

ALTERNATIVE CINEMA

“Alternative cinema” is also known as independent cinema, and includes short films, documentaries, experimental or avant-garde films, animations, short features, and works on video. Most of these are made without the capitalization, machinery, and influence found in the making of commercial films. This form of cinema exists outside the confines of commercial moviemaking.

Few historical accounts of Philippine filmmaking, which is almost a hundred years old, mention the existence of independent cinema. It is mainstream, traditional, narrative cinema that is recognized principally by the “official” version of our film history. Although many independent works contain the living voice and authentic image of the people, this cinema has remained “hidden” from the public eye due to personal or political reasons. In some instances in contemporary history, it has been suppressed for engaging itself with social and political realities. At other times, it has been marginalized for its uncompromising adherence to cinematic forms so unlike those peddled on the big screens of movie theaters.

Many films have been produced outside the movie industry which show actual conditions and processes in society. Valuable as historical documents, they offer forms and images that demand a different consciousness and a re-positioning of our beliefs and attitudes toward the subjects brought onscreen. If commercial narratives give visual pleasure, the polemical style of a political documentary or a formalistic display of lights and colors in an experimental film hold our attention even if these films have no story to tell.

Early History

Independent cinema began when movies were first made in the country, because the first movies were short films produced by artisans. Even with the rise of mainstream cinema, noncommercial films continued to be made.

Jose Nepomuceno, founder of the first Filipino film outfit, Malayan Movies, dabbled in films other than those he made for entertainment. Celso Al Carunungan reports that “in 1921 and 1922, the Nepomucenos (brothers Jose and Jesus) were commissioned by the US government to make a series of documentary films showing the most important industries in the Philippines. The purpose was to show the American people the richness of our resources and the Philippines’ tremendous potentials for industrial development. One of the most impressive of these fourteen films was the one about the hemp industry, which showed all the facets of abaca production, from planting to exportation.” In addition, the Nepomucenos became the local correspondents for Paramount News and Pathe News. In fact, in 1923 Pathe News commissioned them to cover the disastrous earthquake that hit Japan in spite of the fact that there were film people in Shanghai, which was nearer to Japan than Manila. Unfortunately, none of the works by the Nepomuceno brothers are extant. Such films,

more than *Dalagang Bukid* (Country Maiden), 1919, could have offered us insights into the kind of image representation the Nepomucenos made at the time when the US presence was already established in the country.

Carunungan also cites Faustino Lichauco, who organized Victoria Pictures, one of the first newsreel-and-documentary film outfits in Asia, which concentrated on “reviews and views.”

Orient Pictures Corporation, partly owned by Joaquin Pardo de Tavera, employed the services of a well-known French cameraman in covering the first world boxing title fight ever to be held in the Philippines, between Pancho Villa, world flyweight champion, and challenger Clever Sencio. The first documentary picture of its kind made in the country, the venture did not make money.

In the 1920s Roger Hillsman captured in his *Old Manila* the grandeur of the Noble and Ever Loyal City by the Pasig. Manuel Silos, another pioneer-director of Philippine movies, made his debut film, *Tres Sangganos*, a short film in 16 millimeters which he later expanded into his first feature film, a three-part series called the *Three Tramps*. A short film on the celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress was produced in 1936 by the now defunct Parlatone. Parlatone followed this in 1938 with *PMA Cadets*. A Frenchman shot *Intramuros*, a travelogue on the famed walled city.

Balut (Duck’s Egg), produced by Sampaguita Pictures in 1939, had some elements of the documentary. In the same year, a 25-minute film, *Jose Rizal*, was made by Ramon Estella.

The above-mentioned films were destroyed during World War II. The films marked the modest resistance of some filmmakers against the onslaught of commercial moviemaking. Fortunately, a 1941-vintage film, *March of Time Series: The Philippines* by Louis de Rochemont, which is about the Philippines from 1898 to 1940, has survived in the film archives in Washington DC and is now reportedly available for local audiences.

