

# Press Talk Philippines – Guest of Honour Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025

**March 20, 2025, 10.00 – 11.00 am**

Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels e. V., Berlin Office,  
 Schiffbauerdamm 5, D – 10117 Berlin

## Welcome Remarks

**Juergen Boos**, Director Frankfurter Buchmesse

## Opening Remarks

**Her Excellency Irene Susan B. Natividad**, Ambassador of the Philippines to  
 Germany

## Message

**Honorable Loren Legarda**, Project Visionary and Senator

## Presentation

**Karina Bolasco**, Head of Literary Program and Curator of Books

## Conversation featuring

**Daryll Delgado**, Author of *Remains* (*Überreste*, Kröner Verlag, 2025)

**J. Philip Ignacio**, Author of *Alandal* (*Alandal 1*, Dantes Verlag, 2024)

## Moderated by

**Juergen Boos**, Director Frankfurter Buchmesse

## Moderator Press Talk

**Ines Bachor**, PR Manager Frankfurter Buchmesse

Following the press talk we invite you to a reception with snacks from the  
 Philippines. The participants will be available for interviews and networking.

# Press Talk Philippines – Guest of Honour Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025

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Press release, March 20, 2025

 **FRANKFURTER  
BUCHMESSE**  
 15 – 19 OCTOBER 2025  
 GUEST OF HONOUR PHILIPPINES

## Guest of Honour Philippines Unveils New German Editions, Leipzig Lineup, and First Wave of Authors for Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025

**Berlin, March 20, 2025 – As Guest of Honour at Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025, the Philippines announced its key initiatives, major programs and activities during a press talk in Berlin today.**

These developments include new German editions of Philippine books and the initial lineup of authors set to participate in literary and cultural events at both the National Stand and the Philippine Pavilion, and around Frankfurt during FBM 2025. The country also announced its first-ever national stand and official presence at the Leipziger Buchmesse. Additionally, it will launch its inaugural cultural program, *Oculus*.

At the press talk, the Philippine Guest of Honour delegation was represented by **Karina Bolasco**, curator of books and head of the literary program, alongside acclaimed Filipino authors **Daryll Delgado**, who introduced the new German edition of her climate fiction novel *Remains*, and **J. Philip Ignacio**, presenting his compelling historical graphic novel *Alandal*. The discussion with the authors was moderated by Frankfurter Buchmesse’s Director **Juergen Boos**.

**Senator Loren Legarda**, the driving force behind this initiative, reflected on its deeper meaning, stating, “The Philippines’ presence in Germany is more than a literary offering—it is a call to journey through stories that sail across oceans, voices that weave connections between cultures, and ideas that know no boundaries.”

**Juergen Boos** added, “At a time of global division, literature remains a powerful tool for connection. Our Guest of Honour program enhances the visibility of the guest country’s literature and the expansion of the international network of publishers, authors and cultural institutions, which are important players for the democratic civil society.”

The Philippines Guest of Honour presentation (PHLGoH2025) at Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025 is a collaborative undertaking of the National Book Development Board (NBDB), National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Office of Senator Loren Legarda. Inspired by a line from Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*, the country’s theme *The Imagination peoples the air* encapsulates the profound intersection of Philippine literature, vibrant culture, and rich history. It invites the global audience to experience the nation’s literary heart.

## New German Editions

Through the PHLGoH2025 Translation Subsidy Program for Foreign Publishers, led by the NBDB, **129 Filipino books have been translated into foreign languages.** The program bridges the gap for Filipino writers working in English and regional languages, ensuring their voices reach a global audience.

**Twenty-seven titles have been translated into German-** including the highly anticipated *Aswanglaut* by **Allan Derain**, *Tiempo Muerto* by **Caroline Hau**, *The Collaborators* by **Katrina Tuvera**, *The Singing Detainee and the Librarian with One Book: Essays on Exile* by **Michael Beltran**, *Second Opinion* by **Gideon Lasco**, *Essays on Philippine Cinema* by **Nick Deocampo**, and graphic novels such as *mga walang pangalan pero andyan* by **Archie Oclos**, *Death Be Damned* by **Mike Alcazaren**, **Noel Pascual**, and **AJ Bernardo**, *Depikto* by **Ruvel Abril**, and *Josefina* by **Russell Molina** and **Ace Enriquez**.

More titles are set for release in 2025, including *Kites in the Night* by **Blaise Campo Gacoscos**, *Some People Need Killing* by **Patricia Evangelista**, and *Trese Vol. 3* by **Budjette Tan** and **Kajo Baldesimo**. March 2025 will also see the release of *Remains* by **Daryll Delgado** and *The Age of Umbrage* by **Jessica Zafra**.

More than expanding readership, this initiative strengthens the Philippines' literary presence on the global stage, opening doors to wider recognition and international publishing partnerships. **Kristian Sendon Cordero**, co-head of the translation committee with **Flor Marie Sta. Romana-Cruz**, highlights its significance, "Translation allows our literature to break beyond local languages and enter a global dialogue. Philippine writers contribute to the world, and in turn, our literature is enriched by engaging with other cultures."

Aside from the products of the translation subsidy, the Philippines will also feature existing translated works, as well as German editions that have been translated through the initiative of foreign publishers who have shown interest in Filipino books. The complete list will be announced before October.

## Authors at Frankfurter Buchmesse

The Philippines has unveiled its initial lineup of authors for the program at the Pavilion and National Stand at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025, presenting the nation's rich literary diversity. This selection features both established and emerging voices, including award-winning novelists, poets, indie authors, and publishers who are shaping the future of Philippine literature.

The lineup spans a wide array of genres, including climate fiction, new adult, science fiction, poetry, graphic novels, children's and young adult literature, and contemporary fiction.

Five National Artists—the highest national recognition given to Filipino individuals who have made significant contributions to the development of Philippine arts—lead the roster of creatives, namely, **Virgilio S. Almario** (Literature, 2003), **Resil B. Mojares** (Literature,

2018), **Kidlat Tahimik** (Film, 2018), **Gemino H. Abad** (Literature, 2022), and **Ricky Lee** (Film and Broadcast Arts, 2022).

Notable multi-awarded authors include **Jose Dalisay**—acclaimed for *Last Call Manila* and the recent German translation of his *Killing Time in a Warm Place*, a novel set during martial law—and Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Maria Ressa**, trauma journalist **Patricia Evangelista**, alongside poets and novelists **Luna Sicat Cleto**, **Luisa Igloria**, **Marjorie Evasco**, and **Merlie Alunan**.

The lineup also includes award-winning authors such as children’s book writer **Luis Gatmaitan**, novelists **Sarge Lacuesta** and **Ronaldo S. Vivo Jr.**, and leading graphic novelists **Budjette Tan** (*Trese*), **Manix Abrera** (*Kikomachine*), and **Mervin Malonzo** (*Tabi Po*). More authors will be revealed at the Frankfurt press conference on June 26, 2025.

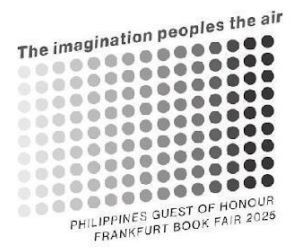
The country’s publishing industry strongly supports its literary talents, with contributions from leading academic institutions such as Ateneo de Manila University Press, The University of the Philippines Press, and University of Santo Tomas Press. Major commercial publishers like Anvil Publishing, Vibal Publishing House, and Adarna House, along with independent publishers—19th Avenida Publishing House, Milflores Publishing, Komiket, Balangay Books, and Exploding Galaxies—bring fresh perspectives to the literary scene. Additional publishing houses will be announced in June.

“This selection underscores the Philippines’ commitment to engaging the world in meaningful conversations on identity, history, imagination, and today’s pressing issues,” said **Karina Bolasco**.

## First Participation at Leipziger Buchmesse

Building momentum for its Guest of Honour role at Frankfurt 2025, the Philippines will make its debut at the Leipziger Buchmesse (March 27–30, 2025), presenting German-translated Filipino works at **Hall 4, C402** and **eleven events** on different stages at the fairgrounds and in the city of Leipzig.

The Philippine stand will feature **150 titles, including 14 German editions**, six of which are new releases. The delegation includes both award-winning and emerging authors. Representing the country’s thriving graphic novel and comic scene are **Renren Galeno**, **J. Philip Ignacio**, and **Paolo Herras**. Celebrated authors **Daryll Delgado**, **Jessica Zafra**, and **Stephanie Co** will discuss themes like climate change, colonialism, globalization, and social inequality. Translators **Kristian Cordero**, **Annette Hug**, and **Monica Fröhlich** will give vivid impressions on the art of literary translation.



