

San Francisco Cinematheque presents

# Kidlat Tahimik's *Perfumed Nightmare*

Presented in Association with the Center for Asian American Media

Sunday, May 21, 2006 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Exuberant, witty, and politically incisive, Tahimik's now classic 1977 feature/essay *Perfumed Nightmare* takes a wry look at American cultural influence and globalization from the artist's playful and idiosyncratic perspective. The nightmare is the "cocoon of American dreams" which the film evokes and then parodies. From Tahimik's childhood village in the Philippines, where Voice of America, movies, and space travel transform his lively imagination, the film moves to Paris and Bavaria where he tastes the fruits of the capitalism alongside an American bubble gum entrepreneur. Ostensibly produced with the help of Werner Herzog and made for \$10,000, *Perfumed Nightmare* "reminds one that invention, insolence, enchantment—even innocence—are still available on film" according to Susan Sontag. It won the International Film Critic's Prize at the Berlin Film Festival in 1977, a prize shared with Turkish filmmaker Yilmaz Güney. (*Irina Leimbacher*)

***Perfumed Nightmare (Mababangong Bangungot) (1977) by Kidlat Tahimik; 16mm, color, sound, 91 minutes, print from Les Blank, Flower Films***

"*Perfumed Nightmare* was my first film; I taught myself how to make films during it. Before that I had shot a bit of Super-8, but nothing else. The film began when I lived in Munich in a video commune where there were many actors and actresses. Some of them knew Werner Herzog though the Munich School of Film and Television Arts. Once I was in a class and Herzog approached me after an exercise and asked if I was an actor. I was flattered but said no. Then he asked me to be in the film he was making, *The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser*. So I played Humberto, a character who appears in the circus scenes.

"Anyway, having spent some time on Herzog's set, I discovered a bit about moviemaking. Then I traveled to France with some friends who were shooting a film in an abandoned mountain village. I was the one providing transportation in my jeep—the jitney or 'jeepney' of the film. This jeep of mine had come to the Munich Olympics from the Philippines. And eventually this jeep became the star of my film, because people were always so curious about it and reacted to the jeep. [...]"

—from an interview with Kathleen Hulser, *The Independent*, December 1982

"*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, *Village Voice*, Nov 2, 1980

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