



KinoFest

THE GERMAN FILM FESTIVAL

The Dead Are Home in Our Pockets

Paratexts 01

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The Dead Are Home in Our Pockets

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About



KinoFest is...

the annual German film festival, taking place across Southeast Asia and the Pacific from October to November 2026. In Manila, KinoFest returns from October 15 to 18, 2026, and will be held at GH Ortigas Cinema, Greenhills Mall for the first time, bringing Filipino audiences some of the newest and most acclaimed films from Germany's dynamic cinema landscape.

This year's program explores how our lives are shaped by the spaces we move through and the burdens we carry, from our families and workplaces to our communities and the histories we inherit. Across stories of faith, memory, justice, care, and belonging, the films ask a central question: *How do we create lives of our own when the realities around us are often imposed upon us?*



MARG1N is...

an independent, print-only film magazine based in Cambodia and supported by Anti-Archive. We celebrate and bridge together regional writers, artists, and filmmakers through the lenses of Southeast Asian cinema under a different topic each year.



Paratexts has...

everything to do with the book aside from its main content. Or the movie aside from the movie. Or the song beyond the song. Or the game within the game. Or anything else dead, really—anything you can touch, verify its ebbing pulse, and create something new from. Any criticism or commentary that inhabits the thresholds between a work and its audience...anything buried a thousand feet beneath the lede.

Compromised Corners

Lé Baltar

Like watching the crest of a great and gorgeous wave crashing ashore, the vicissitudes of belonging and becoming animate the thematic core of three films playing at this year's KinoFest—Ryan Machado's *Raging* (2025), Frauke Lodders's *Gotteskinder* (2024), and Cris Bringas's *Body Count* (2025)—in how they consider the toll of community and kinship upon individuals on the margins.

In *Raging*, teenager Eli (Elijah Canlas) retreats irrecoverably inward in the wake of sexual abuse. Nightmares shove him into loops of anguish while reminders of what has been lost at day come with a jolt of helplessness. Worse, healing can't happen anytime soon. The perpetrator Arjo (Ron Angeles), Eli's peer, walks away scot-free.

"I can't get it out of my head," Eli confesses to his Walkman, recalling how long it has lapsed since the wrongdoing—the details of which remain deliberately obscured in a movie that relies upon an after-the-fact temperament to examine the trauma swelling at its center while upending expectations for catharsis. This discernment is the smartest aspect of Machado's second feature, distancing itself from previous films centered on sexual violence that flatten the experience into a device that choreographs suffering in service of sheer verisimilitude.

Set in mid-nineties Romblon and based on a real-life rape case that went nowhere, per Machado's October 2025 interview with *Lifestyle Inquirer*, the film unpacks the role a community plays in the context of sexual assault—and the possibility of fostering caring systems in environments now estranged from them. Machado isolates Eli in mostly still, meticulous frames. The protagonist traipses all over town, witnessing various tragedies that simmer like perpetual white noise inside his head.

Amid his predicament, Eli gives way to a necessary but fleeting distraction. Determined to find the wreckage of a plane he

witnessed descend into the mountains one stormy day, he enlists the help of his gay best friend, Jopay (Reynald Santos). Machado comments on the relationship between sexual assault and memory, and how survivors are put through the wringer during their involution. It helps that Canlas portrays the abuse as an embodied experience. His terrified visage, slouched posture, and routine zoning-out evoke the contours of an assault survivor's daily reality. But neither a vanished plane nor the unexplained death of a miner incites the mayor (Glenn Sevilla Mas) and the townspeople to move past inaction or indifference. If anything, they dismiss Eli's testimony as an imagined tale to protect whatever sense of normalcy they enjoy. For them, not knowing means absolving themselves of any moral and social duty—a sly invocation of Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil.



Raging © Daluyong Studios and Ryan Machado

The vaporous scenery and ambient soundscape not just lends the film mysticism but also calls attention to something shrouded, working like a leitmotif in the story of a community that cannot confront its own complicity. Machado languidly builds his critique to a Brocka-tinged endnote that betrays the ethos echoed by the film's title. There are no grand gestures of relief, no legible ways to comprehend the pain that survives. One can read this not only as a gesture of complexity but of sincerity.

Much like *Raging*, Lodders's latest is a coming-of-age movie anything but insouciant or bittersweet. More heavily plotted and straightforward than Machado's sophomore work, *Gotteskinder*—the German word for "children of God"—follows teenage siblings coming to terms with desire within a fundamentalist society.