## Beyond Books: Philippine Culture Takes the Spotlight

The Philippines' Guest of Honour participation extends beyond literature with *Oculus*, an exhibition exploring how we “see things.” Hosted at the Heidelberger Kunstverein, *Oculus* reflects on the intersections of science, art, and imagination—where the line between real and spectral blurs.

Curated by **Patrick Flores** (also the curator of the Philippine Pavilion, FBM 2025), the exhibition references José Rizal's ophthalmological studies in Heidelberg and his novel *Noli Me Tangere*, which he partly wrote in the city. Artists **Stephanie Misa** and **Joscha Steffens** work out how seeing, shaped by both ecology and imagination, can give rise to visions.

*Oculus* opened on March 15 and runs until May 18, 2025.

More cultural and literary activities will be announced.

For full event details, visit [philippinesfrankfurt2025.com](http://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com), download the digital press kit here and on [www.artefakt-berlin.de](http://www.artefakt-berlin.de) and follow us on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **Tiktok**, **LinkedIn @philippinesfrankfurt2025**.



## **Part 1: Guest of Honour-Activities in March 2025**

# **The Philippines at Leipziger Buchmesse 2025**

## **Philippine Stand, Activities, Featured Authors**

The Philippine stand at the LBM, located at **Hall 4, C402**, will feature a selection of books with **150 titles, including 14 German editions**, presenting diverse genres: fiction, non-fiction, new adult, and graphic novels and comics.

The Philippine delegation will take part in eleven readings, discussions, and panel talks, engaging directly with German audiences and literary professionals.

## **Literary Program of the Philippines**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Venue</b>
March 27, 2025, Thursday	12.20- 13.05	<b><i>Can Climate Fiction Save Our Planet? A Conversation on Environment, Society, and Change</i></b> with Daryll Delgado & Ann-Sophie Henne	Leipziger Buchmesse, Forum Offene Gesellschaft, Hall 2, B500
	14.00- 14.30	<b><i>Filipino Graphic Novels Travel the World</i></b> with Paolo Herras	Leipziger Buchmesse. Globale Perspektiven, Hall 4, E305
	19.00- 20.00	<b><i>Can Climate Fiction Save Our Planet?</i></b> with Daryll Delgado	Lancaster University Leipzig, Strohsack Passage, Room 116, First Floor, Nikolaistr. 10, 04109 Leipzig
March 28, 2025 Friday	14.00- 14.30	<b><i>The Social Divide in City Fiction</i></b> with Jessica Zafra	Leipziger Buchmesse, Forum Literatur, Hall 4, A100
	19.00- 20.00	<b><i>Clothing the Colonials</i></b> with Stephanie Coe	Lancaster University Leipzig, Strohsack Passage, Room 116, First Floor, Nikolaistr. 10, 04109 Leipzig

Date	Time	Description	Venue
March 29, 2025 Saturday	14.00- 14.30	<b><i>The Horrors of Reality</i></b> with Renren Galeno	Leipziger Buchmesse, Phantastische Leseinsel 2, Hall 3, B401
	17.00- 17.30	<b><i>Comics Reimagine the Nation</i></b> with J. Philip Ignacio	Leipziger Buchmesse, Übersetzungszentrum / Forum International, Hall 4, C403
March 30, 2025 Sunday	11.00- 11.30	<b><i>We Are All Strangers In Our Own Native Lands</i></b> with Paolo Herras	Leipziger Buchmesse, Globale Perspektiven, Hall 4, E305
	11.30- 12.00	<b><i>Literary Translations: From Bikol to the World &amp; Back</i></b> with Kristian Cordero	Leipziger Buchmesse, Globale Perspektiven, Hall 4, E305
	13.00- 13.30	<b><i>To Draw the Everyday</i></b> with Renren Galeno	Leipziger Buchmesse, Globale Perspektiven, Hall 4, E305
	13.30- 14.00	<b><i>How To Translate Philippine Literature</i></b> with Monica Fröhlich and Annette Hug	Leipziger Buchmesse, Globale Perspektiven, Hall 4, E305



## The Philippine Delegation at Leipziger Buchmesse 2025

### Fiction



**DARYLL DELGADO** is the author of the novel *Remains* (German edition: *Überreste*, Alfred Kröner Verlag, published March 12, 2025), finalist of the Philippine National Book Award for Best Novel in English (2021), and the collection, *After the Body Displaces Water*, winner of the Philippine National Book Award for Best Book of Short Fiction and finalist of Madrigal-Gonzales First Book Award (2013). Delgado heads the research and stakeholder engagement programs of an international non-government organization and writes global reports on labor migration and precarity, women, and workers' rights.



**JESSICA ZAFRA** has published a novel, *The Age of Umbrage* (German edition: *Ein ziemlich böses Mädchen*, Transit Buchverlag, published February 24, 2025), three short story collections, and the *Twisted* series of books on travel and popular culture. She has presented television shows and web series, hosted radio talk shows, and written and produced feature films. Her second novel is being adapted for film.

### Graphic Novel



**RENREN GALENO** is a comic author and illustrator from Davao City, Philippines. She illustrated the Pulitzer Prize Finalist (2024) *Searching for Maura* for the *Washington Post*. Her first book, *Sa Wala* (German edition: *Sa Wala - Für nichts*, Dantes Verlag 2024), was published in 2023 and won the 42nd National Book Awards' Best Graphic Novel and Comics in English in 2024. Ren2x likes animal-shaped ceramics and looking for fat frogs.



**PAOLO HERRAS** is the Co-Founder of Komiket, a non-profit organisation that advocates for Filipino comics, and the Festival Director of the Philippine International Comics Festival (PICO). His graphic novel, *Strange Natives* (German edition: *Strange Natives - Die vergessenen Erinnerungen einer vergesslichen alten Dame*, Dantes Verlag 2024), was a National Book Award Finalist and is currently translated in German, French, and Italian. Paolo directed the film adaptation of his graphic novel, *Buhay Habangbuhay* (Life Afterlife), for the 2nd CineFilipino Film Festival.

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**J. PHILIP IGNACIO** is a musician, actor, documentary filmmaker, improvisational theatre veteran, and Co-Founder of Third World Improv, the premiere improv school in the Philippines. His first graphic novel, *Alandal* (German Edition: *Alandal 1*, Dantes Verlag 2024), won the 40th National Book Award and 7th National Children's Book Award. His book has German, Burmese, and English editions.

## Non-Fiction



**DR. STEPHANIE MARIE COO** is a Filipino-Chinese author of the multi-award-winning book *Clothing the Colony: Nineteenth-century Philippine Sartorial Culture, 1820-1896* (2019), which won the 39th National Book Award for Best Book in History (2022) and the IAS-ICAS biennial International Book Prize for Best Book in Humanities (2021). She was a Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the Universidad de Granada (Spain). Currently, she holds an Associate Professorship at the Ateneo de Manila University while serving as an auxiliary researcher at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa

## Translation



**KRISTIAN SENDON CORDERO** is a poet, fictionist, essayist, translator, and an independent filmmaker. He has written five poetry collections in Filipino, Bikol and Rinconada, the latest two both received the National Book Awards for Poetry in Filipino and Bikol in 2014. As a translator, he translated selected poetry of Rainier Maria Rilke, *Minatubod Ako Sa Diklom (I Have Faith in the Night)*, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis, An Pakagimata ni Gregor Samsa in Bikol* and *An Mapara Sa Kinaban/Ang Maglabo Sa Mundo*, selected poetry of Jorge Luis Borges in Bikol and Filipino under the translation grant from Programa Sur of Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Y Culto of the Republic of Argentina. He was named one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines for Arts and Literature in 2022. He is the co-head of the Translation Committee for the Philippine Guest of Honour in the 2025 Frankfurt Buchmesse and serves as the director of the Ateneo de Naga University Press.



**DR. MONICA FRÖHLICH** studied German and French Studies, as well as German as a Foreign Language, at University of Bamberg, Germany. After completing her doctorate degree in German contemporary literature (Christoph Ransmayr's *Aesthetics of Disappearance*), she became the Head of Department of Communication and Alumni at the University of Bamberg, where she was responsible for internal and external university communications. She is a lecturer of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the University of the Philippines-Diliman since 2021.



**ANNETTE HUG** is a writer and translator from Zurich. She studied Women and Development Studies in the Philippines from 1992 to 1994. Her novel, *Wilhelm Tell in Manila*, was awarded the Swiss Literature Prize in 2017. In 2024, her first translation from Tagalog/Filipino was published (Luna Sicat Cleto: *Offenes Meer*, Edition Tincatinca 2024). Two novels and a historical novella will follow in 2025.