Despite the exigencies of the Japanese occupation, several documentaries and newsreels were produced during that period. Motoe Terami-Wada mentions the following news features made during the war years: *Laurel Reviews His Troops*, November 1943; *First Session of the National Assembly*, November 1943; *New Cabinet Organized*, November 1943; and *What Do You Think?*, April 1943. The last is about the progress of the city of Manila under the Japanese occupation forces.

The postwar years saw the local film industry staggering back to its feet. But the revival offered no room for short films because the industry, to survive, needed to turn out box-office hits. Short films and other forms of independent cinema were not given due attention. The war, however, had brought about a universal awareness of the important role of films as the countries involved in the conflict realized the effectiveness of the medium in military training, propaganda work, and other war-

related activities.

In 1946 *Philippine Progress* and *Philippine Rehabilitation*, both in 16 millimeters and in black and white, were produced by the United States Information Service (USIS). Directed by Charles Tanner of the USIS, *Philippine Progress* reviewed the country's economic gains during the decade prior to independence. *Philippine Rehabilitation* focused on postwar reconstruction and the role of the United States. It was directed by Harold Goodwin, another American with the USIS. When some people asked to view the two films in the USIS film library, they were told that the films had been dumped in Manila Bay.

In 1950, a film following the documentary concept as we know it today was produced by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. General Francisco Licuanan, AFP Chief Signal Officer, initiated a production designed to give an insight into the life of young men who had been drafted into the army. However, this film, titled *I Was a Trainee*, did not give the necessary impetus to create a short film movement despite the promise it made for innovating the medium. Made under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Armando Medel, Major Dominador Estanislao and Captain Benedicto G. Pinga, all of the AFP, the film was designed to enhance the recruitment of air force trainees.

Also in 1950 the USIS produced two 20-minute 16 millimeters shorts in black and white: *This Is the Philippines* and *Woodcarving in the Philippines*, both directed by Harold Goodwin. The turning point in the development of noncommercial films came in 1953 when the government information program went full blast. The creation of the National Media Production Center (NMPC) on 1 June 1953 was the most significant factor in the upsurge of documentary and short film making in the country after the war. With rural areas as the main target, the information program focused on agricultural and community development.

For want of a form and style, the early productions were patterned after the local full-length cinema. In fact, some short feature films depended a great deal on stereo typed plots. They usually had a cast that included a name star or bit player and their stories tended to employ melodrama. In one of these films, however, Fidel de Castro presented the story of two landseekers in a style then considered as employing documentary techniques. The film was *The Land Is Free*, produced by NMPC.

In 1955, Lamberto V. Avellana made *Si Mang Anong* for the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, based on the story of the Rice Farmer of the Year. In the same year, a radical departure from local film presentation was *The Gray Menace*, another government production, on the control of rodents in the ravaged fields of Mindanao. The film did away with the usual plot, casting, and melodrama. A year later, *Better Hides and Skins* proved to be another successful attempt at infusing the narrative with documentary technique. In 1957, *The Fisherman's Bounty* found its way into the television network of West Germany.

The private sector likewise mixed melodrama and documentary techniques in *Without*

Fear of Tomorrow, an industrial documentary film which was given an award by the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS) in 1957.

The First Independent Film Movement

The number and frequency of short film production in the Philippines have considerably increased since 1955. Local filmmakers and enthusiasts searched for a more suitable style and form for the specialized films. The documentary was given considerable attention. The 1950s saw what may be considered the first major movement of the country's independent cinema.

For the first time, there arose a concerted effort at forging a cinema outside of the movie industry, as evidenced in the steady increase in short film and documentary production, in the creation of film training centers like the Film Institute of the Philippines, in the holding of short film festivals like the National Short Film Festival, and in the promotion abroad of the country's short films and documentaries.

It is worth noting that the Philippines was one of the pioneers in film education in Asia. During the so-called "golden age" of Philippine cinema, Philippine short films like those made by Avellana were winning in international short film competitions. In all these efforts, a new consciousness was beginning to form outside of the movie industry. These efforts would be curtailed upon the imposition of martial law. The movement was to become part of the establishment, with some short film practitioners making propaganda films for the government, particularly when NMPC became the propaganda arm of the Marcos dictatorship.

