

# Early Philippine Cinema Flyers As Queer Archives

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## Research Objectives

The primary goals of this study are to:

### Examine film ephemera:

Analyze a rare collection of early cinema flyers from Malolos, Bulacan, to understand their role in global film circulation and the formation of a local cinematic identity.

### Apply a queer lens:

Investigate how early Philippine audiences might have engaged with these films beyond traditional, heteronormative frameworks.

### Reframe the archive:

Position ephemeral materials like cinema flyers as legitimate historical archives of queer possibility, desire, and resistance.

### Establish an alternative history:

Construct an alternative genealogy of national film history and queer cultural memory in the colonial Philippines.

## Methodology

The study utilizes the following approaches:

### Archival Analysis:

Examining primary historical artifacts, specifically a localized collection of cinema flyers from 1911 to 1913 and beyond.

### Queer Reading and Theory:

Applying queer theory to historical spectatorship to identify themes of camp, parody, alternative desire, and identification within the promotional materials.

### Genre and Thematic Critique:

Categorizing and analyzing the flyers based on cinematic genres—comedy, melodrama, mythic/operatic spectacles, and religious pageantry—to extract their specific queer potentials.

### Historical Contextualization:

Tracing the chronological shift documented in the flyers from the colonial importation of foreign films to the rise of local Philippine cinema and its associated star system.

## Key Findings

The analysis of the cinema flyers reveals several distinct patterns:

### Comedy as a Queer Catalyst:

Comedic figures like Max Linder and Wiffles destabilized norms through vanity, disguise, and gender parody, heavily aligning with camp aesthetics.

### Melodrama as Tragic Identification:

The themes of betrayal, repression, and exclusion inherent in melodrama provided a resonant space for queer subjectivities and identification.

### Spectacle and Performativity:

Mythic, operatic, and religious pageantry featured in the flyers amplified excess and performativity, qualities historically embraced by queer spectators.

### The Shift to Local Production:

The flyers document the gradual transition toward national cinema, showing how local films incorporated circus and stage traditions.

### Emergence of Fan Culture:

Later flyers highlight the rise of the local star system, a process deeply intertwined with queer modes of attachment, fantasy, and performance.

## Discussion

The implications of these findings suggest the following broader cultural impacts:

### Subversion of Colonial Cinema:

Comedic figures like Max Linder and Wiffles destabilized norms through vanity, disguise, and gender parody, heavily aligning with camp aesthetics.

### The Power of Ephemera:

Promotional flyers are not merely marketing tools; they function as critical nodes of transnational film culture and vital records of marginalized spectatorship.

### Reclaiming Queer Spaces:

The study proves that queer spectatorship and identification were not absent in colonial Philippine cinemas, but rather hidden within the theatricality, excess, and tragedy of the films being promoted.

## Key Takeaway

By shifting the focus from the films themselves to the ephemeral materials used to promote them, this research highlights how early cinema served as both a mechanism for global cultural exchange and an intimate, local space for queer resistance and identity formation.

## Statement of Prior and Upcoming Acceptances

This study and/or topic has been accepted for presentation under various abstract calls, as detailed below:

### 2026 (Upcoming Presentations)

- 2026 Philippine Queer Studies Conference April 24–26, 2026 University of the Philippines Diliman – School of Statistics
- “Patok na Patok!”: A Conference on Popular Culture and Media Studies April 29–30, 2026 Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City
- 37th National Conference on Philippine History and Culture November 28–30, 2026 Marikina Polytechnic University, Marikina City

### 2025 (Previous Acceptances)

- Previous National Acceptance: “Pelikula, Pulyetos, at Pamana: Cinema Flyers as Public History and Popular Memory in Early 20th-Century Malolos” 2025 PHA Annual Conference and the 8th International Conference of the International Council for Historical and Cultural Cooperation–Southeast Asia (ICHCC-SEA) September 18–20, 2025, National Library of the Philippines, T.M. Kalaw Street, Ermita, Manila
- Local Conference Acceptance: “Alaala ng Kabataan sa Pulyetos” Pambansang Kumperensiya sa Bulacan 2025, Theme: “Goyo@150: Buhay at Kabayanihan ni Gregorio del Pilar at ang Kabataan sa Kasaysayang Pilipino” November 27–28, 2025, San Rafael Municipal Gym (New Site), San Rafael, Bulacan

- International Recognition: The research has been accepted for presentation at the Annual Philippine Studies Conference at SOAS, University of London:

- 2025 Conference (September 19–21, 2025) Theme: “Repatriating Philippine Heritage: Transnational Perspectives on Objects, Archives, and Memory” (Unable to attend due to delayed visa processing and non-approval)

Support is respectfully requested to cover **airfare, accommodation, local transportation, and daily subsistence** for participation in the:

- 2026 Annual Philippine Studies Conference August 21–23, 2026 Theme: “Archipelagic Tongues: Philippine Languages and Meaning-making, Austronesian Worlds, Global Futures”

### Additional Major Distinction:

- This research on early Philippine cinema flyers has also qualified for nomination to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, underscoring the cultural and historical significance of the collection.

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