Hannah (Flora Thiemann) takes a vow of chastity, which will prove difficult to uphold upon the arrival of the free-spirited Max (Michelangelo Fortuzzi) next door. Meanwhile, her brother Timo (Serafin Mishiev) struggles with homosexuality as he confronts his feelings for the equally troubled Jonas (Lennox Halm). For fear of being ostracized and believing queerness can be cured, Timo ships himself to a “pastoring camp,” which Jonas also signs up for. Conflicts mount when their conservative parents and evangelical enclave learn about their “sinful” ways.

Shot in Calden, located in central Germany’s Kassel district, Lodders paints a picture of a small municipal town punctuated by joyous singing and praying. Rendered via widescreen compositions, the devout community brims with possibilities at first glance, but the bulk of scenes taking place at home, in the church, in school corridors, and on a cul-de-sac might hint otherwise, revealing the pervasive control over private life and activity. Even a brief trip to the movies can be seen as courting intimacy with the devil.

Whereas *Raging*’s protagonist feels detached from the world around him, Hannah and Timo are embedded in church. They ward off a growing cognitive dissonance to further assimilate themselves into “a life with Jesus at its center,” similarly to their father David (Mark Waschke), who thinks he’s got such crises all figured out and is hell-bent on reinstating religious dogma within the family. Lodders often stages confrontations when the family gathers around the dining table, allowing dramaturgy to establish the pecking order within the household, lifting the patriarch at the top. The spacious family home hosts worship gatherings at nightfall. Though daylight pours through glass windows, the gray interiors, aided by cinematographer Johannes Louis’ reliance upon the uneasy neutrality of the medium close-up, evoke the tidiness and coldness of an office setting.

But what comes through most profoundly is how the controlled preservation of the family unit can result in the alienation of self: the way we think, the way we behave, the types of relationships we build. The more we compromise, the film suggests, the more we lose our sense of identity.



The movie is not stripped of tenderness, but it ultimately surrenders to doom and gloom. One protagonist dies. The other becomes trapped in the status quo, their decision disguised as self-agency. The German director presents such fates as an inevitability, which makes for a dubious finale in which alternative paths are stymied, conking out the power of this drama real fast, with no aircrafts in distress to up the impact of the crash.

Raging and *Gotteskinder* plunge us into festering cynicism, the former more arresting than the latter. In both films, communal affinity is positioned as a brutal act of forgetting the needs of the self. The illusion of placidity can very much enable acts of wrongdoing and leave us fending for ourselves. Community, they suggest, keeps us apart as much as it brings us closer.

Whereas the protagonists of *Raging* and *Gotteskinder* are hardly afforded space to verbalize their traumas and desires, Bringas offers the opposite in *Body Count*, though not without a caveat. In the eighteen-minute documentary still subject to a re-edit, two queer men recount past lives and current desires following a Grindr hookup. Known by aliases, Paul is a Filipino nurse living in Germany for six years while reeling from the death of his brother under Rodrigo Duterte’s notorious regime, whereas David is an Israeli who has previously served in the Zionist military for half a decade.

Reconstructed out of an original fifty-nine-minute audio recording, the film positions both the director and audience as passive listeners. To an extent, it allows Paul respite to be more

upfront and intimate about his plight and identity, standing in stark contrast to the characters of *Raging* and *Gotteskinder* who are alienated, mocked, or hurt for doing the same. David's Berlin apartment reinforces that semblance of safety, the warm company of an unmade bed. Bringas shoots the interiors with growing tenderness, switching between wide shots and close-ups, as voiceovered histories echo throughout the flat. As a result, he turns the perfectly manicured place, all soulless whites and neat surfaces, into a site of shared reckonings.

And yet, this gesture of lending our ears without protest to the subjects, especially David, elicits a herd mentality in which the former IDF soldier's declarations about Palestinian life and the ongoing genocide in Gaza are taken as absolute facts, leaving them unquestioned—similarly to how his identity is readily accepted as mere texture that assumes no political weight. Without the benefit of further interviews or historical archives, the documentary consolidates the plight of the oppressed to that of the oppressor into a single political reality. Belated recollections here, in the shape of a post-sex heart-to-heart, can obscure the magnitude of living in hellish times.

