

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon Apr 20 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

KIDLAT TAHIMIK: *Perfumed Nightmare*

Revival screening

Program organized in collaboration with Cinema Pacific, Pomona College, Simon Fraser University, Northwest Film Center and Northwest Film Forum.

REDCAT welcomes back Filipino director Kidlat Tahimik for a reprise of his famous semi-autobiographical fable *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977, 93 min.), a work of rare brilliance. Raised in "a cocoon of American dreams," the young Kidlat, a bus driver in a town near Manila, dispenses with documentary convention and himself assumes the role of protagonist on a journey of self-discovery. As president of the local Werner von Braun fan club, Kidlat dreams of Cape Canaveral and American technological prowess, but eventually grows disenchanted with Western cultural colonialism as he travels from the countryside to France and Germany. Staged and improvised accounts of Kidlat's seriocomic experiences commingle with newsreels of Western politicians, ethnographic footage of puberty rituals, and lyrical interludes extolling the beauty of the Philippine landscape—all coming together to create an astonishingly original cinematic texture.

In person: Kidlat Tahimik

"One of the most original and poetic works of cinema made anywhere in the seventies." – Werner Herzog

"*The Perfumed Nightmare* makes one forget months of dreary moviegoing, for it reminds one that invention, insolence, enchantment - even innocence - are still available on film." - Susan Sontag

"*The Perfumed Nightmare*, the highly original first feature by Filipino director Kidlat Tahimik, is a kind of comic Third World psychodrama. The filmmaker plays himself as a rustic naïf, the ideal subject of neocolonialism...More underground than most Third World films, it's

far more Third World than most underground ones. As a blueprint for an 'undeveloped' cinema, I haven't seen anything comparable since Ousmane Sembene's *Black Girl* or the early films of the Brazilian cinema nove. Tahimik is a man of undeniable wit and he details a certain consciousness so engagingly than, uneven as it is, *The Perfumed Nightmare* seems likely to become some sort of classic."
- J. Hoberman

An idol of iconoclasts worldwide, a pioneer of the postcolonial essay film, and the grandfather of the Philippine New Wave, Kidlat Tahimik has made a career of—as he puts it—“straying on track.” Born Eric de Guia and educated at the Wharton School of Business, Tahimik renounced both career and name to become Kidlat Tahimik (roughly translated as “Quiet Lighting”) and embrace a filmmaking aesthetic unabashedly personal and defiantly political, filled with both warmth and fire. Tahimik’s postcollege sojourn in Germany resulted in a friendship with Werner Herzog (who cast him in *The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser*), a marriage, and a deceptively ramshackle debut film, *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977), whose easygoing interrogation of neocolonial identity, Philippine culture, and global economies turned it into a surprise international “hit.” Praised as “the joyful discovery of blasé film buffs from Berlin to Belgrade and beyond” (*SF Chronicle*, 1980), the film is now heralded as a key text of both Third World Cinema and the personal essay film, offering a pairing of politics and pleasure that has continued throughout Tahimik’s oeuvre. Never shying away from embracing a proud, postcolonial identity, yet always grounded in personal observation and a quiet, understated humor, Tahimik’s works take special joy in highlighting the indigenous cultures and history of the Philippines and beyond, whether honoring Tahimik’s beloved *bahag* loincloth, profiling local craftsmen and women, or recounting tales of Magellan’s Filipino navigator/slave. Assembled from countless hours of filming, drawn from months and years worth of work, “my footages are like tiles in a mosaic,” he writes. “You shuffle them, change them around. In my process, nothing is permanent.” “My best friend always mispronounced the word ‘indigenous,’” Tahimik noted in an interview in the book *Philippine New Wave*. He’ll say ‘indigenius.’ I would always call it cosmic mispronunciation... The genius of the indigenous culture is still within us. We just have to recognize it, and let it flow out.” Committed to documenting the “indigenius,” yet always iconoclastic enough to “stray on track” to capture the wonder of life around him, Kidlat Tahimik is one of cinema’s true originals. – Jason Sanders, Pacific Film Archive

The name **Kidlat Tahimik** immediately connotes contradiction. As an obsessive cultural observer, he has been exploring his inner cultural contradictions by making his non-commercial films since 1975. This process of "introspection on celluloid strips" is his way of digging out the *sariling dwende* buried in the "education" process.

Born in 1942 as Eric Oteyza de Guia in Baguio City, he was raised in that American enclave resort town, situated in the heart of the tribal highlands of Igorot Culture. Then he began questioning his American education, (a.k.a "my benevolent assimilation"), ending up in America for a graduate degree (Wharton School MBA).

