

# UNREAL FOREST

a film by Jakrawal Nilthamrong



extravirgin



VIOLÉ IMAGES PRODUCTIONS



HUBERT BALS  
FUND



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70 minutes, Digibeta, Colour, 2010  
In Nyanja, English and Thai with English subtitles

An **Extra Virgin** production, commissioned by the **International Film Festival Rotterdam**  
and co-produced by **Vilole Images Productions**

With supports from Numthong Gallery and the Hubert Bals Fund

## extravirgin

International Sales (World except Benelux and Africa): **Extra Virgin**

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## Synopsis

*Deep in the middle of an African forest, Tamaya, a shaman who can connect to the dark side, is paddling on a canoe across a big river, heading towards an unknown land. His body is covered in white powder – the one used in holy rites. At the shore, Lunggeaw, a 60-year-old man is waiting for him. They head towards a small village where Lunggeaw's son is lying sick from a mysterious illness.*

*Tamaya promises the old man to find a way to cure his son. He covers the white magic powder on the sick boy's body, and takes him into the woods.*

*A ritual is performed in the middle of the forest to evoke the powerful spirits. But Tamaya finds out he is not able to cure the boy from the fatal illness. He tells Lunggeaw the boy has death awaiting him, but that the spirits in the woods reveals that the boy's soul belongs to a great waterfall, and so they need to transport him there so his spirit could return to see his father again in a different form.*

The above is a story within a documentary-style film which shows Zambian independent filmmakers working hard to finish a film under severe limitations in terms of filmmaking resources as well as their own cinematic expertise. They have to make this film from the story written by Thai filmmakers – a process set up by Dutch project initiators, looking to discover new cinematic gems from Africa.

Through the process of the film-making, the ancient folklores and Zambian filmmakers' struggles are taking the viewers on a journey, tracing back to the historical roots connecting Africa and Asia in a never-before imagined way.



## Cast

Tamaya  
Lungwe  
Sick Child  
Villager

CHANODA NGWIRA FRACKSON  
FELIX KALIMA  
MAURICE MWELWA  
MWIINDE MWIINGA  
JULIET CHANDA  
JACKSON MWALA  
RUTH MUSHOTA  
ADESY SUNTWE  
JUAN WATSON MUTUTA  
SANDY  
INONGE LAMAS

As Director  
As Casting Director 1  
As Casting Director 2

## Production Team

Producer  
Associate Producer  
Production Consultant  
Writer / Director / Editor  
Co-Writer / Co-Director  
Production Manager  
Director of Photography  
Assistant Director  
Assistant Camera  
Sound Re-recording Mixer  
Boom Operator  
Best Boy  
Make-up Artist

Location Manager

Catering

Driver  
Office Coordinators

PIMPAKA TOWIRA  
MAI MAKSAWAN  
CATHRINE MUSOLA KASEKETI  
JAKRAWAL NILTHAMRONG  
JUAN WATSON MUTUTA  
PAUL LUANGA JR  
CHATCHAI CHAIYONT  
MAKUNKU CHIPOYA  
JOSEPH MUWOWO  
AKRITCHALERM KALAYANAMITR  
JAPHETI CHULU  
JACKSON MWENYA  
LOREEN MUFAWELI  
MWIINDE MWIINGA  
JULIET CHANDA  
PAUL LUANGA JR  
GREENWOOD BESA  
MWIINDE MWIINGA  
JULIET CHANDA  
MERCY MWALE  
MARY MWALE  
MRS. JAPHET MWALE  
MELE NDHOVU  
MUHAHO INYAMBO  
MELE NDHOVU  
PAILIN VIRIYAVATHANA  
THANET RATANAKUL

## Director's Statement

At the beginning of 2009, I was invited to participate in the Forget Africa project commissioned by the International Film Festival Rotterdam with UNREAL FOREST. The organizers invited 12 filmmakers from all over the world to travel to Africa and make a film there. The main objective of the project is for the Festival to “discover” new talented filmmakers from countries in Africa and show them to the (western) world at the 2010 festival's edition.