The most chilling bit arrives at the six-minute mark. David's memory of the most painful act he had inflicted upon Palestinians abruptly cuts to the couple's moaning and gasping, treating unfathomable suffering as fodder for sex, for cinema. In this way, the sense of community Paul finds in David registers as rather artificial and futile, and the film's messaging insular. For such a spatially effective picture, the radical possibilities of community ironically exist outside its four corners.



Body Count © Cris Bringas



Raging © Dauryong Studios and Ryan Machado

Portable Sanctuaries

Tito Ramos Quiling, Jr.

Across three houses, I carried my mother's reassurances and the socks that she had packed for me when I left Quezon City for Melbourne. Yet for those without such anchors from home, temporary spaces absorb what domestic and state institutions fail to provide for. With this in mind, Faraz Shariat's *Prosecution* (Staatsschutz, 2026) and Daniel Abma's *The Family Approach* (Im Prinzip Familie, 2024) show how an urban apartment becomes a workplace and a residential care home substitutes the functions of a family home.

Prosecution opens in darkness before light reveals the courtroom. The controlled entry establishes the threshold between public law and private life. The film follows a Korean-German prosecutor, Seyo Kim (Chen Emilie Yan), who fails to keep that threshold in place as the boundary between the courtroom and her home blurs. She pursues her own case through a legal system that fails to adequately address right-wing extremism.



At first, Seyo's apartment is a refuge from work. She eats ramen while on a video call with her father (Haeng-Goo Peter Yeo), a taxi driver proud of her, and does yoga. A racist assault disrupts her quotidian routines when she is struck by a Molotov cocktail

while on a bike ride. Her black leather jacket catches fire. A panicked Seyo wrenches it off and throws the smoldering garment on the pavement. Despite the shock, she ensures the evidence is documented: her wounds are photographed and added to a case file. While the assault occurs outside the home, its aftermath moves in with her.

Over lunch, Seyo's father mentions that his passengers assume he cannot understand them and belittle him. His experience of being misread mirrors Seyo's own encounters with racism. The film suggests a "death by a thousand cuts," where recurring experiences of othering accumulate. These barriers make self-advocacy difficult for Seyo, who works within an institution meant to provide protection. Seyo insists that her experience deserves recognition as a legitimate case. Her position does not exempt her from racial dynamics that she addresses, complexifying negotiations.

Tension is expressed through space. As the institution refuses to accommodate her pursuit of the case, Seyo shifts her investigation into the apartment. She uses her expansive glass windows like a detective board, turning the opaque boundary between the inside and outside into a surface for plotting other's suffering. The car becomes a secondary sanctuary, where Seyo gathers her thoughts alone, offering respite from testifying and performing composure. The film repeatedly shows Seyo working from home, scrounging through documents in basements, and visiting witnesses, as the investigation spills into spaces that were not meant to hold it.



The film's Neo-Nazis extend beyond the immediate violence against Seyo, engulfing the homes and shared spaces of other immigrants. The montage of witnesses and suspects makes this network spatially visible. Seyo discreetly documents the suspects from her car, behind trees and in parking lots, smartphone in hand. The rushing sound of her car connects these locations together as she drives through the night.

The ending offers a cautionary reclamation. After sentencing the perpetrator, the three exhausted witnesses—all women—gather to hug Seyo. She returns home and dismantles the wall. The photographs, notes, and news clippings come down; the windows are cleaned. The apartment is gradually reclaimed from the investigation. When Min-su (Kotbong Yang) cuts Seyo's hair there, this gesture from a lover offers a quiet return to domestic intimacy, allowing her shoulders to finally drop and shed the weight of the state's dereliction.

*

Abma's documentary features a *Landhausstil* country house adjacent to a forest and lake. A verandah faces open water across a sprawling lawn. This property functions as a residential care group home. Inside, a kitchen table anchors the common space where the boys eat, study, and spend their evenings. A fox occasionally visits, pacing around in the verandah. The house is looked after by three youth workers: Antje Wagner, Max Gerecke, and Sören Wagner, who take turns cooking, tutoring, and reading bedtime stories. The film is led by two central subjects.

Niklas is a thin, fair-skinned boy who turns eleven. Reserved but quick to anger, he leaves the table halfway through his birthday dinner. The festive setting makes the occasion difficult to sustain for him: a celebration organized by a family that is not his own.