## The Philippines Unveils ‘Oculus’ as its Inaugural Cultural Program as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025



Image courtesy of the artists and NCCA, Joscha Steffens © VG Bildkunst, 2025

**Heidelberg, Germany — Heightening anticipation for its Guest of Honour role at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025, the Philippines presents *Oculus*, an exhibition that brings together moving image, research and installation to reflect on what it means to “see things.”**

Artists **Stephanie Misa** and **Joscha Steffens** work out how seeing, shaped by both ecology and imagination, can give rise to visions. *Oculus* immerses audiences in a space where scientific knowledge and aesthetic education intersect, and where the line between real and spectral blurs.

One of the entry points of the exhibition is Philippine National Hero Jose Rizal’s ophthalmological studies in Heidelberg and his novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, parts of which he wrote when he was in the same city.

Curated by **Patrick Flores**, *Oculus* is a central feature in the Philippines’ cultural program as Guest of Honour at the 2025 FBM. It resonates with the theme of the country’s participation: *The imagination peoples the air (Fantasie beseelt die Luft)*, which was cited from the same novel by Rizal.

***Oculus* opened on March 15, 2025, at the Heidelberger Kunstverein and will run until May 18, 2025.**

Misa is a Vienna-based Filipino visual artist, researcher and curator whose work centers on decolonizing methodologies. She examines phenomena related to the orality and richness of multilingualism.

Amsterdam-based German artist Steffens creates work about hidden communities that immerse themselves in an imaginary world, particularly the game world, focusing on those forms of gaming that require their members to immerse themselves completely in the skin of their avatar and transcend the limits of play.

Flores is Chief Curator of National Gallery Singapore and concurrently the Professor of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines and Director of the Philippine Contemporary Art Network. He was Curator of the Philippine Pavilion in 2015 and the Taiwan exhibition in 2022 at the Venice Biennale. Flores serves as the curator of the Philippine Pavilion for the country's role as Guest of Honour at the 2025 FBM.

## Reimagining Vision and Perception

Flores explains, “Seeing things can mean grasping objects visually to prove that they really exist in the world. But it can also be about sensing what lies beyond the visible. *Oculus* takes us through historical moments that both clarify and complicate our view, inviting us to explore new dimensions of thought and action.”

Steffens deepens this exploration during his research in the Philippines. In Mount Banahaw, he worked with the spiritual community *Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios of Kinabuhayan*, who regard Rizal as a reference of the Filipino Christ and treat his writings, particularly *Noli Me Tangere*, as sacred. Published in Berlin in 1887, *Noli Me Tangere* played a critical role in inspiring the Philippine revolution against Spanish colonization.

Meanwhile, Misa delved into the archives of Heidelberg's Augenlinik to investigate Rizal's early medical work. Her installation reimagines the *augenspiegel* (ophthalmoscope)—invented in 1851 by the German physiologist Hermann von Helmholtz—as a multifaceted portal, encouraging viewers to explore the boundary between the literal retina and the metaphorical “mind's eye”.

Senator Loren Legarda, the visionary of the project states, “In Germany, the Philippines' Guest of Honour participation provides an insight into our literature and our culture, sharing with the world the intelligence of our people — one inspired by our heroes, our complex history, our multicultural reality, and the endless possibilities our talents can accomplish.”

## Facts & Figures

<b>Exhibition</b>	<b><i>Oculus</i></b>  Cultural Program of the Philippines Guest of Honour Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025
<b>Artists</b>	<b>Stephanie Misa &amp; Joscha Steffens</b>
<b>Curator</b>	<b>Patrick Flores</b>
<b>Place</b>	<b>Heidelberger Kunstverein Hauptstr. 97, D – 69117 Heidelberg</b>
<b>Duration</b>	<b>March 16 – May 18, 2025</b>
<b>Opening</b>	<b>March 15, 2025, 6:00 PM</b>
<b>Artist Talk</b>	<b>with Stephanie Misa, Joscha Steffens and Patrick Flores March 16, 2025, 2:00 PM</b>
<b>Presented by</b>	The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) National Book Development Board (NBDB) Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Office of Senator Loren Legarda Talking Heads e. V. HdKV Heidelberger Kunstverein Baden-Württemberg Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst
<b>Information</b>	<b>Exhibition <i>Oculus</i></b>  Heidelberger Kunstverein: <a href="https://www.hdkv.de/en/exhibitions/oculus">https://www.hdkv.de/en/exhibitions/oculus</a>  E-Mail: <a href="mailto:Fabienne.Finkbeiner@hdkv.de">Fabienne.Finkbeiner@hdkv.de</a> Phone: ++49 (0) 6221-184086  <b>Philippines Guest of Honour Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025</b>  <a href="https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com">https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com</a> and on the social media pages @philippinesfrankfurt2025: <a href="#">Facebook</a> , <a href="#">Instagram</a> , <a href="#">Tiktok</a> , <a href="#">Linkedin</a> .

## **Part 2: Translation Program**

# **Extending the Reach of the Filipino Imagination: Literature in Translation**

## **Philippine Translation: An Overview**

The history of translation in the Philippines is deeply intertwined with the country's colonial past and the complex interplay of indigenous, Spanish, American, and global influences. From the early translations of religious texts by Spanish missionaries, such as the *Doctrina Christiana* in the 16th century, to the modern-day translations of Philippine literature into various foreign languages, the practice has played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's literary and cultural landscape. Translation has not only facilitated the spread of Christianity and Western education but has also allowed Filipino writers and thinkers to engage with global ideas while preserving their own cultural identity.

The earliest novel published in the Philippines was a Spanish translation from Greek, titled *Historia Magistral de los Santos Anacoretas Barlaam y Josafat* (*The Edifying Story of the Hermit Saints Barlaam and Iosaphat*), authored by Dominican friar Baltasar de Santa Cruz. This rare work, printed in 1692, is preserved in the library of the University of Santo Tomas. In 1712, Jesuit priest Antonio de Borja translated the novel into Tagalog, making it the first known work of fiction published in the language.

## **Rizal, Noli Me Tangere, and El Filibusterismo in Translation**

A significant portion of translation scholarship in Philippine literature centers on a single author and his two seminal novels. José Rizal—intellectual, martyr, and national hero—wrote the foundational works of Filipino nationhood in Spanish. These were *Noli Me Tangere*, first published in Berlin, Germany, in 1887, and its sequel, *El Filibusterismo*, released in Ghent, Belgium, in 1891. Widely regarded as foundational literature, these novels captured both the failures and aspirations of an emerging Filipino national identity.

Over the years, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* have been translated both into numerous Philippine and foreign languages. One of the earliest translations of *Noli* was into French by Henri Lucas and Ramón Sempau in 1899, titled *Au pays des moines* (*The Land of the Monks*) (Testa-de Ocampo, 2011). The most recent translation, into Portuguese by Rita Custódio and Àlex Tarradellas, was published in 2023 under the original title *Noli Me Tàngere*. New German editions of the two novels are expected in 2025.

Today, *Noli* and *Fili* are primarily read in translation. Perhaps more strikingly, even Filipinos often encounter Rizal's works in translation rather than in their original Spanish. This linguistic divide separates many from their own history, illustrating how language remains a barrier to fully engaging with the country's past.

## NBDB Translation Subsidy Program

A significant portion of translation scholarship in Philippine literature centers on a single author and his two seminal novels. José Rizal—intellectual, martyr, and national hero—wrote the foundational works of Filipino nationhood in Spanish. These were *Noli Me Tangere*, first published in Berlin, Germany, in 1887, and its sequel, *El Filibusterismo*, released in Ghent, Belgium, in 1891. Widely regarded as foundational literature, these novels captured both the failures and aspirations of an emerging Filipino national identity.

The Philippines is ready to show the world of international publishing the rich and diverse stories of the country. Translation is a lifeline, of utmost importance for the country where most of the writers write in English and in Filipino and where more than 100 regional languages are spoken. For the many talented regional writers to make a breakthrough, their works have to be first translated into English before foreign publishers can take notice. Their representation is important for a true portrait of the Philippines' national literature.

Many German publishers have lamented how little they know of the Philippines and, encouraged by their initial discoveries of the country's literature, are eager for more discoveries and more material to translate. The very first German translation was in 1934, the *English-German Anthology of Filipino Poets* published by Libreria Manila Filatelica.

The National Book Development Board (NBDB) has an existing Translation Subsidy Program (TSP), which started in 2016, aimed at supporting the translation of Philippine literary works into foreign languages. This program seeks to promote Filipino literature on the global stage by providing financial assistance to publishers and translators. By facilitating the translation of both contemporary and classic Filipino works, the program helps make these stories accessible to a wider international audience, fostering cross-cultural exchange and enhancing the visibility of Philippine literature worldwide.

