



THE KALAMPAG TRACKING AGENCY:
30 YEARS OF EXPERIMENTAL FILM AND VIDEO
FROM THE PHILIPPINES

MAY 23, 2022

8:30pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CaLARTS

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society..

THE KALAMPAG TRACKING AGENCY: 30 YEARS OF EXPERIMENTAL FILM AND VIDEO FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Program curated by Merv Espina and Shireen Seno

Overcoming institutional and personal lapses to give attention to little-seen works—some quite recent, some surviving decades of loss and decomposition—this program collects loose parts in motion, a series of bangs, or kalampag in Tagalog, assembled by individual strengths and how they might resonate off each other in the context of a screening program and a contemporary audience. These are some of the most singular, fragile, and striking films and videos from the Philippines and its diaspora from over the past three decades.

They say it always starts with a bang. Or a series of bangs.

Like the tiny explosions in your brain that rattle you to take action, it could be something simple and small, not necessarily earth-shattering. The act of capturing the fleeting moments, ideas, and visions entails a certain slippage of forms and time, something that tends to elude us but cannot be ignored, something which we liken to kalampag, a 'bang'; the act of tracking them something of an alert, a warning that something may worsen or interrupt the journey, versus the stable engine hum of a giant system, a well-oiled machine; like the rattling of loose parts that collide while in motion.

This is by no means a representative program. This selection is personal, subjective. Like the works assembled here, the act of assembling this program is itself informed by a certain agency, by an independent urge to act on one's own will.

With no small amount of detective work to address the institutional and personal gaps of proper cataloging, archiving and storage, we tracked down individual people and individual works, from the nooks and crannies of several libraries and collections, to tiny islands in the Visayas, to the Los Angeles sprawl.

With a variety of formats, techniques and textures from 8mm and 16mm to HD and cellphone video; from found-footage and optical print experiments to ethnographic documents and video installations—this is a collection of works assembled not by theme, history, medium or other arbitrary concerns: this is a confluence of uncanny juxtapositions and pleasant contradictions, an experience not unlike revisiting a familiar place under a new light. But before you get to where you're going, you hit a speed bump or a pothole and you hear a loud rattling coming from your car. Sometimes you think something's amiss; sometimes it's the sound of it that comforts you.

The Kalampag Tracking Agency is an ongoing curatorial initiative between Shireen Seno of *Los Otros* and Merv Espina of *Generation Loss (GEN_LOSS)*.

PROGRAM

Miko Revereza: *DROGA!* (2014) 8 mins

A Super 8 tourist film about the Los Angeles landscape seen through the lens of Filipino immigrants, examining cultural identity by documenting the intersections of American pop culture and Filipino traditions.

Melchor Bacani III: *Minsan Isang Panahon (Once Upon a Time, 1989)* 4 mins

An experiment in optical printing using Super 8 home movies and hand-colored found film material. The film was created during the influential Christoph Janetzko workshops, conducted in 1989 and 1990, in collaboration with Mowelfund Film Institute, Goethe Institut and the Philippine Information Agency.

Rox Lee: *ABCD* (1985) 6 min

An experimental animation, decidedly crude in approach, part sociopolitical commentary and surrealist whimsy, advocating for a new and personal take on the alphabet.

RJ Leyran: *Bugtong: Ang Sigaw Ni Lalake (Riddle: Shout of Man, 1990)* 4 mins

Rumored to have used footage salvaged from a commercial studio dumpster, the film is a commentary on Filipino onscreen macho culture and one of the rare surviving works in the brief filmmaking career of Ramon 'RJ' Leyran. It was a product of the last Christoph Janetzko film workshop, with a focus on experiments with optical printers, held in 1990.

John Torres: *Very Specific Things at Night* (2009) 5 mins

A mobile phone film that captures the peculiar tension between the beauty, violence, and raw exuberance of New Year's Eve in Manila. Shot on Mahiyain Street (Shy Street), Sikatuna, a stone's throw away from the house of Chavit Singson, who also led the masses to bring then President Estrada out of the presidential palace.