The caregivers write their reports and discuss custody arrangements, sometimes including the boys. These scenes sit alongside the domestic routines, reminding us that the adults are also working in the house. Their recurring meetings demonstrate the union of the house's domestic and institutional functions. Abma

frames this duality through treetops swaying, windmills churning, and the drenched forest floor. These images punctuate the scenes of the youth workers carrying out their responsibilities. The pastoral landscape makes the house appear removed from institutional life, even as the scenes inside it reveal how closely the two functions remain connected.

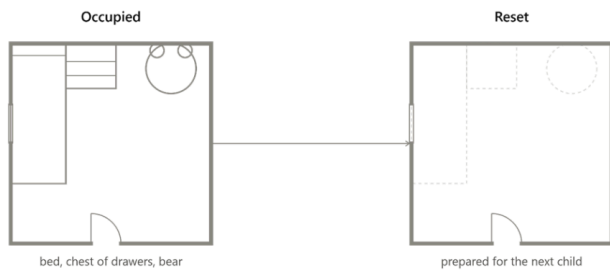
But these frames also isolate the house. Scarcely any neighbors live around the property. The house sits outside the systems that shape the boys' lives, such as the courts, welfare offices, and their parents' homes in the city. Those same systems determine who arrives and leaves.

Niklas wants, more than anything, his mother. The family court process stands between him and her possibility. In the meantime, calls with his mother go unanswered, and plans to see her fall through. When the caregivers tell Niklas the courts' decision, he cries. Mr. Wagner takes him out for ice cream, offering company in the absence of answers.



Ten-year old Kelvin, a Black child of Cameroonian descent, sits hunched on his bed, while Mr. Wagner asks him about school and therapy. His path to the house ran through language barriers, a maternal absence, six weeks in a psychiatric clinic, and the compounding weight of systemic racism. The state intervenes with Kelvin through medications, occupational therapy, and duty reports that are narrated in voiceover like a case file. Both boys seek a stability the house cannot provide.

When one leaves, their bedroom must be prepared for someone else. Bedrooms are personalized domestic corners, accruing their occupants' belongings and habits. Here, each room must become someone else's, its traces and routines soon replaced. Niklas can live in it without fully making it his own, so his departure changes the room's meaning without altering its function. The empty bedroom shows how easily the institution can reset.



Meanwhile, the boys and caregivers cook, socialize, eat, and learn in the kitchen. Unlike the bedroom, children arriving juxtaposed against the flow of repeating meals and conversations make the house feel like a home. This comforting but unsettling cycle reveals the institutional contract beneath the domestic rituals: the house *must* keep becoming a home. Unlike Seyo's apartment, which absorbs the casework that her institution refuses to hold, this residential care house is designed to absorb new occupants. Its temporality is structural and not incidental.

The house resets. Kelvin's stuffed toy and belongings vanish from his old bedroom. This cycle complicates domestic space as a stable foundation for belonging, though parts of that temporary existence cement themselves into the boys' identities. For instance, Niklas calls Ms. Wagner to ask for her pancake recipe.

The house provides routines, care, and attachment but cannot determine how long those relationships last. It invites comparison with residential care in the Philippines, where institutions rely on extended kinship rather than professional caregivers—a different arrangement shaped by the same tensions between care and impermanence. My mother's socks insulate me in the winter. But

the rootless subjects of *The Family Approach* carry few mementos, until they depart from spaces where safety is performed and occasionally embodied.



Looking Into the Sun

Lk Rigor

Dear Mick,

I hope you are well.¹

It's been almost a month since we met online. You looked bright and awake on a Sunday morning. I was on the other side of the coin, corroborated by my lateness. Mind still half-asleep, I introduced myself with my usual spiel of what I do and noticed the prompts on the shared screen.

One went: "The most recent thing that you learned about & fascinated you." I'm unsure if you remember my answer, but I

¹In my past life at customer service, where our body clocks synced to our clients on the other side of the world, our emails and calls always began with pleasantries. Even if they reached out first because of a problem,^a we had to buffer the solution with levity first.

Years later, I attempt to unlearn the greeting. I want to say it because I genuinely mean it and to hear the sincere answer which, I know, in reality, is not always "good."

²Last night, I slept for a full eight hours. I haven't been taking care of myself for the past few weeks.

I shared the YouTube video that I watched while falling asleep.² What I remembered before entering the dreamworld was the speaker talking about the wisdom we can derive from the biological processes when our wounds heal.³

I've since rewatched the video multiple times as I reflect on my own wounds, as well as the pains of the female characters in the three films I blindly picked⁴ for this project. Even without consciously looking, perhaps I am drawn to stories about women as I navigate my own womanhood.

