind of bonus. At the same time, you are intensifying your relationship with the audience. But I don't know if I am brave enough to grab the projector and run around with it. I'd be afraid that people wouldn't be able to follow the story anymore. Maybe I really have become a conservative. (*laughs*)

Tilman Baumgärtel: Both approaches require you to be present at the screening. That means that only so many people can see the films, because you cannot be everywhere. Do you have any other thoughts on the distribution of independent films, especially here in Southeast Asia, where it is very difficult to see local indie films, and almost impossible to see indie films from other countries in the region?

John Torres: I am writing an essay for a book right now where I say that independent filmmakers should try to talk to the DVD pirates. They have such an effective distribution network and the video pirates have brought so many good films into our country already. Of course, there has to be some sort of trade-off. But I like the idea that my film would be available everywhere for next to no money.

Kidlat Tahimik: I never retained any copyright on *Perfumed Nightmare* anyway. I always knew that I would not make a lot of money out of it. So I did not even bother. As for my films – Johnny Depp can have all of them! (*laughter*)

Filmlist

The following films that were produced in workshops of the Goethe-Institut, Mowelfund or the U.P. Film Center, are available for viewing at the library of the Goethe-Institut:

Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn Documentary Workshop 1983
Production of documentary *Spark of Courage*

Ingo Petzke Cinematography Workshop 1986
Works by Resaba, Guieb, Artibal, Santiago, Donato and Quirino

Thomas Mauch Workshop 1988
Works by Agbayani, Meily, Corre and Bacani III

Christoph Janetzko Workshop 1989
Works by Agbayani, Lim & Co, Donato, Laramas, Roxlee, Red, Bacani, Calderon and Orelana

Christoph Janetzko Workshop 1990 (Optical Printing)
Works by Ricardo & Mercado, Leyran, de Guzman, Quirino & Sales, Ermitaño, Nicandro, Hernando and Romana

Michael Wulfes and Christian Weisenborn Workshop 1991
Production of documentary *Masakit sa Mata*



illustrations: Roxlee