

DIVINE FACTORY



A Film by Joseph MANGAT

**PHILIPPINES – USA – TAIWAN | 2022 | Observational | Color | 120'
Filipino | DCP | 16:9 / 24fps / Dolby 5.1**

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SYNOPSIS



Divine Factory takes us into a world of the outcast of the Filipino society who experience financial and religious struggles showing the contradictions of our contemporary world.

DIVINE FACTORY is about a city factory in Metro Manila. Built as a labyrinth, with multiple levels and buildings, the TML (Three Mighty Lords) factory offers unsafe handcraft jobs on a uber-like system with self-employed workers, the outcast and left behinds of the Filipino society. There, while filling their lungs with chemicals and killing their eyes on miniature tasks, among others Chabi and Maja, a lesbian couple with an 8-year old son trying to finance their newly bought house, Chelsea and Rhea, two joyful ladyboys who became miniature painters after the government deemed them unlawful as online sex employees, are making religious figurines that will soon be bought, blessed and worshiped by Christians all over the world.

JOSEPH MANGAT

Director, Screenwriter, Editor



Filmography

DIVINE FACTORY

2022, Feature Film

PATAYAN (KILLINGS)

2018, Narrative Short

EXORCISM

2013, Narrative Short

EVERY DEATH HAS A STORY

2012, Narrative Short

SHOES AKA KIDS THESE DAYS

2011, Narrative Short

Biography

Joseph Mangat is a Filipino filmmaker that shuttles back and forth from New York and Manila. He has written, directed and edited several short films that garnered awards and screened at various festivals. He was the recipient of the Uniondocs and Rockefeller Editing fellowship and was on the Creative Capital 2014 On Our Radar List. Mentored by professor and filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin, former Jean-luc Godard collaborator, at the University of California, San Diego, he holds an MA in TV, Film and New Media from San Diego State University where he graduated with honors, receiving the Student Emmy Award, Kathleen Kennedy Fellowship, Fotekem Scholarship and Focal Press Best Student Film Award. He worked for numerous non-profit groups including Pacarts as a film programmer and film instructor, and at the Tribeca Film Institute producing and directing video content for their programs and events. A few years ago, he decided to explore his Filipino roots. His latest short film, Patayan (Killings), is a brutal glimpse at the ongoing drug war in the Philippines. DIVINE FACTORY is his first feature length film.

JOSEPH MANGAT

Filmography

DIVINE FACTORY

2022, Feature Length Film

PATAYAN (KILLINGS)

2018, Fiction, Short, 10 minutes, DCP 4K

Writer, Director, Editor

A remake of Alan Clarke's *Elephant*, *Patayan* swaps the sectarian murders in Belfast during the 80's with the extra judicial killings currently occurring in Manila. A bleak look into the brutality of the murders and the staggering amount deaths being carried out by police and vigilantes on the supposed mandate from Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

2018 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival

2018 San Diego Film Festival

2018 Athens International Film and Video Festival

2018 Cinematografica Film Festival

EXORCISM: A SHORT FILM

2013, Fiction, Short, 15 minutes, 35mm film

Director, Editor

Set in 1912, a troubled young man contends with life after a failed suicide attempt. Adapted from the one-act play by four time Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Eugene O'Neill.

2013 "Best Student Production" by National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences

2013 Grantee of FotoKem Student Filmmaking Award

2013 Excellence in Filmmaking award by FocalPress

2014 Big Muddy Film Festival

2014 Ohio International Film Festival

JOSEPH MANGAT

Filmography

EVERY DEATH HAS A STORY

2012, Fiction, Short, 12 minutes 35", English

EXHIBITION FORMAT: HDCAM SR/Color/5.1 Dolby mix

ORIGINAL FORMAT: HD with Panasonic AG-AF 100

Writer, Director, Editor

A distraught mother is confronted with cleaning up a mysterious and gruesome death.

2013 Golden Reel Best Short Film Nominee at Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival

2013 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival

2013 Athens International Film Festival

2013 San Diego Asian Film Festival

2013 Grantee of Kathleen Kennedy Award

2015 - Vidsee (Online Short Film Platform)

SHOES AKA KIDS THESE DAYS

2011, Fiction, Short, 8 minutes 20", English & Tagalog w English Subt.

EXHIBITION FORMAT: HDCAM SR / Color / 5.1 Dolby Mix.

ORIGINAL FORMAT: HD with Canon 7D

Writer, Director, Editor

An homage to Francois Truffaut's 400 Blows, a teenage girl disobeys her mother and heads into the city to steal a pair of shoes.