In 1956, Benedicto Pinga, who had studied film in the City University of New York, founded the Film Society of the Philippines (FSP). In 1962 the FSP held the First National Festival of Short Films. The 24 entries accepted in the competition provided a basis for gauging the status of the local short films as a form distinct from that of the commercial narrative film. The following year, a weekly program of short film classics, followed by a forum entitled *Film Appreciation*, was shown on television.

For its initial venture, the FSP organized together with the UP Writers' Club the first International Film Festival held in Manila late in 1956. For the first time a public exhibition of short and long film classics from Europe and Asia was held. Although the FSP was financially handicapped, it was able to conduct film seminars and production workshops.

In 1964 entries to the Second National Festival of Short Films showed marked improvement. The FSP, newly renamed Film Institute of the Philippines (FIP), began to organize festivals outside the country, with the first ones being held in Cairo, Bangkok, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in 1965. The First Filipino Film Festival in the United States was an eye-opener for filmmakers of independently produced films. Short and feature-length films were shown in Europe and the United

States.

Since 1958, Philippine participation in international film festivals has been truly rewarding, due partly to the awards and recognition gained by short films. In 1959, during the Bilbao Short Film and Documentary Festival, Lamberto V. Avellana's *El Legado* (The Legacy) won the Conde de Foxa Award, a signal honor given only to entries from Latin America and the Philippines. In 1961, *La Campana de Baler* (The Bell of Baler), also by Avellana, got a similar award.

Son of the Sea, though not a Filipino-produced film, deserves special mention because it is among the few films that have won for the Filipino student international recognition in the field of short films. Made for the Republic of Vietnam by Jose Avellana, Lamberto's brother, with Higino Fallorina as cameraman, the film won a special award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1960.

The Land Is Free by Fidel de Castro was cited in the Week of the Asian Films in Frankfurt in 1962. In the same year, *They Shall Not Want* by Emeterio Ornedo was shown at the San Francisco International Film Festival and at the Agriculture Film Competition in Berlin. *Brave Little Island*, produced by Tony Smith, received a certificate of acceptance at the San Francisco Film Festival in 1963.

The year 1964 proved a big year for Filipino independent filmmakers. The main reason for this was that during that year, a documentary film, *Soul of a Fortress*, produced by Benedicto Pinga and directed by Ferde Grofe and Emmanuel Rojas, participated in nine film festivals in Germany, Spain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Cambodia. The highest distinction it won was the Silver Prize at the Bilbao Short Film and Documentary Festival. In the same year, *Mangandingay: A Place of Happiness* by Jesus Ramos brought home the Rotary Award for Service to Mankind from the Asian Film Festival in Taipei. In 1965, *Masinloc*, a short film also by Ramos, was cited for its participation at the Industrial Film Festival in the Chicago International Film Festival.

In 1969, Avellana's *The Survivor* garnered the Prix D'Honneur at the second Festival International du Film in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. *The Land of the Sun Returning*, a Caltex color documentary, earned the Golden Award, the Anvil Award, and the Chris Certificate at the Nineteenth Columbus Film Festival held in Ohio in 1971.

Twenty years after its creation, the NMPC in 1973 entered its *As a Nation Grows* at the Teheran Educational Film Festival. Later, its *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* (Story of Race), a Marcos propaganda film, became the Philippine entry in the Fifth International Cinema Festival in Tashkent, USSR.

While the country was reaping international recognition with its documentaries, film consciousness started to take shape among local cineastes. Among these was the pioneer Benedicto G. Pinga, the organizer of the short film festivals held in 1962 and 1964. He was one of the founders of the Filipino Society of Cinematographers (FSC)

and the FAMAS.

Rise of the Filipino Avant-garde

In the following years and after the windfall of awards bestowed on Philippine documentaries, the situation was anything but clear. While most professional filmmakers subscribed to the making of commercial films, only a few individual talents sprang up to create personal films which were aimed at a select group of viewers. The urge to make films privately had its beginnings here.

Early examples are the works of Michael Parsons, an American residing in the Philippines who still works as an independent filmmaker. One of his short works was shown during the Fourth Manila Short Film Festival in 1984 where he and Virgilio “Pandy” Aviado were honored as pioneers of experimental filmmaking in the Philippines. Parson’s works include black-and-white shorts like *The Wall* and *Las muñecas* (The Dolls).