Of the 12 films, mine is the only feature-length one, due to the positive feedback during the brainstorming process in which all parties involved agreed to expand the work into a feature. All the other films produced are shorts.

I traveled to Zambia with my team to make this film in September 2009, an experience which brought me in touch with an incredible viewpoint of people from such a faraway continent.

Africa feels so distant for most Asians, me included. I found however that all these poverty, disorder and lack of hygiene that are parts of everyday life in Zambia are waiting to be fixed using know-hows from the West.



We used to believe that the age of colonization is already behind us. On the one hand that seemingly looks to be the case. But the leading force from the west of new cultural imperialism is undeniably becoming more and more prevalent all over the place. Even though for Thais, and me being one, the sense of colony may not be felt so clearly like the nearby countries with long colonized past, we still could not wholly say we have never experienced it.

How could we be so sure that the western force has never really penetrated the Thai sovereignty? The reason for our long-claimed pride of never being colonized. Officially.

When historical facts still fail to define an exact geographical border – as evident in the endless conflict over the Preah Vihear today still, they are also not able to define our exact identities too.

I intend for this film to bring about the new outlook in modern colonization, where new technology and modern communications are employed, replacing marine forces from the past. I hope also this exploration of the relationship of the two continents, through comparable ancient folklores, will in turn help us to look back at our own cultures facing the complexity of the ongoing cultural hegemony.





## Director's Profile

Jakrawal Nilthamrong graduated in Bangkok from Silpakorn University's faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts in 2000. His background as an art student brought him to study filmmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA. There, he discovered possibilities of making narrative in unconventional way. Jakrawal started experimenting with video and interactive installations. He exhibited art works in both gallery contexts and film festivals since 2002. His early video DRIPPING (2004) won a prize from the 10<sup>th</sup> Thai Short Film and Video Festival in Bangkok and his thesis film PATTERNS OF TRANSCENDENCE (2006), an experimental narrative about reincarnation of a Hindu God, has screened at many international venues including the 36<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

After graduation Jakrawal received the MFA Fellowship 2006 Award from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2007 he was selected to the Artist-in-Resident program at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam among the 25 upcoming young artists from around the world.

Jakrawal's short film A VOYAGE OF FORETELLER, supported by the Rijksakademie, screened at the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany, and the 2007 International Film Festival Rotterdam. A feature-length project of this title is also currently in preparation. His latest short films, ORCHESTRA and MAN AND GRAVITY, screened at Rotterdam in 2009 – the latter in the Tiger Awards Competition for Short Films.

Jakrawal's works have also participated at a number of international film festivals including Clermont-Ferrand (France), 25 FPS (Croatia), Amsterdam Short (Netherlands), Tampere (Finland), Dublin (Ireland), Video Art Biennial (Israel) and Sydney (Australia).

UNREAL FOREST is his first feature-length film.

## Filmography

- 2010 - **Vanishing Point** (Feature Film in Production 2010)  
Winner Hubert Bals Fund : Script Development Spring 2009
- 2009 - **Unreal Forest : FORGET AFRICA** (Experimental Documentary Film in Production 2009)  
Commissioned by International Film Festival Rotterdam
  - **Man and Gravity : Plateau** (Japan), 2009, HDV Color (22 Min)
- 2008 - **Man and Gravity** (Thailand), 2008, HDV Color (10 Min)
  - **Orchestra**, Semi-Documentary, DV Color (22 Min)
- 2007 - **Parallel Journey**, 2 Channel Color Video Installation (10 Min)
  - **Unified Field**, S16mm film transferred to HD Video (4Min)
  - **Man with A Video Camera**, B&W Video (9 Min)
  - **pARadoXiSM**, 16mm film (4 Min)
  - **A Voyage of Foreteller**, HD Video (8 Min)
- 2006 - **Patterns of Transcendence**, 16mm film transferred to DV (49 Min)
  - **Auditions for a Revolution**, (Cinematographer) Directed by Irina Botea
- 2005 - **Enemy**, B&W Video (12 Min)
  - **Tsunami**, 4 Channel Color Video Installation (Loop)
  - **CTA – Chicago Transit Authority**, Video Installation (Loop)
- 2004 - **Dripping**, 2 Channel Color Video (7 Min)