2011 San Diego Asian Film Festival

2011 "Best Short" nominee at San Diego Asian Film Festival

2012 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival - Shoes

2012 The Standard Print (online)

In the casting and retouching room

BING and BUNSO



The walls, floors, and workspaces are covered with layers upon layers of hardened resin. In an intoxicated atmosphere and a messy workshop, there are **BING** and **BUNSO** — two lesbian tomboys. They have been working for some time at the factory. They are used to work and joke about their female conquest, playfully teasing each other their sex life. Bing, the older, is more earnest, detailing her preference for working upstairs in the showroom versus the dungeon-like space of the casters.

BING & TESS



We also find **BING** at her workstation with her girlfriend **TESS**, and Tess's young son. The kid is having breakfast. He looks on as Bing and Tess have a tender moment reciting the lines of a break up song. He isn't saying much, just observing his mum and her lover.

In the basement: the painters' area

SALVI



On a table, there are hundreds of unfinished miniatures of Saint Joseph, sleeping on his bag. **SALVI**, a middle-aged woman is airbrushing them. She recounts the flood that washed away all her supplies, her tools and all her finished items. That forced her to turn to TML for a loan despite knowing she'll be in debt for quite some time. She recalls when the sales of the *Sleeping Saint Joseph* spiked. It was when Pope Francis visited the Philippines and endorsed the item's ability to grant wishes.

CHABI & MAJA



Working on a number of life size Santa Clauses are **CHABI** and **MAJA**, a lesbian couple. While painting Santa, they recall when they had their own personal Sleeping Saint Joseph statue blessed at Antipolo Church and how soon after they started receiving so many new orders. Thanks to those sleeping Josephs they eventually bought a house. Now, Maja has taken the habit to pray to every statue she makes.

CHELSEA and RHEA



CHELSEA and **RHEA**, two transgender painters finishing meticulously a handful of mid-size Sleeping Saint Josephs. The two are long-time friends and coworkers. They complain about the recent diminishing orders of Sleeping Saint Josephs. They recall their prior work as “cam girls” where they would entertain foreigners online with sexy talks or more. It was easier work and better pay. But all had to stop after the government banned it as a form of cyber crime.

VIRGO & MARIET



VIRGO & MARIET are long time worker of TML. They believe that the power of the Sleeping Saint Joseph statue changed their life. Virgo prayed to the statue just like the Pope, and not long after, his prayers were answered. He started making a better living with his statues. At that time the belief of many Filipinos in the Sleeping Joseph’s power became the reason why Virgo and the workers of TML started benefiting from the influx of orders for the statue.

The Painting Shop Seller

NORBERT



NORBERT holds the paint shop inside the TML, a small room from where the workers buy their painting.

As he leaves the building and walks through the corridors and levels informing everybody on his way about his departure and the closing of his shop, the incredibly interlaced levels and workshop become a real labyrinth.

Norbert doesn't reach any street, while walking he finally reaches the entrance door of the small shack. As most of the workers, Norbert resides on the TML premises. His home is a tiny bedroom located inside the factory space, at the back of the main buildings. He tidies his tiny space that barely fits his twin bed.

His cramping room includes the inevitable Sleeping Saint Joseph miniature, and a mug commemorating the 2015 Papal visit to Manila.

The Three Mighty Lords Factory's Manager

DANIEL "Boy"



Back at the showroom Daniel explains in detail the power of the Sleeping Saint Joseph and the effects it had on the workers of the factory.

He recalls the time prior to the Pope's visit when the factory was struggling financially. The workers were getting paid just enough to stay afloat. Many of the workers had bad habits, drinking away most of their earnings which broke many families apart.

With the influx of orders for the Sleeping Saint Josephs, not only did the boom in business help the workers financially, but it also helped them spiritually. In his opinion, money and the constant work gave them a sense of purpose, and allowed them to save up.

Soon they started buying lavish items that they could not afford before, such as clothes, shoes, flat screen TVs, and household appliances. This new revenue reignited their faith. Since then on Sunday the workers spend their time at church, rather than a bar.

DIRECTOR'S Statement



As a Filipino, Catholicism is deeply rooted in our culture—its doctrines are part of law, its rituals are part of people’s daily routine and its images can be found everywhere. Depictions of Jesus and the Virgin Mary are stamped across cars, houses and store fronts. Even the most mundane objects from blankets to air fresheners are marked with Jesus’s image. Although these items hold meaning to the people who purchase them they are not considered sacred to the Catholic Church. But what makes these objects different from crucifixes, rosaries, saint statues and other objects made for worship? What makes these objects sacred? Aren’t they manufactured and distributed as well? I was curious to know where these items come from and importantly how do they transform into something sacred?