In 2021, the NBDB revamped the TSP to cover translations into mother tongue-based languages. To celebrate Filipino diversity and creativity, the NBDB offers translation grants to Filipino authors and publishers who wish to translate and publish their books into Filipino and international languages.

In 2023, as the Philippines prepared to be the Guest of Honour at the 77th Frankfurter Buchmesse in 2025, the PhlGoH2025 initiative enhanced the translation program to subsidize foreign publishers translating Philippine books into foreign languages.

The goals of this program are: (1) to introduce a significant number of Philippine books to international publishing markets; (2) to further cultural exchange between our diaspora communities and their host countries, and; (3) to make Philippine books globally competitive as the country positions itself as an emerging content capital in Southeast Asia.

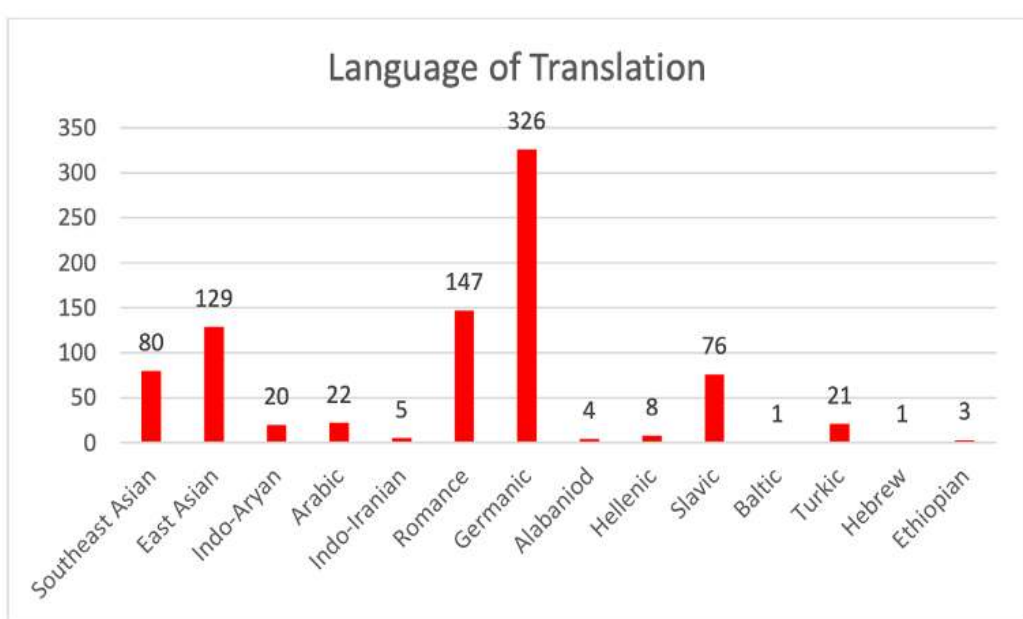
The NBDB, the Philippines' lead agency for the development of the book publishing industry and promotion of Filipino authorship, spearheads the implementation of this

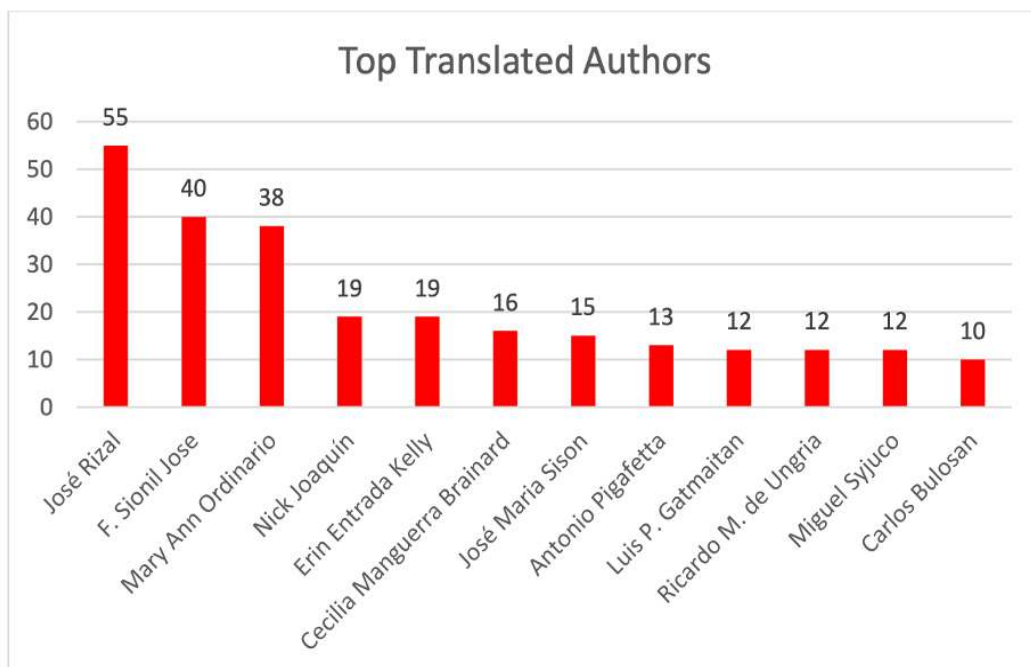
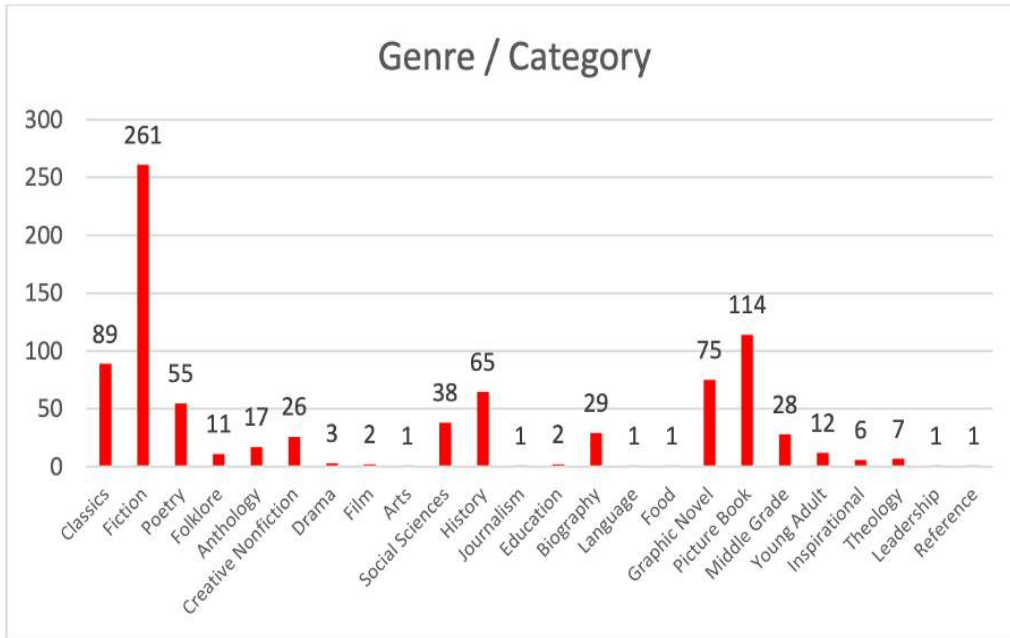


Translation Subsidy Program. In 2024, three (3) subsidy cycles were initiated to provide more opportunities for foreign publishers to discover Philippine titles and introduce them to their local markets. The PhlGoH2025 subsidy program resulted in 124 books translated into foreign languages, 27 of which are in German.

## Fast facts about Translation of Philippine books

- There are at least **846 translated works**, including both historical and contemporary translations.
- **1698 is the earliest** year of data, and **2025 is the latest**.
- There are **12 known translations** from **1698 to 1900**.
- There are **303 translated titles** from **2014 to the present**.
- There are **46 languages** of foreign translation.
- There are **17 source languages**, of which **10 are Philippine languages**.
- **English** is the most common language into which our books are translated, with **215 titles**.
- **Fiction** (novels, novellas, short stories, classics) is the most translated genre, with **350 titles**.
- **Children's and Young Adult literature** (picture books, middle grade, young adult) follows, with **154 titles**.
- **Jose Rizal** is the **most translated author**, and *Noli Me Tángere* and *El Filibusterismo* are the **most translated books**.