Roxlee: *Juan Gapang (Johnny Crawl, 1986)* 8 mins

A man searches for his destiny while crawling the streets of the metropolis at the height of the Marcos dictatorship, traversing the main EDSA thoroughfare, and

tracing the shadows of the pillars of the Manila Film Center, all just before the People Power Revolution and the storming of EDSA that toppled the Marcos regime.

Yason Banal: *Chop-chopped First Lady + Chop-Chopped First Daughter (2005) 2 mins*

A tongue-in-cheek poke at our own culture and recent history. The First Lady is none other than Imelda Marcos, the First Daughter none other than Kris Aquino. Both women's lives and antics juxtaposed with gory evocations of the highly publicized chop-chop lady murders that were exploited by those 90s slasher films Aquino herself starred in.

*This piece was last shown as a 2-channel video installation at the Ateneo Art Gallery (AAG), and is reformatted as split screen for the purposes of this screening program, with kind permission from the artist and AAG.

Tad Ermitaño: *The Retrochronological Transfer of Information (1994) 10 mins*

Less a documentary than a marvelous if irreverent parody of science fiction films. A humorous meditation on time, politics, and point of view in cinema. Hoping to send a message back in time by equipping the camera to shoot through Rizal's portrait on Philippine money, Ermitaño plays with the boundaries of different points of view—Rizal's, that of Philippine politics, the camera's, the filmmaker's, and ours—as well as with the temporal relations between them.

Raya Martin: *Ars Colonia (2011) 2 mins*

A structural commentary on both colonialism and globalization through medium translation and generation loss. Shot on Hi8 video, then hand-coloured on 35mm black-and-white film, then transferred to video, this brief piece is evocative of both aging and scratched silent film iconography and trashy image-collapsed analog video.

Tito & Tita: *Class Picture (2012) 5 mins*

Shot on a single roll of expired 16mm film, this 'photography film' evokes faded memories and injects lyricism and humor into the archetypal class picture, alongside the fleeting sound of waves crashing on a beach.

Martha Atienza: *Anito* (2012) 8 mins

An animistic festival Christianised and incorporated into Folk Catholicism slowly turns into modern day madness. A tragicomic portrait of a small island town whose livelihood is deeply rooted in and bound to the sea.

Jon Lazam: *hindi sa atin ang buwan (the moon is not ours, 2011) 4 mins*

Travel footage from a family holiday on the island of Bohol, Philippines is captured in black and white, without sound, on a basic video camera, in this contemplative piece on lost love, distance, resignation, and sadness.

Cesar Hernando, Eli Guieb III & Jimbo Albano: *Kalawang (Rust, 1989) 7 mins*

One of the most prominent and well-crafted films that emerged from the Christoph Janetzko experimental film workshops, *Kalawang* is a satirical piece that uses found footage of war, sex, and pop culture to unpick the cultural and libidinal complex of colonization.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Miko REVEREZA is an award-winning experimental film and video artist based in Los Angeles. Since relocating from Manila as a child, he has been living illegally in the United States for over 20 years. This struggle and exile from his homeland has influenced the content of Miko's personal films that explore themes of diaspora, colonialism and Americanization. He also makes music videos and live video art installations for LA's experimental music scene.

Melchor BACANI III is a director for TV and was an active participant of the Mowelfund Film Institute (MFI) film workshops in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Roque Federizon Lee, a.k.a. **ROXLEE**, is a Filipino animator, filmmaker, cartoonist, painter, rock star, and is considered by many as the Godfather of the Filipino young filmmakers. Roxlee is an icon of underground Philippine cinema. Apart from making animated and collage films, he is also a comic strip artist known for 'Cesar Asar' and 'Santingwar'. In the late 80s, he was featured in retrospectives in Hamburg and Berlin. In 2010, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Animation Council of the Philippines.