These are the questions that became the impetus for Divine Factory.

As a child being raised Catholic and predominantly attending Catholic school, I grew accustomed to its rituals and beliefs. Being inundated by the Church both in school and in everyday life, I began to question its effect. Early on as a teen, I noticed how many of its values and beliefs not aligning with mine. I first started to question the necessity for such lavish and expensive decor that adorned the churches, particularly since many of its congregation were poor and struggling.

DIRECTOR'S Statement

What was more interesting is how the worshippers relished in each big purchase of the church, particularly when it bought a new Saint statue they would celebrate during its benediction with fanfare. Although I understood that their faith is unwavering and that the image represented a higher significance, I still couldn't help to wonder the cost of the item, where it was manufactured and all the practical things the money could have provided.



Fast forward to adulthood, already a filmmaker, the notion still fascinated me. I was compelled to explore on film the relationship the Catholic Church has with money and to a certain extent with commercialism. The hope was to bring forth the hypocrisies I noticed early on and in some way deconstruct the notion of the sacred in a way that doesn't question one's faith or belief, but merely ask the same questions I mulled over as a teen. I began to explore possible angles on how to go about making this complex self-imposed task. At one point, I toyed with the idea of dealing with the topic as a genre based narrative film and in my search for location led me to TML, a small factory, located in a province outside of Manila. They were making cheap resin-based statues including different sized the Virgin Marys, giant busts of the head of Jesus and every other saints imaginable, in all shapes and colors.

DIRECTOR'S Statement

As I continued to visit the factory, one particular item caught my attention, a statue of the Sleeping Saint Joseph. The item was innocuous enough but what drew me to it was the massive quantity they were manufacturing. Every worker in the place was making it, all by hand and at such a fast rate. One worker proceeded to tell me the reason why the item was so popular, learning first of the Pope's visit and mention of the item. The worker even went as far as calling the Pope's story as an endorsement, a commercial for the Sleeping Saint Joseph and for the factory.



Although the factory and the Sleeping Saint Joseph encapsulated my idea perfectly, I was still steadfast in making a narrative film. It wasn't until I was introduced to the many LGBTQ factory workers that I wanted to pivot the film into a documentary feature. Spending more time with the workers, I began to understand their struggles with money, religion and how working at the factory often blurred those lines. It was especially confounding amongst the LGBTQ workers who were devout Catholics even though their values do not match with the values of the Church. What was even more fascinating is how they took their frustration and struggles in stride. Their optimism, tireless outlook, and contradictory yet dutiful stance with society and church was the exact complexity I was attempting to manufacture into a narrative.

DIRECTOR'S Statement

The film take an unconventional approach to its subject of workers making religious goods and their complex relationship with money, religion and sexuality. The thematic complexity is also represented in its form. The film experiments with structure, blending different modes of documentary filmmaking— observational, participatory and reflexive modes—interviews will transform into observations and in-turn change into moments of self-reflexivity —with the hope of creating a complete and honest portrait of the workers lives. The merging of structure allows for the the film to stay nimble and flexible particularly in dealing with varied characters and personalities.



Particularly, since many of the subjects are quite reserve in-front of the camera but otherwise extremely spirited when interacting with one another, I want to allow them multiple ways to let their genuine disposition to shine through and for their situation to unfold truthfully without hindrance. The self-reflexive moments, especially, where the workers address the camera is also quite informative, offering another layered perspective on their situation, one that also questions the notion of documentary as a truthful method of storytelling. With the complicated visual structure I intend to simplify and pare the film down visually.

DIRECTOR'S Statement



To do this I mainly used long takes and wide shots and avoid any complex unnecessary edits. I also planned to use only one camera remaining mostly static with precise framing. My goal is to provide as close to a similar experience to that of the workers, further creating an honest portrayal of their everyday reality. Through this contemplative and unobtrusive visual approach my desire is to immerse the audience in both the space and environment, absorbing every inch of the workers environment—the glorious, decaying walls, the broken, unfinished and limbless saints that are scattered throughout the factory. With the hope of understanding the significance of the cheap yet intricate nature of the products that they spend countless hours manufacturing.

CREDITS

DIRECTOR	JOSEPH MANGAT
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