



NERVOUS TRANSLATION Philippines

Category : Drama
Length : 75'
Language : Tagalog
Shooting format : VHS / Hi-8 (shooting), HD (final)
Shooting location : Marikina City, Metro Manila (Philippines)
Shooting dates : Late 2015, early 2016
Expected date of completion : Mid 2016
Stage of production : Development stage

Budget : 520 000 €
Financing in place : 19 000 €
Source of financing : Hubert Bals Fund, The Global Film Initiative
Workshops or markets attended : Venice's Biennale College Cinema, Cinemart, IFP No Borders
Current situation : Seeking for European coproducer, international sales agent



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John TORRES – PRODUCER (Películas Los Otros)



John Torres has made four feature films and over a dozen shorts in the past ten years — all written, directed, edited, and produced by himself. His debut feature, *Todo Todo Teros* (2006), won the Dragons & Tigers Award at Vancouver, NETPAC and FIPRESCI critics' awards in Singapore, and Jury Special Mention at the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival. His second feature, *Years When I was a Child Outside* (2008), won Jury Special Mention at Bangkok and Grand Jury Prize at Cinemanila International Film Festival and screened in competition in Rotterdam and as a multi-channel work in Berlin Forum Expanded. His latest, *Lukas The Strange* (2013), premiered at Rotterdam and won Special Mention at Festival de Cine Lima Independiente. To date, three retrospectives of his films have been shown: Seoul International New Media Festival in 2012, Vienna International Film Festival in 2013, and Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente de Cosquín in Argentina in 2014.

Shireen SENO – DIRECTOR

Shireen Seno is a lens-based artist whose work addresses ideas of memory, history, and image-making, often in relation to nature and home. She has had two solo exhibitions in Manila and received international recognition for her Super-8 feature film *Big Boy* (2012). Her photo zine *Trunks*, published during a residency at Objectifs Centre for Photography & Filmmaking in Singapore, has been exhibited at MoMA PS1, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and the Tokyo Art Book Fair. Her next film project, *Nervous Translation*, was one of 15 projects of the Venice's Biennale College - Cinema in 2013, a recipient of a Script & Project Development grant from the Hubert Bals Fund, and invited to IFP's No Borders International Co-Production Market and CineMart 2014, where it received a grant from The Global Film Initiative. She recently co-curated The Kalampag Tracking Agency, a program of experimental film and video from the Philippines over the past 25 years.



SYNOPSIS

Late 1988, Post-Marcos Philippines. Eight-year old Yael is a nice girl but nervous to a fault. She has certain obsessive-compulsive tendencies such as cleaning the bottom of her shoes when she gets home from school. Mother assembles shoes at the local shoe factory so she is not around so long as the sun is still out. Father works in an oil refinery in Saudi Arabia.

One day, Yael's long lost relatives come to visit from Japan. They bring many things including VHS tapes and a pumping device for her grandparents to measure the pressure of their blood, which reminds Yael of her father. Above all, Yael's relatives bring the chance for her to connect with others, especially her cousins, but everything turns out awkwardly. While her aunts and uncles drink and sing their lungs out to cheesy karaoke videos, Yael watches a silly Japanese TV advertisement for a pen, which she believes can 'translate' the thoughts and feelings of a person like herself, hindered by nervousness. She becomes obsessed with finding this pen and realizes she will need money to get anywhere.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT (extract)

« [...] *Nervous Translation* is based on my experiences growing up a shy child of the Filipino diaspora, unsure of myself, wanting to belong, and longing for a way to express that. It is the story of eight year-old Yael, who is sweet but shy to a fault. Left to her own devices, Yael plays 'House' with her miniature cooking toys. This routine will be shot very intimately, creating a quiet sense of awe and wonder. Mother is so afraid of aging that she spends evenings with her daughter lying down with her head in Yael's lap. [...] In this way, each character exhibits their own peculiar vulnerability but both are portrayed in a very deadpan, unemotional, matter-of-fact way. [...]

Set in 1988, *Nervous Translation* seeks to recapture an important period in Philippine history and draw connections to the present day through issues that are still very familiar to us: the complexity of the family unit in light of migration, an obsession with consumer electronics and personal technology, and the sheer power of nature to remind us of our limits and about what really matters.»

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