### **Part 3: Preview on Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025**

## **The imagination peoples the air Pinupuno ang hangin ng hiwatic Fantasie beseelt die Luft**

The Guest of Honour spaces of the Philippines of the Frankfurt Book Fair will play out under the title *The imagination peoples the air*. It is lifted from Jose Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tangere*, written in Germany in 1887, specifically from the chapter on Sisa. The full line is: "The imagination peoples the air with specters," translated by Charles Derbyshire from the original Spanish. In the said section of the novel, the unhinged mother, Sisa, whose two sons, Crispin and Basilio, had gone missing and whom she would seek in desperation, one beaten, the other accused of theft. In the said section of the novel, the unhinged mother Sisa, would seek her two sons, Crispin and Basilio, the former beaten and accused of theft

She later would die in the forest to be buried by Basilio. In the ominous episode, as she waited for them deep into the evening, her mind would wander and mutate, startled by the howling of a black dog. Rizal describes the condition of darkness as teeming, as the night is disposed to belief or conjuration, the period when the "imagination peoples the air with specters." These specters creep into the body: "Suddenly she felt her hair rise on her head and her eyes stared wildly; illusion or reality, she saw Crispin standing by the fireplace."

While Derbyshire translates "imaginación" as imagination, in the context of Sisa's life as a distraught but resolute woman, her belief in possibility may be more sharply seen as speculative rather than a fully formed object like an imagination. Thus, the Filipino term "hiwatic" becomes more apt because it considers premonition, instinct, presentiment, suspicion, and so on; it is more openly preternatural, and therefore more inter-species and mystical, than exclusively humanist.

The poetry here evokes the power of the book as the source of imagination and speculation. The noun "people" becomes a verb that signifies the habitation or the fleshing out of the atmosphere. Nature and history, ethos, and ecology come together beautifully in this ensemble. The keywords of imagination, people, and air allude to the elements of the writing and reading context: the producers and receivers of texts; the talent of the idiosyncratic individual who reads and writes, and the community gathered by the air emanating from and animating books. For Filipinos, at the heart of books is the promise of sharing, a collective aspiration to be present in the world of stories, ideas, myths, fantasies, and the future. The Guest of Honour pavilion will be the space, the climate for sharing: democratic, deliberative, daring, convivial, peopled by imagination, prompted to action by speculation.

The Philippines is excited and confident to stage its pavilion as Guest of Honour country at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2025. The excitement stems from the premise that the book fair is not a travel or trade fair and therefore should not function as a marketing initiative that

favors themes easily and readily captured by the populist mind accustomed to the shorthand of advertising. It instead aims to promote Philippine books, including their translations, with care, acuity, style, and intellectual dignity; and share with the world the robust history of writers and readers, the nation's literacy and literature, and the levels of sophistication that these have reached.

It is with this sensitive intelligence that the Philippines conceptualizes its Guest of Honour position without losing the joy and liveliness of the fair as a convergence of bookmakers, book lovers, and their broad public. It is this substantial Philippine air — metaphoric, elemental, metamorphic — that will be felt through the vital presence of people reading books together in the pavilion.

Central in this regard is the oral traditions of the Philippines that will complicate the primacy of the written culture. The pavilion will foreground both the literacy and orality in the Philippines, the literature of both voice and word.

Moreover, the Philippines is aware of the context of the Guest of Honour status. In this light, it offers a trajectory that will pursue the historical link between the Philippines and Germany. This trajectory, which is at once a genealogy and an urgency, is no less than Jose Rizal, National Hero, exceptional writer, reader, polymath, and inspiration of countless Filipinos, writing alongside him and reading him in times revolutionary and otherwise. Rizal's engagement with Germany and notable German figures is part of this framework, and so is Rizal's relationship with home and exile that forged international solidarity in the 19th through the 20th centuries in Southeast Asia, as well as the necessary resonance with the current Philippine diaspora. Such a context provides prospects for organizing exhibitions and related projects in Heidelberg, where Rizal studied; Berlin, where *Noli Me Tangere* was published; and Frankfurt, where the Book Fair will take place.

### **Patrick D. Flores**

Curator, Philippine Pavilion

## Visual Identity

The visual identity represents the theme: *The imagination peoples the air* while conveying the act of ‘imagining’ as a graphic and geometric abstraction brought to life. To imagine is to form ideas, visions, and sensations until an image becomes concrete. The main logo visualizes this process: an ascending grid — as imagining lifts us up in the air, spiritually or mentally — that starts transparent from the left up until it becomes more solid.

Books are fueled by imagination, especially those that push the boundaries of Philippine literature, from the epics of extraordinary beings passed down via oral tradition to the retooling of pre-colonial myths for the modern audience. The logo “takes flight,” with the letters following this ascending angle as well, recalling the collective aspirations of the nation.

The 9 x 15 grid has 135 dots, which can also be seen as particles of imagination, falling into place from their amorphous state until they take a more substantial form.

The grid is inspired by three things: the process of letterpress printing in the 19th century, when the *Noli* was born; the halftone printing technique, which breaks images into dots to produce continuous imagery; and the pattern of dots that are present in the screens of many devices that we use today.

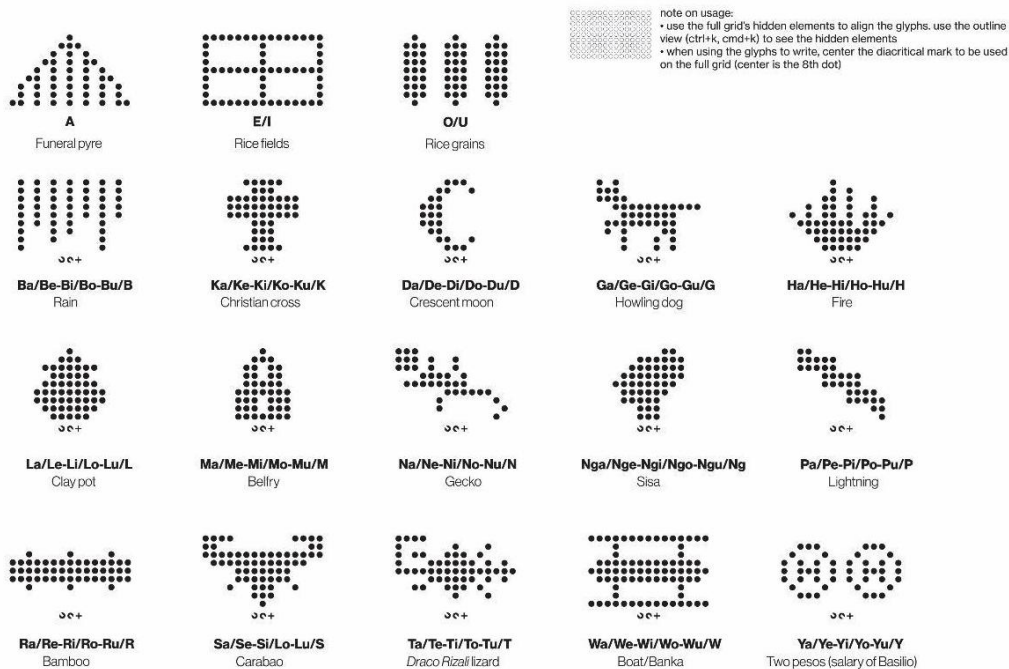
This printing inspiration theme is also present in the typefaces used for the Philippine Guest of Honour’s visual identity. Neue Haas Grotesk and Adobe Jenson Pro are approximations of the typefaces used in the first printing of the *Noli*. Neue Haas Grotesk, or Helvetica, is inspired by the famous 19th-century (1890s) typeface Akzidenz-Grotesk, which was used around the 1890s. Meanwhile, the serif typeface Adobe Jenson combines Renaissance-era typefaces created by Nicolas Jenson and Ludovico degli Arrighi.

The colors used in the visual identity are also anchored by the theme’s literary source, using Rizal’s descriptions that conjure vivid colors of settings and characters. The *Noli* comes to life with passages such as “the sand was gold-dust and the stones,” or “the sky was blue and a fresh breeze,” or “the green rice-fields” to bring to life Rizal’s Philippines — all blending into a powerful work of literature.

Finally, the visual design of the Philippine Guest of Honour in FBM 2025 also includes glyphs, a more playful representation of imagination that can be decoded and used as hints into the richness of Philippine culture.

The glyphs are inspired by the baybayin script, the ancient writing system used by early Filipinos before the Spanish colonization. The glyphs here represent elements or objects found in the *Noli*, inspired by the invented writing system that one of the characters, the sage Pilosopo Tasio, uses for his writings for the future generation. He says, “But the generation that deciphers these characters will be an intelligent generation, it will understand and say, ‘Not all were asleep in the night of our ancestors!’”