³In the video, after discussing healing, the expert brings us to a bleak closing thought: "Death is the coat of life." She elaborates that the outermost part of our skin is made of dead cells that protect us from viruses craving life to latch onto and infect.

It is ironic, the expert ponders, but also genius. How being enveloped by death allows us to be alive, to continue breathing.

As if an omen,^b these three films share themes of wounding and death.^c

^aWe were trained to call a "problem" a "concern" to make it "less negative." So when I heard Heike utter the title while speaking to an irate client over the phone, it summoned up the scripts I memorized to reduce a customer's displeasure.

"I'll check it personally and we'll find a solution together," Heike promises. I would say this as well to pacify a customer. Their satisfaction leads to my retention, i.e., regular business, i.e., money, i.e., means of survival, i.e., living.

Heike started working in the cleaning

company at the early age of eighteen, eventually going up the ranks of being a middle manager. Now in her late fifties, she has a few years left before retirement if she continues to endure. Every day, she extinguishes fires from all sides: the employees under her, her co-manager, her clients, her boss.

It is asphyxiating. She finally escapes. But not without consequences.

^bSince encountering the Death tarot card in action (i.e., a prediction that came true), I learned to appreciate death as transformation.

"Woman is a pain that never goes away," Leslie Jamison quotes Greek playwright Menander in her 2014 essay "Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain." Or, put simply, "being a woman requires being in pain."

As I write this, I am in the first days of my monthly cycle. While I have learned to expect and manage it after twenty years, discomfort is ever-present.

Do you have sisters? Have they told you about their red days?⁵ Nevertheless, I know you write about films. You would know how, compared to a text, an audiovisual medium such as film renders pain more sensuously. I invoke again Jamison, who catalogs different representations of pain: "hurt, suffering, ache, trauma, angst, wounds, damage."

Trauma and devastating events are deeply embedded in *Sound of Falling*. A collage of four seemingly separate family stories, the film is situated in and connected by a farmhouse in an unnamed German region.⁶ The omniscient house bears witness to the manifold manifestations of trauma encountered and experienced by its occupants. Like a living body, it gets wounded. Pain permeates. It passes to the next inhabitants, even if they are unrelated by blood.

In *Luisa*, these disasters happen onscreen and offscreen to the titular character. We see

⁴ Blind in the sense that Alyssandra only gave us the loglines. No title, director, year, etc.

In the order that I watched them, the films I picked are: *Sound of Falling* (*In die Sonne schauen*,^d 2026), *Luisa* (2025), and *I Understand Your Displeasure* (*Ich verstehe Ihren Unmut*, 2026).

⁵ I really hope I'm not the first one!

⁶ Although unmentioned in the movie, the script indicates that it takes place in the Altmark region, an "old German cultural landscape" as promoted online.



Something ends for something new to begin.

Death surrounds all four generations in *Sound of Falling*. In one scene, Alma, the youngest of the first family, recreates a post-mortem photograph of the child that she was named after. She wears the same black dress and poses on the same chair.

"Maybe her spirit passed into you," one of Alma's sisters says.

"Perhaps you're not yourself but her," another sister adds.

The eldest, Lia, informs them that the Alma in the photo died when she was seven, the present age of the living Alma. She never woke up.

Later, we see the sisters asleep, except for one. Alma gets up and lies beside Lia.

"What did you mean by she just didn't wake up?"

"Sleep, Alma." Lia turns her back.

Alma cannot.

Something ends for something new to begin.

^c Other themes in my mindmap: trauma (inter and transgenerational), predatory men, depression, autonomy, survival, shame,

how the bus driver takes Luisa to a secluded spot in a forest and asks her to sit on his lap. We don't see him after, but we hear his noises. We see how a caretaker enters Luisa's room in the night.⁷ We don't see him after, but we see how Luisa hchanges. We process the trauma alongside Luisa.

A system⁸ allows this to happen. Women are taken advantage of in multiple ways—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially.

Each heavyweight film tries to land gently at their feet: in one case, not landing, but flying.⁹ In another, a surface-level resolution.¹⁰ And then there's that tiny spark

secrets, sacrifice, systemic violence.

^d The direct English translation of the title is "Looking into the sun."

⁷ The movie is set in an assisted living facility for adults with disabilities.

⁸ Patriarchy, if it must be spelled out.

⁹ *Sound of Falling* ends in a fantastical imagery: fierce winds whipping across the wheat-laden harvest, levitating two characters while the others take cover.