After five years as an economist in Paris, he tore up his MBA diploma in 1972, tuned-in to commune-culture lifestyle, and embraced an anti-Hollywood school of filmmaking (a.k.a *Banal-Kahoy* production). He returned to the Philippines in 1975 and began to work on his first film, *Mababangong Bangungot/Perfumed Nightmare* (1977), that has become an internationally recognized cultural landmark. As a self-taught cineaste, his works are recognized at home and abroad for their primitive style and for their humorous deconstruction of his "benevolent assassination".

In Baguio, he is an active artist (film, video-installation, performance), supporting the process/viewpoint of the undiploma-ed artists. In 1997, his Sunflower Film Collective embarked on a project to share user-friendly video technology with tribal people, with the aim that responsibility for cultural documentation rests in their own hands. He lectures at U.P. and Ateneo University, speaks at local/international conferences, contributes articles in Taglish to the Sunday Inquirer. Since 1983, he performs in his native *bahag* (G-String) as an addendum to his "technically unpolished films".

On- and off- screen, his *bahag-cum-bamboo-kamera* appearances dramatize his advocacy for films that reflect the *indio-genius talents* of the Pinoy. As juror at the CineMalaya 2006 film awards ceremony, he came on the CCP stage, in the coat-and-tie dress decorum: He wore his crimson tie around his waist while he "shot" the gala audience with his bamboo Kamera. Then he gave the *Bamboo Kamera Award* in recognition of the director with the freest *sariling-dwende* (SD). It is his anti-*Aliw-Wood* statement for young cineastes to "slay the *cultural father*" (Hollywood) by filming their local story. Its an annual encouragement award that lures the hunter down from the mountains to view 12 films in 3 days. To spot an orig that deserves a shot.

In the face of potential film career in greener pastures, Kidlat Tahimik chose to return home to nurture his family (and his *sariling dwende*). His partnership with German stained-glass artist Katrin de Guia, whose pursuit of a PhD in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Philippine Indigenous Psychology) continues to influence profoundly his quest to find the elusive *sariling duwende*. His main *barkadahan* (gangmates) are his three sons, Kidlat, Kawayan, and Kabunyan as well as Ifugao woodcarver-guru Lopes Nauyac. He sharpened his focus on "breaking out of the colonial cocoon" through passionate debates with his mother, Virginia Oteyza (+ February 2015). He continues to churn out un-bankable films (i.e. no stars, low budget, thirteen years to release). He prides himself in his dictum "I'm a *tatay* (father) and a filmmaker – in that order."

Among the many awards Kidlat Tahimik received are the Berlin Film Festival International Critics Award for *Perfumed Nightmare*, (1977), the Manheim Film Festival Top Cash Award for *Turumba*, (1981); 15th Tokyo Video Festival, 2nd Prize for *Orbit 50: Letter to my Sons* (2002); Fukuoka Prize Laureate for arts and Culture (2012); CineMalaya Lifetime Achievement Award as "father of Philippine Independent Cinema", for inspiring a new generation of filmmakers in the Philippines and Asia (2014); and, more recently, the Berlin Film Festival Caligari Prize for *Balikbayan #1 (Memories of Overdevelopment Redux III)*.

Filmography

As a director

Mababangong Bangungot (Perfumed Nightmare), 1977. 93 mins. Color Film.

Sinong Lumikha ng Yoyo? Sinong Lumikha ng Moon Buggy? (Who Invented the Yoyo? Who Invented the Moon Buggy?), 1979. Color Film.

Olympic Gold, 1981. Color Film.

Yanki: Made in Hongkong, 1982.

Turumba.1983. 94mins. Color Film.

Ang Balikbayan (Memories of Overdevelopment), 1980 (to the present). Color Film (Work in progress.)

Bakit Yellow ang Gitna ng Bahaghari?, 1983-94. Color Film.

Takadera Mon Amour, 1987-89. Video*

Bahag ko, Mahal ko (Japanese Summers of a Filipino Fundoshi), 1996. Film.

Orbit 50 (Letters to my Three Sons), 1990-92. Video*

Our Bomb Mission To Hiroshima, 1995. Video*
Banal-Kahoy, 2000. Film and Video.
Aqua Planet, 2003. Video*
Some More Rice, 2005. Video*
Tatlong Atang at Isang Pagnakaw, 2005. Video
Bubong (Roofs of the World! Unite!), 2007 (to the present). Video*
BalikBayan #1 (MOD Redux III), 2015.
* JVC Short Films

As an actor

Kasper Hauser (a.k.a Every Man for Himself and God Against All) by Werner Herzog, 1974.
Jose Rizal, by Marilou Diaz Abaya, 1998.
Abong, by Koji Imaizumi, 2000.
Mababangong Bangungot, 1977 and other films directed by Tahimik.

Presented as part of the Jack H. Skirball Series. Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud.
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