The glyphs used here come from recognizable images — especially related to the theme. *The imagination peoples the air* — such as the profile of Sisa, the lightning that becomes a threat to her sons, the belfry that knells for the souls, and the howling dog that Sisa imagines.



## Philippines Guest of Honour Curatorial Team



**Patrick D. Flores**  
Curator of the Philippine Pavilion

Patrick Flores is the Chief Curator at the National Gallery Singapore (NGS). He is concurrently a professor at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. In 2015, he curated the Philippine Pavilion at the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale. In 2022, he was the curator of the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

Flores was a Visiting Fellow at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1999 and an Asian Public Intellectuals Fellow in 2004. Among his publications are *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (1999); *Remarkable Collection: Art, History, and the National Museum* (2006); and *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (2008). He was

a grantee of the Asian Cultural Council (2010); a member of the Advisory Board of the exhibition *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989* (2011), organized by the Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe; and a member of the Guggenheim Museum's Asian Art Council (2011). He co-edited the Southeast Asian issue with Joan Kee for *Third Text* (2011). On behalf of the Clark Institute and the Department of Art Studies of the University of the Philippines, Flores organized the conference, *Histories of Art History in Southeast Asia* in Manila.

He serves as the curator of the Philippine Pavilion for the country's role as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025.



### **Karina A. Bolasco**

#### **Head of the Literary Program & Curator for Books**

Karina Africa Bolasco dedicated four decades of her life to book publishing, first as Junior Editor, then as Assistant Publishing Manager for Textbooks at National Bookstore. After ten years, she co-founded Anvil Publishing which she ran for 26 years. In 2016, she moved to Ateneo de Manila University Press. Under her leadership, both presses won Publisher of the Year many times and for their books, over 300 National Book awards.

Active in literary organizations and industry associations, she also served as National Book Development Board Governor and Cultural Education Head at the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Karina was hailed as one of the Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS) in 1995 for her work in book publishing and literacy development. In 2018, she was awarded a 6-month fellowship at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) at the Kyoto University.

She wrote two children's books and contributed to anthologies, literary and professional, and represented the country in many international publishing congresses.

In 2013, she was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Manila Critics Circle and The Hildegard Award for Changemakers in Media.

She holds the roles of Head of the Literary Program and Curator of Books for the Philippines as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025.

## Featured Authors in FBM 2025: Philippines as Guest of Honour

As the 2025 FBM Guest of Honour, the Philippines is gearing to bring over 100 delegates—its biggest and boldest delegation yet—to present the depth and diversity of Philippine literature, culture, and creativity to the world.

The PhlGoH also launched an open call inviting all NBDB-registered publishers, including self-published authors, to be part of the Philippine National Stand. The Philippines is proud to present the first batch of creatives and publishers (including those selected from the open call nominees) who will be part of its Official Delegation at the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

Gemino H. Abad	Robert U. Laurio
Camille Abaya	Ricky Lee
Manuel Luis Abrera	Alreena Levy
Stephen Acabado	Avid Liongoren
Gigo Alampay	Lowela G. Malangen
Dean Alfar	Mervin Malonzo
Virgilio S. Almario	Francheskka Manansala
Aurora Almendral	Gutierrez Mangansakan II
Merlie Alunan	Angelo Miguel S. Mangubat
Bambi Amago	Dorian Merina
Analyn Salvador Amores	Resil B. Mojares
Alizza Luz Anatan	Ace Molo
Ardie Aquino	Asa Montenejo
Maria Rilke C. Arguelles	Katrina F. Olan
Mary Jane C. Arguelles	Will Ortiz
Yasmin D. Arquiza	Benedict B. Parfan
Genevieve Asenjo	Beth Parrocha
Kyra Ballesteros	Chuck Berry J. Pascual
Bert Banico	Ralph Kristoffer Y. Porio
Niles Jordan Breis	Ige Ramos
Elaine Castillo	Maria Ressa



Paul A. Castillo	June Pauline Sandoval
Aria A. Chelabian	Robin Jason A. Sebolino
Carlo Clemente	Beverly W. Siy
Luna Sicat Cleto	Isabelle Songco
Jose Dalisay	Ian Sta. Maria
Nick Deocampo	Kidlat Tahimik
Gladys Doronila	Dennis Tamayo
Ace Enriquez	Budjette Tan
Maria Carmina V. Esguerra-Co	Yvette Tan
Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla	Claude Tayag
Patricia Evangelista	Ergoe Tinio
Renato Zosimo Evangelista	Renato C. Tranquilino
Marjorie Evasco	Katrina Tuvera
Dani Florendo	Randy P. Valiente
Tara Frejas	Nicole Arianne S. Velasquez
Katherine B. Garcia	Jane Vergara
Luis P. Gatmaitan	Ronald V. Verzo II
Luisa Igloria	Ronaldo S. Vivo, Jr.
Mookie Katigbak-Lacuesta	Cindy C. Wong
Amado Angelo R. Lacuesta	Tanya Yuson

In June, the PhlGoH will announce another batch of creatives who will complete the Philippines' delegation.

## **Part 4: Background Information**

# **The Philippines' Journey at the Frankfurter Buchmesse**

The first-ever National Book Development Board (NBDB) participation in the FBM was in 1998. Forty-five publishers displayed 302 book titles under the theme Centennial of the Philippine Independence. The Philippine stand was eight square meters.

The Philippines continued to participate for two years until 2000, and it only resumed its participation in 2015. NBDB sent two delegates, then NBDB Chair Flor Marie Sta. Romana Cruz and Executive Director III Graciela Mendoza Cayton, who had gone on an exploratory visit the year before, in 2014.

Since there was no budget for designing the country stand, Karina Bolasco, then Director of Ateneo De Manila University Press and NBDB Board member, reached out to Senator Loren Legarda in 2015 as she knew the senator to be one who was committed to passionately supporting the arts and culture sector. The Senator helped by referring to an agency that could provide support to the participants. Since then, Senator Legarda has given the NBDB additional financial support for the Philippine participation in the FBM.

This also marked the beginning of the Philippines' campaign to become Guest of Honour.

## **The road to becoming Guest of Honour**

### **2015**

Senator Legarda became the project visionary behind the country's bid for the Guest of Honour in 2015. Bolasco informed her of the FBM and its importance.

### **2017**

Senator Legarda met with FBM officials led by Juergen Boos, President and CEO of the FBM, during their visit to Manila. In the same year, the Philippines submitted its Letter of Intent for Guest of Honour through then NBDB Chairperson Romana-Cruz.

### **2019**

In another meeting with Boos in Frankfurt, Senator Legarda was accompanied by then Philippine Ambassador to Germany Theresa de Vega, Deputy Consul General Emil Fernandez, NBDB Chair Sta. Romana-Cruz, NBDB Board Member Bolasco, while the latter was accompanied by FBM Vice President Claudia Kaiser. Senator Legarda inquired about the requirements for bids for the Guest of Honour country.

### **2020**

Senator Legarda again met with the FBM officials in July 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions focused on how the pandemic had affected the bids,

but the Senator emphasized that the Philippines remained committed to complying with the requirements for becoming a Guest of Honour. It was during this meeting that the year to become Guest of Honour had to be delayed to 2025 due to the pandemic.

## 2023

In June 2023, Senator Legarda met again with the FBM Officials. This time, Boos announced that the FBM Board had approved the proposal for the Philippines to become GoH in 2025. Administrative requirements were discussed again during this meeting.

On August 18, 2023, the official Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Philippines as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair was signed in Davao City by FBM officials, headed by Juergen Boos, and the NBDB, led by Chair Dante Francis Ang II.

Once the Guest of Honour MOA was finalized, it became evident that executing this initiative would demand significant resources and coordination. The Philippine Pavilion in 2025 features a 2,000-square-meter pavilion, a strategically curated selection of books and authors, a dynamic cultural program, and a communications campaign designed to maximize global visibility.

In response, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, NBDB, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Office of Hon. Senator Loren Legarda came together to form the Philippines as Guest of Honour committees, leveraging each agency's expertise and commitment. This collaboration ensures the Philippines' publishing industry, and its key players will be highlighted and given the international focus it has worked hard to attain.

## 2024

On October 20, 2024, Italy, the 2024 FBM Guest of Honour formally handed over the GoH role to the Philippines.

During the 2024 FBM, the Philippines unveiled the visual identity, theme, and plans for 2025. Its theme, "The Imagination peoples the air", draws inspiration from Dr. Jose P. Rizal's seminal work, *Noli Me Tangere*. From October 17-20, more than 70 publishers, authors and creatives, and over 700 titles graced the Philippine stand and various sections of FBM including for genres such as graphic novel, children, new adult, and education.