In the United States, a Filipino filmmaker made waves on the Greenwich Village film scene with his *On my way to India consciousness I reached China*. With this 16 millimeters black-and-white work by Henry Francia, Philippine cinema reached a high point in experimental filmmaking. The film was praised highly by the high priest of the American underground, Jonas Mekas. That was the time when the New York film scene was dominated by the likes of Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger.

In the 1970s, poet and dramatist Virginia Moreno, and photographer Romy Vitug, now multiawarded cinematographer in commercial films, teamed up to make *Orfeo Marino*. Amable “Tikoy” Aguiluz VI documented the practices of Rizal cultists in *Mount Banahaw—Holy Mountain*. The short documentary won the Silver Prize, professional category, at the 1976 Young Filmmakers of Asia Film Festival held in Shiraz, Iran.

The crowning glory of Philippine independent cinema is *Mababangong Bangungot* (Perfumed Nightmare) by Kidlat Tahimik (Eric de Guia). The feature-length film was premiered at the Young Filmmakers Forum of the Berlin Film Festival on 25 June 1977. It was awarded the Prix de la Critique Internationale by the FIPRESCI Jury for “poesy and humor with which the cineaste describes the discovery of a new world.” It also received special mention from the Organization Catholique Internationale du Cinema et de L’Audiovisual (OCIC) and the recommendation of the Interfilm.

Most of the above filmmakers, however, remained isolated artists, apart even from each other. Remarkable films came from their private visions as artists but did not create a public cinema.

The Second Independent Film Movement

In the milieu of social disorder and political confusion ushered in by martial law, the short film was reborn. This time it sought refuge in the volatile world of academe.

A number of factors were responsible for the appearance of short films in the 1970s. Among them were the introduction of film courses in the universities and of workshops like those conducted by the Mowelfund Film Institute, and the communication departments of De La Salle, the Ateneo, and University of the Philippines (UP); the adoption of lightweight equipment such as super-8, 16 millimeters and video; the relatively low cost of such equipment and stocks (as compared to 35 millimeters); the availability of amateur talent; and to some extent, the presence of an audience, which until now remains largely untapped.

Along with the events on the local independent film scene, many “new” cinemas were made available for viewing to the emerging young filmmakers. Foremost among them were New German Cinema through the Goethe Institut-Manila, the *nouvelle vague* screened at the French Embassy as well as film programs offered by the embassies of Japan, India, Australia, Sweden, and others.

Also significant was the introduction and patronage of the super-8 film by Kodak, introduced into the market in 1964. By the late 1970s, the super-8 had encouraged practical filmmaking activities in the universities, resulting in the emergence of a new generation of amateur filmmakers. When the supply and processing of super-8 films were drastically cut in the mid-1980s, many of the young filmmakers moved on to work in bigger film gauges, like those in 16 millimeters and 35 millimeters and also in video. The development of short films was further boosted when the Manila Short Film Festival was held 20–24 April 1981 at the Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero Theater at the University of the Philippines. In a bid to promote alternative filmmaking, the festival geared itself to the development of short films at a time when the mass media were controlled by the dictatorship. The government’s newly organized film outfit, the ECP, also held its own short film competition, which helped to increase public recognition of the short film.

The short films being turned out by young Filipino filmmakers manifest all the qualities of a new cinema. They employ new cinematic language and technique. Unlike most industry films, they uphold the personal creativity of the filmmakers. They seek new ways of producing and distributing films independent of the commercial systems, and they spawn a new, distinct set of beliefs, both creative and ideological. This was not the situation in the earlier short film movement, when many filmmakers succumbed to the allure of producing for multinational corporations, civic groups, and the dictatorship.