## Screenings

- 2009
  - 7th World Film Festival of Bangkok, Thailand
  - 13th Thai Short Film & Video Festival, Bangkok, Thailand
  - AOSTA Film Festival, Italy
  - L'Alternativa, Festival de Cinema Independent de Barcelona
  - Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival
  - Underdox Festival, Cinematheque of Munich (Filmmuseum), Germany
  - 5th 25 FPS International Film Festival, Zagreb, Croatia (International Competition)
  - Hamburg International Short Film Festival (International Competition)
  - IndieLisboa, Portugal (Emerging Cinema)
  - Akiyoshidai International Art Village, Yamaguchi, Japan
  - Tampere International Short Film Festival, Finland (International Competition)
  - Asian Hot Shots, Berlin, Germany
  - Fringe Festival, Ratchaburi, Thailand
  - 38th International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands (Tiger Short Competition)
- 2008
  - Open Ateliers, the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, the Netherlands
  - The 4th International Video Art Biennial, Israel
  - BEFF5 Bangkok Experimental Film Festival, Thailand
  - 12th Thai Short Film & Video Festival, Bangkok, Thailand
  - Life Boat # 2551 at Gallery 4a the Asia-Australia Art Centre Sydney, Australia
  - Invisible Hands, at Jim Thompson Art Center Bangkok, Thailand
  - 17th Brisbane International Film Festival, Australia
  - Split Film Festival, Croatia
  - Amsterdam Shorts Int'l Film Festival, the Netherlands (Teaser #2: Kunst Kino)
  - International Contemporary Culture Centre of Donostia / San Sebastian, Tabacalera, Spain
  - The Aerials of Sublime Transscapes at Lokaal 01 Breda, the Netherlands
  - 30th International Short Film Festival Clermont-Ferrand, France (Lab Competition)
  - BLACK AIR, Interactive Video Installation with Pimpaka Towira, Akaritchalerm Kalayanamitr and Koichi Shimizu, 37th Int'l Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands
  - 37th International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands

- 2007 - Open Ateliers, the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, the Netherlands
- Head Or Tail? : Contemporary Media and Video works from Thailand, Pallas Studio Dublin, Ireland
- 3rd 25 FPS International Film Festival, Croatia (International Competition)
- EXiS2007 Seoul, South Korea (International Competition)
- 11th Thai Short Film & Video Festival, Bangkok Thailand
- Ambient Urban SIBIU FESTIVAL 2007, Romania
- "Director in Focus" Patravadi Theatre, Bangkok Thailand
- 53rd Int'l Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany (International Competition)
- K13 Velp, the Netherlands
- 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands
- 2006 - "Digital Momentum" 10th Thai Short Film & Video Festival, Bangkok Thailand
- Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago Illinois USA
- 2005 - Manipulation, G2 Gallery, Chicago Illinois USA
- MAY-JUNE Group Exhibition, G2 Gallery, Chicago Illinois USA
- Taza Space Public Art Project, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois USA
- "Unfinished" 13th Station, Chicago Illinois USA

## **Awards / Residencies / Workshops**

- 2009 - Second Prize Winner, 13th Thai Short Film & Video Festival, Bangkok, Thailand
- Akiyoshidai International Art Village, Yamaguchi, Japan
- 2008 - Berlinale Talent Campus, Berlin, Germany
- 2007-08 - the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- 2007 - Fellowship 2007 Mr. G.E. Loudon, Great Britain
- Special Mention, EXiS2007 Seoul, South Korea
- Arts Network Asia Travel Grants
- UNESCO Aschberg Bursary for the Promotion of Culture