¹⁰ Luisa finally gains the courage to name her perpetrator to the authorities, but we later learn that the male facility director already received a report of sexual abuse by the same caretaker years prior.



flaring against a formidable structure.¹¹

There is discomfort, but I invite you to sit with it, with them.

Let me know how it goes.

Until we meet again,
Lk

¹¹ Heike quits her job as a manager of a cleaning company in *I Understand Your Displeasure* and invites some former colleagues to start a cooperative. She faces reality during the application process. A processing officer dissuades her choice due to her age, suggesting that she could continue working for a few years to receive her pension instead of starting a business.



I once heard from an activist friend that systemic change might not happen during our lifetimes but we must continue to try regardless. Continue to fail forward. Continue to hope in the face of heartbreak.^e

^e Derived from an essay by queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz, dearly loved by another friend who reminds me to not be afraid of heartbreak, of failing, of pain.

Where There's Smoke

Mick Gaw

Fragments of data in the form of images, smells, sounds, or words constantly stream into our hippocampus for processing and storage. The average person does little to interrogate these unconscious processes, but memory formation also has integral social functions. When testimonies or lived experiences are mobilized as collective touchstones—as building blocks of larger narratives—their reconstruction becomes explicit. Whether through the erection of a monument, the excavation of a site, or the pained analysis of a canonical text, keeping a memory alive requires immense exertion. This toil is distributed across all levels of society.

In schools, factories, public squares, and works of art, one may contest the foundations of a social memory. Two films from this year's KinoFest program—a German feature and a Filipino documentary—contend with the exhaustive efforts behind memory work. Inspired by true accounts, Markus Schleinzner's *Rose* (2026) is set in a small 17th century Protestant village. An unknown soldier (Sandra Hüller), bearing a bullet wound on her cheek and a claim to inherit a large estate, returns from war.



On the other hand, Joanne Cesario's documentary *Invisible Labor* (2024) shines light on the unsung legacy of the late archivist Cleto Piedad. Cesario documents practice and practitioner. The tapes Piedad recorded for the IBON foundation, a non-profit

research foundation, and the anecdotes of his loved ones carry Cleto's memory forward.

Though both films dwell on the past, *Rose* takes us back four centuries and halfway around the world. It opens on a lifeless landscape. Trails of smoke escape from the trodden and scorched grassland, like misty stems being uprooted from the soil. The viewer hovers over the aftermath of a battle or pillage. Rendered in black and white and accompanied by the gentle crackle of burning shrubbery, this establishing shot of *Rose* produces images expected at the end of a film rather than its beginning, gesturing towards a grave trauma.¹

German cinema is no stranger to traumatic memories and their imagistic representations. Since the end of the Second World War, cultural institutions in both East and West Germany reckoned with the moral disgrace of the Holocaust. In his 2014 book "German Cinema—Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory Since 1945," film scholar Thomas Elsaesser introduces *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Roughly translated as "mastering the past," a post-Nazi German national identity was built around confronting its genocidal legacy. Whether this was reconciled through monuments or Holocaust films, Elsaesser observed that this cultural fixation "makes the past into something undead², a threat or at any rate, a force or agent that has to be wrestled down."



¹ Kimi (K), my sister, who watched the films with me: "The weird pagan masks in the beginning look like the entrance to a sort of mythical afterlife, even."

² K: "To me, the past is less undead and more like a slave the master whips."

Rose also presents the traumatic past as a living, violent construction open for the taking. The audience is left with a literal field of possibility through the scarred, vast landscape, bereft of structure, precedent, and expectation. Though the film is set in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, little reference is made to the nature and reason of the conflict. Schleinker spares viewers from dramatized recreations of kinetic carnage. Perhaps he recognized the limitations of onscreen brutal medieval warfare. Anything too gritty or graphic may have verged on fetishistic.

This decontextualized opening presents an axiom: history is never made in the past. To assert one's existence is to perform. Our cross-dressing protagonist, Rose, does just that. She masquerades as a dead compatriot, laboriously putting up a front, trudging through the revitalization of the inherited farm, and evading prying eyes. A new battle emerges atop the smoking embers of another.