Herein lies the great difference between the two movements in the independent cinema. The earlier films made in the 1960s were primarily commissioned by Caltex, the Rotary Club, or the NMPC. The short films made in the 1980s, on the other hand, were made through private initiative, and thus were more radical and daring not only in the choice

of their subjects, which were often political, but also in the forms they created for the stories. The film directors who came of age during the 20 years of the Marcos regime made films that were not possible in the early history of cinema in the country. Although they benefitted from film courses and the introduction of the super-8 film in the 1970s, these young film directors produced many of their important works in the 1980s.

Redefining Philippine Cinema: The Radical Impulse

The 1980s came like a double-edged sword for the Filipino people. With the country reeling under the Marcos dictatorship, media became politicized. The emergence of the radical media during a period of intense social tension brought about by the dictatorship led to the creation of alternative models of thinking and praxis outside the state-controlled media. After the 1986 EDSA revolt which launched Cory Aquino's rise to the presidency, disappointment and frustration crept in when social reforms failed to live up to people's expectations.

Out of the period of struggle soon emerged a new generation of filmmakers who would seek new ways of defining Philippine cinema. Existing outside the mainstream movie industry, they eagerly sought expression in gauges and genres other than those conventionalized by the narrative cinema which had assumed the popular 35 millimeters format. The struggle in society was expressed in the short, independent films which were oppositional by nature.

Through the films of the mid-1980s, Philippine cinema was reinvented. This happened when Philippine film reached a somewhat productive period in political filmmaking through Lino Brocka and Mike de Leon and accommodated some voices of dissent, then declined as it became totally engulfed by sheer commercialism towards the end of the decade. Soon after the new government was installed, an avalanche of films catered only to the commercial demands of the film market.

As life under the new government went on, it became apparent that the state of the country's cinematic art, as it was generally with the country's culture, was no major priority; thus, no clear-cut policies were made for its upliftment. In this scenario of chaos, the short, independent film began in its marginal way to become the country's "other" cinema, a counter-cinema. Its small, artisanal mode of production, supported mostly by individuals or institutions, made it strikingly different from the huge infrastructure of high finance and power politics governing commercial cinema.

Among contemporary short films, the works of Raymond Red stand out as the epitome of the new Philippine cinema. His *Ang Magpakailanman* (Eternity), 1983, set a standard which would forever recast Philippine cinema in a new mold of filmic creativity. His subsequent work, *Ang Hikab* (The Yawn), 1984, and his earlier film, *Sining Ang* (Art), 1983, project his private vision of a world peopled by solitary men

and women. His *Kabaka* (Enemy), 1983, and *Kamada* (Mate), 1984, in collaboration with Ian Victoriano, explore human relationships against a sterile, if not oppressive, world.

Two dominant lines of aesthetic significance divide contemporary short filmmakers. One camp adheres to the tenet “film as film,” affirming that cinema should serve art. The investigation of form, the discovery of cinematic ideas, the application of innovative techniques, and the adoption of styles are the primary considerations of this camp. To this belong the experimental works, animations, and short features that are subjective in approach.

The other camp believes that film must deal with social reality. These filmmakers go beyond the film material as they investigate the world they capture on celluloid. Loosely, the prime consideration is reality in whatever form it may assume, and the camera serves only as a tool to unravel the varied shades of reality.

The short films by the new generation of young directors won international prestige for the Philippines at a time when commercial cinema was churning out formula movies without regard for quality. In 1987, the super-8 film trilogy of this writer—consisting of *Oliver*, 1983, about a gay entertainer supporting his family in Tondo; *Children of the Regime*, 1985, about abused and prostituted children; and *Revolutions Happen Like Refrains in a Song*, 1987, about the hopes and frustrations of the people power revolt—won the Grand Prize in the 19th International Super-8 and Video Festival in Brussels, Belgium. The films were also screened in major film festivals in New York, London, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Yamagata (Japan), and several other film capitals. Raymond Red’s *Sketches*, 1988, won second prize at the Young Film makers Cinema Competition in Montreal, Canada in 1988. In Kalibia, Tunisia, two animation films won prizes. The special jury prize went to Roxlee’s *Tronong Puti* (White Throne), 1983, and the bronze prize to Juan and Mike Alcazaren’s *Hari* (King), 1982.