The Philippines extended its cultural programming beyond the fairgrounds in Frankfurt through a dynamic four-day launching program titled "In the air" that was held in Heidelberg and Wilhelmsfeld from October 24 - 27. The program explored Dr. Jose Rizal's legacy as a hero, writer, and thinker who inspired countless Filipinos, surfacing how his experiences in Germany shaped his work and ideas. It also delved into broader themes such as home, exile, and international solidarity, examining their relevance to the contemporary Philippine diaspora and how these interactions with the world animate Filipino literature.

## Philippine Literary and Publishing Landscape 2024: An Overview

Philippine literature, shaped by centuries of colonial history and cultural exchange, remains a powerful medium of expression. Its extensive scope from oral traditions to modern formats — spanning speculative fiction, climate fiction, graphic novels, and comics — reflects the nation's diverse heritage. The interplay of indigenous Southeast Asian roots, European colonial legacies, American education, and a history of migration has created a distinctive voice that resonates across generations.

As National Artist for Literature Bienvenido Lumbera observed, the country's literary development is defined by a continuous tension between cultural assertion and external influences. This dynamic, combined with the contributions of a vast Filipino diaspora, continues to enrich and redefine the nation's cultural landscape.

The Philippines, currently populated by 109 million people belonging to 135 ethnolinguistic groups and speaking 183 languages, counts human capital as one of the driving forces behind its growing influence in global industries, from creative sectors to logistics and services.

The Filipino experience is distinctive and diverse, made even more so by a huge diasporic population. This exposure to the cultures and lifeways of other countries has enriched the already vibrant local culture even more, as mirrored in the rich narratives of the various regions in a dense, and teeming archipelago.

### Fast Facts on the Philippine Publishing



The Philippine book publishing industry concluded 2023 with an extraordinary milestone, issuing 10,297 ISBNs — the highest in the last decade. This surge in book production mirrors the country's robust trade performance in the creative sector. From 2020 to 2023, the total trade value steadily increased from US\$30.06 million to a remarkable US\$ 45.7

million, underscoring the Philippines' expanding ability to export its rich culture and narratives to the global stage. With trade already reaching US\$ 40.08 million by the second quarter of 2024, the Philippines is poised to further broaden its reach and influence, solidifying its position as the emerging content capital of Southeast Asia.

## Philippine Literary Landscape

The Philippine book market, like any other in the world, is diverse. Readers tend to prefer a specific genre among the many: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, romance, and new adult, children's books and young adult, graphic novels, and comics. Each genre has sub-categories to show the wide range of choices. Fiction has expanded to speculative, noir, and climate fiction. New and young adult genres now include climate change concerns and gendered series, a growing list among publishers.

There are leaders in every genre, as most publishers see the wisdom in niche publishing, focusing on certain markets.

There is also a huge divide between imported books, mostly from the United States and the United Kingdom, and locally written, locally published books. The biggest bookstore chains in the country carry imported books and local books at a 24:1 ratio, a consequence of a trade law enforced by the United States before the Philippines was granted its independence. The law stipulated our book market as an extension of the US market.

Education, with 29 million students in both the public (27.6 million) and private (1.4 million) sectors, remains the biggest buyer and user of textbooks and supplementary children's books. The Department of Education just opened its doors to graphic novels and comics, those which are mythical, folkloric, and historical. When in School Year 2012-2013, the Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education was passed into law and adopted by the public schools, it provided the impetus for the organization of regional publishers around 19 major languages. Publishers began to retrieve and recover the people's stories, area by area, stories long suppressed by English as the primary medium of instruction. This is a work in progress, for while acclaimed as a landmark law, it has also been severely critiqued for slow and faulty implementation.

There are no literary agents in the Philippines. Publishers are usually designated to represent their authors in rights transactions.

The Filipino literary landscape is vibrant with book launches, readings and signings, writing workshops, literary contests and book awards, fairs, and festivals. Indie presses are making a mark for themselves and winning awards and prizes for their books.

The Palanca Prize, in its 74th year, remains the most prestigious literary prize for any work. The Manila Critics Circle has been annually recognizing the best books for 43 years. Two writers' organizations, PEN Philippines, which is 67 years old, and the writers' union, UMPIL (Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas), which just celebrated its 50th year, continue to hold annual congresses.

The 62-year-old Silliman Writers Workshop is the longest-running university-based workshop in Asia today. Five other top universities also regularly host such summer workshops. The Manila International Book Fair is in its 45th year. These are long-held beloved literary traditions, the backbone of literature, the pillars of literary creativity. Simply put, they cover the entire literary cycle: writing, community, readership, review, and recognition.

## Romance and New Adult

Today, there are four distinct forms of romance novels in the Philippines: pocketbook romances, traditionally published romance novels, platform-produced love stories, and self-published English-language romance books. Together, they represent a diversely emergent romance fiction industry in the Philippines.

Pocketbook romances, usually written in Filipino, are printed as paperbacks measuring 17 by 10.5 centimeters with an extent of 128 pages and sold from ₱20 to ₱40 (US\$.35 -US\$.71) per copy when it hit the market in the 1980s. They are available not just in bookshops but also in convenience stores and supermarkets to a primary readership of women from low-middle and high-lower classes. These novels unsurprisingly focus on a central love story and are unabashedly melodramatic and steadfastly formulaic in nature.

In recent years, global digital writing and reading platforms such as Wattpad and others have leveraged its large Filipino user base to develop partnerships with local publishers. These platform-produced love stories are currently being picked up by traditional publishers for local publication and distribution. Young to new adult readers are currently fascinated with these romances, with book signings seeing hours-long lines during major book fairs such as the Philippine Book Festival and the Manila International Book Fair.

In recent years, major national production companies began adapting these stories into films and television series. For instance, it was Wattpad that first saw the University Series by Gwyneth Saludes before it was published and then adapted into a hit television series.

On the other hand, self-published English romance books are also on the rise. Filipino romance writers collective #RomanceClass has engaged in the production and development of self-published romance books on diverse themes and topics such as body positivity and LGBTQIA+. These are published digitally globally alongside local print editions with several entertainment media texts, including audiobooks, podcasts, web series, and its biannual live reading events.

## Children's books

The Philippine children's book sector is an essential part of the country's publishing industry, producing an average of 100 to 150 titles annually. It has grown into a robust institution, driven by dedicated authors, illustrators, and publishers, all working to engage young Filipino readers.

At the core of many Philippine children's books are stories that instill a deep sense of self, community, and national identity in young readers. These stories often reflect the Filipino experience and emphasize values such as peace and a sense of country. Beyond the light-hearted and humorous elements typical of children's literature, many books in this sector also tackle difficult topics, including war, famine, death, grief, and even the country's historical tragedies. The inclusion of such topics ensures that children's books remain relevant and reflective of real life.

In recent years, for instance, Philippine children's literature has embraced more inclusive themes including books featuring LGBTQIA+ families and stories that challenge traditional norms. The sector's focus on giving protagonists a sense of agency and promoting inclusivity ensures that these books resonate with a modern audience while retaining quintessential Filipino humor and values.

A major milestone for the sector was its recent participation in the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) in April 2024, marking the Philippines' debut at the world's largest fair for children's content. Led by the NBDB, in partnership with the Philippine Board on Books for Young People (PBBY), it was an opportunity to showcase the creativity and talent of Filipino authors and illustrators on a global stage. The Philippines was also the Country of Focus at the Asian Festival for Children's Content, further solidifying its role in the global children's book industry. As the most widely translated genre, children's literature offers an ideal entry point for Philippine books to gain worldwide recognition.

## Graphic Novels and Comics

The Philippine comics and graphic novels sector has seen significant growth over the past decade, driven partly by a renewed interest in Philippine mythology and fantasy, and by community-driven initiatives that engage creators and fans of sequential art alike. Publishers have played a key role in this resurgence. An example is 19th Avenida that published *Trese*, the popular graphic novel series that became the first Filipino anime adaptation on Netflix, boosting the visibility of local comics on the global stage.

The strength of the comics scene in the Philippines lies in its deeply connected community of creators, fans, and publishers. Events like Komiket's Philippine International Comics Festival and community-driven art markets fuel the sector's growth, providing a platform for emerging talents.

Self-published authors and online platforms have also made significant contributions, allowing creators to share their work directly with readers. In terms of content, Philippine graphic novels often explore themes rooted in folklore and mythology, colonial history, slice-of-life stories, and even high fantasy. There also are progressive narratives that represent LGBTQIA+ and anthologies that address difficult issues.