Similarly, the opening of Cesario's short places viewers in the wake of great upheaval. A small monitor plays footage from the EDSA Revolution. As the camera zooms in, the plastic borders of the television set are pushed out of frame, sharpening the overexposed pixels. Hundreds under the banner of the Kilusang Mayo Uno flag gather around a convoy, taking place in a procession. A red lorry draped in flags carries two coffins, presumably of workers martyred by the dictatorship. Unlike the restrained, atmospheric sound design in *Rose*, *Invisible Labor*'s images are accompanied by lo-fi, swelling guitar riffs of left-wing Filipino rock band The General Strike.



The overhead shot of the blurry masses, marching shoulder to shoulder with the strikers and activists, cuts to cameras on the ground. A sea of bobbing heads push forward. Fists thrust up to the sky. When we find ourselves being sucked into their world, Cesario pulls us out with a hard cut. Suddenly, a youthful face fills the screen. A woman watches the footage intently as her glasses reflect the vibrant CRT. If the opening sequence in *Rose* set the scene for a history ready to be written, then *Invisible Labor* presents viewers with the fruits of memory work yielded generations later.

The woman is Cleto's daughter, Cay Piedad. Now a researcher at the same foundation her father worked in, Cay guides our excavation of Cleto's legacy. Cesario's film is not simply about archiving and artifacts. Inscribed in the rewinded recordings of EDSA broadcasts, in the gap between the tape's insertion and the first flicker of light on the screen, are traces of Cleto's labor. Alongside Cay, viewers share a temporal experience with the dead archivist, inhabiting the solitary practice of reviewing and rewinding footage nearly lost from history.

The IBON Foundation has passed on the duty to embalm knowledge onto her and current archivists. Yet the battle over the control of historical memory is far from settled. In the single cut that transitions from footage to viewer, a dialectic emerges. The footage of the EDSA protests is at once a triumphant recollection of the past and a lamentation of the contemporary state of national affairs. The archive enshrines images of resistance, but the lessons recorded on these tapes alone couldn't break the entrenched system of gangster capitalism. The videotaped expressions of rage dodge identification as isolated artifacts of another epoch and continue struggling today against the same political dynasties, oligarch cronies, and goons.

Towards the film's conclusion, *Invisible Labor* includes extracts from recent protests. The lineage of political struggle and memory work are brought to the present, inextricably linked to one another. As long as the people do not resign to stagnation, the momentum of history is pushed by these dual forces. In Schleinker's film, Rose's crusade to rewrite her story rages all the way until her final moments. Before her gender is exposed, Rose

establishes themselves as a paragon of the community. Villagers—men in particular—admire the way Rose tirelessly transforms her ramshackle property into thriving farmland and helps fend off bear attacks. Until her deceit was exposed, the people accepted her as another trusted comrade.



As she prepares for her execution, a narrator describes our protagonist's botched beheading instead of showing it. Authorities maim and burn her body to ensure that Rose and her lie will "remain in no one's memory."

Though stripped of her lands, reputation, and pistol, she attempts to reclaim herself amid a patriarchal narrative. The camera is affixed at the back of Rose's head, against the stone wall of her cell. With her back slightly hunched, she works away at her final testament. She recounts the events on her own terms but also indulges the fantasy of what could have been. Even in the face of imminent execution, Rose writes in hopes that the future will hear her. In a sense, Rose's fiction represents those stripped of voice: victims who laid the foundations for the victors' grand narratives.

In an interview with IndieWire, Schleinker reveals that the film's screenplay is the "[...] culmination of centuries of real women who adopted male identity to claim autonomy or to survive." Reinforcing that idea, Rose's off-screen narrator leaves viewers with the line "We alone imagined and invented ourselves," while the camera imparts one last close up. Against an empty backdrop, reminiscent of a museum portrait or a mugshot, we stare into Rose's eyes one last time. While Rose's prosecutors blatantly lean

against legalities and virtues to entrench a conservative political legacy, conversely, Rose embraces reinvention and deceit to carve her own space.³

In many respects, *Rose* and *Invisible Labor* exist worlds apart. Their people, places, and memories (even their frames) are incomparable. Yet Schleinker and Cesario both call upon viewers to reassess their relationships to the past and how that, in turn, may inform their present actions. Both films are attuned to the material conditions in which memories are allowed to exist or perish. Watching both films side by side reveals a common consensus: that history is a work-in-progress. It is not a set of facts passively recorded, but a laborious assertion of narratives that only the future may judge or forget.



³K: "Creativity has always been essential to queer existence: trousers, binders, packers, polari, drag, techno, SOPHIE, Schoenbrun, and all of Marsha's children."

Author Bios

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