In 1990, at the 12th International Super-8 and Video Festival in Belgium, this writer’s video documentary *A Legacy of Violence* won the best documentary award. It was a video production made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts as part of a series on popular struggle in Asia. Earlier, *Tatay Na, Nanay Pa* (The Father, Also A Mother) by Rowena Gonzalez won the best documentary prize at the same festival in 1984.

At the 1991 International Video Mondial in Belgium, *Es* by Juan Pula (aka Jonjon Red) received the special jury prize, and ... *And Rain Fell in July* by Yam Laranas was awarded the Prix de Emile Cantillon for best experimental video.

The production of Philippine short films coincided with the rise of cause-oriented groups and nongovernmental organizations. Community-based organizations created their own sources of information to counter the falsehood and deception perpetrated by the Marcos-controlled media. Organizations which produced films outside the movie

industry and which tried to counter the information dictated by the Marcos government included the Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), a religious-run media center. Aside from holding communication workshops, the CFA produced media materials, including feature films with topical issues like Ishmael Bernal's *Sugat sa Ugat* (Wound at the Root), 1980, which depicts the conflict between rural life and modernity as reflected in the antagonism between two generations.

The CFA's greatest contributions are socially relevant documentaries: *Children of the Regime*, 1985, which is about child prostitution; *A Spark of Courage*, 1984, with the Goethe Institute; and *People's Power Revolution: The Philippine Experience*, 1986. The CFA also published in 1985 the pioneering book, *Short Film: Emergence of a New Philippine Cinema*, which chronicles the growth of independent cinema in the Philippines.

Asia Vision is another nongovernmental organization that has produced mainly progressive documentaries. Founded in 1982, Asia Vision documented the struggle for justice and democracy in the last years of the Marcos dictatorship. Its first documentary was *Sabangan*, 1983, by Joe Cuaresma and Freddie Espiritu. The film discussed the conflict between a minority tribe being evicted to give way to a dam project of the government. Other important works from Asia Vision include Lito Tiongson's *The Arrogance of Power*, 1983, and *No Time for Crying*, 1987; Mike de Leon's *Signos* (Signs), 1983; and *Lakbayan* (Journey), 1984.

The super-8 films and videos that came out of the academe comprised the main bulk of alternative cinema production. The leading producers of short films in the early 1980s were the Cinema-as-Art and Cinema Direct workshops conducted by the UP Film Center and the communication arts departments of the Ateneo and De La Salle universities and the workshops held at the Mowelfund Film Institute (MFI).

After the super-8 crisis in the mid-1980s, only two institutions—the MFI and De La Salle University (DLSU)—assumed leadership as the country's main producers of short films and documentaries. This happened despite the emergence of the country's first degree-granting institution, the Film and Audio-Visual Department of the UP College of Mass Communication, put up in 1984, which so far has not yet produced any significant work. Among the important works to come out from the academe were those made at the UP Film Center, like Raymond Red's *Ang Magpakailanman*; at DLSU like Nona Ocampo's *Ka Satur*, 1984; and at the Ateneo like Juan and Mike Alcazaren's claymation work, *Hari* (King), 1982.

It is the MFI which has maintained its leadership in developing young filmmakers. Headed by Joseph Estrada, an actor turned-politician who was elected vice-president of the country in 1992, the MFI offered young filmmakers scholarships for studies abroad. Later it tied up with the Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU). Not until 1985, however, did the MFI assert its leadership when young filmmakers from the UP Film Center conducted workshops at the MFI which ushered in the "golden age" of Philippine independent cinema.

A steady stream of landmark films came out of the MFI workshops, which started out merely as an amateur endeavor in the early 1970s. The markings of a turbulent era, these films brought recognition to the country in various international gatherings.

Tying up with the Goethe Institute, the MFI ventured into 16 millimeters filmmaking that saw the blossoming of a new cinema. Out of these workshops, particularly the ones conducted by Christoph Janetzko and under the directorship of Uwe Schmelter, came the now classic works, like Joey Agbayani's *Kidlat* (Lightning), 1989, Luis Quirino's *True Blue American Coconut Grove*, 1989, and *Girl from Bikini Island*, 1989, Ricky Orellana, Mike Alcazaren, and Jo Atienza's *Sa Maynila* (In Manila), 1989, Roxlee's *Spit/Optik*, 1989, Mario Guzman's *Dung-aw* (Lament), 1990, Cesar Hernando, Eli Guieb III, and Jimbo Albano's *Kalawang* (Rust), 1990, and other experimental works. With these films, experimental cinema reached a high level never before seen in local film history.