Ramon Jose **RJ LEYRAN** was active on and off screen in the late 80s and early 90s independent film communities. He was also an actor in several television soap operas, commercials, and movies, including *Radio* (2001), *Ikaw Lamang Hanggang Ngayon* (2002) and *The Great Raid* (2005).

John TORRES is a filmmaker and musician known for his idiosyncratic style of filmmaking that features prominent on- or off-screen spoken texts, including the poetry of local authors. The imagery and structure of his films are not prosaic, but associative and fragmented. Retrospectives of his films have been shown in Seoul (2012), Vienna (2013), Cosquín, Argentina (2014), and Bangkok (2015).

Yason BANAL obtained his BA at the University of the Philippines and MFA at Goldsmiths. His works have been exhibited at the Tate Modern, Frieze Art Fair, Guangzhou Triennale, Singapore Biennale, Shanghai Biennale, Christie's, Queens Museum of Art, among others.

Co-founder of the pioneering multimedia collective Children of Cathode Ray, the works of **Tad ERMITAÑO** are distinguished by an aural and visual sensuousness underpinned by a sequential logic that reflects his training in philosophy and the sciences.

Raya MARTIN has an ambitious, constantly evolving body of work of more than a dozen films including fiction features, documentaries, short films, and installations. He was the youngest artist on Cinema Scope's 50 best filmmakers under 50 in 2012.

TITO & TITA is a collective of young artists working with film and photography. They have been featured in festivals and art spaces including TIFF-Wavelengths, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Silverlens Gallery, Blanc Gallery, Green Papaya Art Projects, and the Lopez Museum.

Marthe ATIENZA lives and works in Rotterdam, Netherlands and Bantayan Island, Philippines. Her works are sociological in nature, reflecting a keen observation of her direct environment, making intensive use of video and sound, and usually viewed as multi-channel installations.

Jon LAZAM is an experimental filmmaker based in Manila. His works have been screened in Chicago, Rio de Janeiro, Montreal, Paris and San Francisco. He also works in theater, reflecting a deep interest in the interplay between reality and artifice.

Cesar HERNANDO is a filmmaker and one of Philippine cinema's best production designers, having contributed to films of Mike De Leon, Ishmael Bernal, and Lav Diaz.

Eli GUIEB III is a filmmaker and award-winning fiction writer.

Jimbo ALBANO is an editorial cartoonist and illustrator.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Shireen Seno is a lens-based artist and filmmaker whose work addresses memory, history, and image-making, often in relation to the idea of home. She is also a curator and organizer for *Los Otros*, a Manila-based space, lab, and platform dedicated to film & video works with unique personal voices.

Merv Espina is an artist and initiator of *GEN_LOSS*, a moving image research platform; cook-janitor for media art festival WSK; program director for Green Papaya Art Projects; and co-founder of the institute of Lower Learning (iLL), based in Saigon and Manila.



The Jack H. Skirball Series is organized by B er enice Reynaud and Eduardo Thomas and funded in part by the Ostrovsky Family Fund

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Dana Berman Duff: Short Films

June 6, 2022

Dana Berman Duff has long been a vital force in Los Angeles' media arts. Astonishing in her versatility, Duff moves fluidly between Super 8mm and 16mm film, video, multi-channel installation, photography, drawing, and sculpture. Regardless of the medium, Duff's work is infused with her subtle wit, tactile delight, and deeply reflective conceptual structure. This program includes selections from the Catalogue Series, in which fantasy tableaux and objects from the pages of a designer furniture knock-off catalogue are reworked into contemplations on the control and selling of desire. Duff's art is in collections of The Museum of Modern Art and New Museum of Contemporary Art, and her films have shown in the Toronto, Rotterdam, Edinburgh, and other international film festivals.

In person: Dana Berman Duff



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