Also produced in these German-sponsored workshops were 16 millimeters-documentaries such as Nick Deocampo's *Ynang-bayan: To be a Woman is to Live at a Time of War*, 1990; and *Masakit sa Mata* (Hurting The Eye), made by a group of young documentarists like Joseph Fortin, Ditsi Carolino, and Cesar Hernando.

Kidlat Tahimik has produced some of the most monumental visual works in Philippine alternative cinema. His *I Am Furious Yellow*, 1989, documents the changes in Philippine society over a period of more than ten years as seen through the eyes of his children. *I Am Furious ...* and another Tahimik film, *Ynang Bayan* were featured at the 1990 Yamagata International Documentary Festival in Japan. Tahimik has even produced films independent of the independent movement in Manila, because he stays in his Baguio mountain refuge. Aside from his *Perfumed Nightmare*, which has given him and the country international honors, he has made other films like *Turumba*, 1983, and *Yanki*.

It is also important to note that while young film artists have sought refuge in academe for their creative fulfillment, several other cultural agencies have furthered the gains made in alternative cinema. Foremost among them is the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) which has taken over the work earlier undertaken by the now defunct ECP. The CCP supports young artists in the making of short films through its annual short film and video competition. It also produces such films through film grants and conducts a nationwide outreach program that makes it possible for the short films to be seen outside Manila. Among the short films completed with CCP grants are the following: Raymond Red's *Pepe*, 1989; Lito Tiongson's *Isang Munting Lupa* (A Little Land), 1989; Roque Lee's *Cesar Asar's Box*, 1989; Ian Victoriano's *Bisperas* (The Night Before), 1989; and Luis Quirino's *Naaalala Ko Si Dante* (I Remember Dante), 1991.

As a sign that alternative cinema has changed the topography of Philippine cinema, major film institutions have saluted works of independent cinema. The Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) has instituted the best student award in its annual awards

rites offering both trophies and cash incentives. Awards for short films are now also part of the Urian awards, occasionally of the FAMAS and the Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA).

Indeed, the short film movement that started at the UP has gone far in re-molding our country's film culture. Since the first works in the 1980s, the young filmmakers have moved on significantly into larger gauges such as 16 millimeters and 35 millimeters films. In doing so, they have sought greater audiences without necessarily compromising their ideals as committed artists.

A case in point is Raymond Red, who has come up with his first full-length feature film, *Bayani* (Hero), 1992. Funding for the film came from ZDF, a German television company, while Red was a resident artist in Berlin. Blown up to 35 millimeters, the film was released commercially after its world premiere at the Berlin Film Festival.

In no other period in Philippine cinema has there been an array of works as varied in form, style and vision as now. As this writer noted in 1985, the young filmmakers vividly manifest through their works new ways of regarding the film image: (1) there is a conscious articulation of film as a plastic material that can photograph, or be painted upon, scratched, or anything that the filmmaker wishes to do with the film material; (2) there is a high degree of perception of social reality that brings to light many unrevealed nuances of political, economic and social life; (3) there emanates from among the works a subjective reality of the filmmakers where the strong recurrence of dreams both as subject and technique informs us of the restless attitude that these young artists have in relation to their society; and (4) there is also a tendency in some works to tread on abstraction using film's formalistic elements to purge cinema of its narrative values while at the same time subverting common-held attitudes to foster new perceptions and uses of the cinematic art.

From these ways of regarding film—anti-illusion, socially relevant, subjective, abstract—sprung the three dominant properties of the new cinema: *experimentation*, *realism*, and *independence*.

The independent cinema or the “other” cinema basks in newfound creative energy. The new short and independent films do not just present the collective unconscious of the young generation but also taps the creative wellsprings from which might someday flow the mainstream of Philippine cinema. • N. Deocampo