Artistically, Filipino comics take in both Western and Asian influences which in turn creates unique and diverse visual styles that appeal to both local and international readers.

The international comics community has taken notice of this burgeoning sector. After the NBDB began including Filipino comics in the Frankfurt Book Fair lineup in 2021, the immense response validated the global demand for Philippine content.

This momentum led to successful participation in other major events such as the London Book Fair, the Lakes International Comic Art Festival, and the Angoulême Rights Market. Over 200 publishing leads and numerous animation opportunities have emerged, with ten titles already being translated for international markets in Germany, the Netherlands, Myanmar, Russia, and the UK.

One of the biggest challenges for the sector today is expanding readership to support its many creators. Although there is a wealth of talent, attracting a larger audience is essential for the sector's long-term success.

## Philippine Crime Fiction

There are at least seven major publishing houses doing crime fiction. Among the commercial publishers include PsiCom, Precious Pages, Summit Books, and Anvil Publishing. University presses such as Ateneo de Manila University Press and University of the Philippines Press also publish crime fiction. Other crime fiction books are self- and independently published.

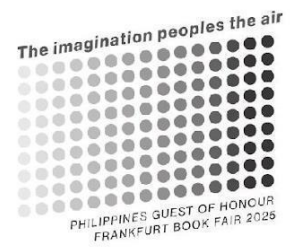
Crime fiction in the Philippines differs from what is usually published in the EU and the US. The EU and US books oftentimes focus on solving the crime with the police or investigators as protagonists in the story. In the Philippines, crime fiction takes the point of view of the victims, with the aggressors coming from the authorities or the police institutions. Crime fiction in the Philippines also intertwines with political situations in the country. It often ties itself with larger themes of corruption, poverty, and justice in the Philippines.

## Book crossovers to theatre, film and television

Filipino literature has made significant strides in crossing over to various media, captivating wider audiences through theater, television, and film. The Netflix adaptation of *Trese*, based on the graphic novel by Budjette Tan and Kajo Baldesimo, brought Filipino supernatural folklore to the global stage, gaining international acclaim.

Other notable adaptations include film versions of national hero Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere*, and Nick Joaquin's works, such as *Tatarin* and *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*. In theater, works like Carlo Vergara's *Zsazsa Zaturnnah* and Severino Reyes' *Tatlong Kuwento ni Lola Basyang* have been brought to life, as well as children's books like *Sandosenang Sapatos* and *Isang Harding Papel*. Classic contemporary novels like *Dekada '70*, *Maynila sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, and *Smaller and Smaller Circles* have also been adapted for film.





## Book Fairs and Festivals

The Philippines hosts several vibrant book festivals and fairs, promoting a love for reading and celebrating the local publishing industry. The Manila International Book Fair (MIBF), which began in 1980 and is the longest-running book fair in the country, attracts thousands of readers, publishers, and authors annually. It features book launches, signings, workshops, and discounted titles, providing a platform for both local and international publishers.

Other notable events include the Philippine Book Fair, which tours multiple cities, and the Iloilo Mega Book Fair, which promotes regional authors and publishers. The Bikol Book Festival and the Cebu Art Book Fair highlight local literary and artistic talent, while the Mindanao Book Fair and Dumaguete Literary Festival serve as important cultural gatherings for authors, readers, and literary enthusiasts in Visayas and Mindanao.



## **Part 5: Information Section**

### **Press Conference in June 2025**

Media are encouraged to stay tuned for a formal invitation to the Philippines' press conference at the Evangelische Akademie in Frankfurt on June 26, 2025—visit our website for updates.

### **Website, Social Media Pages, and Contact Details for the Press**

Official PhlGoH website: [philippinesfrankfurt2025.com](http://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com)

Facebook: [facebook.com/philippinesfrankfurt2025/](https://facebook.com/philippinesfrankfurt2025/)

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National Commission for Culture and the Arts: [www.facebook.com/NCCAOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/NCCAOfficial)

Department of Foreign Affairs: [www.facebook.com/dfaphl](https://www.facebook.com/dfaphl)

Office of Senator Loren Legarda: <https://lorenlegarda.com.ph/>

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## **Appendix: Philippine Books with German Editions**

The following German edition books will be part of the Guest of Honour Pavilion in October, with the first 14 titles to be featured as well at the Leipziger Buchmesse from March 27-30, 2025.

The list includes existing translated works, and the products of both the Translation Subsidy Program and the initiative of foreign publishers who have shown interest in Filipino books. The complete list will be announced before October.

### **Books in Leipziger Buchmesse**

<b>German Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Translator</b>	<b>Illustrator</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Genre</b>
Alandal 1	J. Philip Ignacio	Jens R. Nielsen	Alex Niño	Dantes Verlag	2023	Graphic Novel
Death be Damned	Mike Alcazaren, Noel Pascual, AJ Bernardo	Jens R. Nielsen	AJ Bernardo, Josel Nicolas	Dantes Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Der Junge aus Ilocos	Blaise Campo Gacoscos	Andreas Diesel		Salzgeber Buchverlage (Albino Books)	2025	Fiction
Die Straßenkatzen von Manila	Archie Oculos	Jan Karsten	Archie Oculos	CulturBooks Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Ein ziemlich böses Mädchen	Jessica Zafra	Niko Fröba		Transit Verlag	2025	Fiction
Josefina	Russell Molina	Jens R. Nielsen	Ace Enriquez	Dantes Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Killing Time in a Warm Place	Jose Dalisay	Niko Fröba		Transit Verlag	2024	Fiction
Last Call Manila	Jose Dalisay	Niko Fröba		Transit Verlag	2023	Fiction

German Title	Author	Translator	Illustrator	Publisher	Year of Publication	Genre
Offenes Meer. Gedichte	Luna Sicat- Cleto	Annette Hug		Edition Tincatinca	2024	Poetry
Sa Wala - Für Nichts	Renren Galeno	Jens R. Nielsen	Renren Galeno	Dantes Verlag	2024	Graphic Novel
Strange Natives: Die vergessenen Erinnerungen einer vergesslichen alten Dame	Paolo Herras	Jens R. Nielsen	Jerico Marte	Dantes Verlag	2024	Graphic Novel
Trese Vol. 1 Mord Am Balete Drive	Budjette Tan	Jens R. Nielsen	Kajo Baldisimo	Dantes Verlag	2024	Graphic Novel
Trese vol. 2 Nicht aktenkundige Morde	Budjette Tan	Jens R. Nielsen	Kajo Baldisimo	Dantes Verlag	2024	Graphic Novel
Überreste	Daryll Delgado	Gabriele Haefs		Alfred Kröner Verlag	2025	Fiction
The Singing Detainee and the Librarian with One Book: Essays on Exile	Michael Beltran	Sabine Elisabeth Müller		RegioSpectra Verlag	2025	Non- Fiction

Please note: The **Frankfurter Buchmesse** also compiled a list of publications written by authors from the Philippines as well as new books about the Philippines. This list is constantly updated and available as download from the Guest of Honour-page:

<https://www.buchmesse.de/en/highlights/guest-honour>

## Additional German Edition Books in 2025

*\*more titles will be announced in June*

German Title	Author	Translator	Illustrator	Publisher	Year of Publication	Genre
Depikto	Ruvel Abril	Jens R. Nielsen	Ruvel Abril	Dantes Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Elmer	Gerry Alanguilan	Jens R. Nielsen	Gerry Alanguilan	Dantes Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Stille im August	Caroline Hau	Susann Urban		Verlag Das Wunderhorn	2025	Fiction
Wild Song	Candy Gourlay	Alexandra Rak		Rowohlt	2025	Young Adult
Das philippinische Kino: Essays und Betrachtungen	Nick Deocampo	Dubravka Kriznjak-Petzke		Schüren Verlag	2025	Non-Fiction
Rebellion	Jose Rizal	Gerhard Walter Frey		Mitteldeutscher Verlag	2025	Fiction
Second Opinion	Gideon Lasco	Guido Keller		Angkor Verlag	2025	Non-Fiction
Collected Short Stories	F. Sionil Jose	Guido Keller		Angkor Verlag	2025	Fiction
Some People Need Killing	Patricia Evangelista	Zoë Beck		CulturBooks Verlag	2025	Non-Fiction
Aswanglaut	Allan R. Derain	Annette Hug		Unionsverlag	2025	Fiction
Ang Paghahanap kay Tapat	Albert Banico	Christoph Wiegand	Adriel Perez	Misti Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Unang Kadaugan	Alreena Levy Lumapas	Christoph Wiegand	Alreena Levy Lumapas	Misti Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
The Collaborators	Katrina Tuvera	Jan Karsten		Verlag Klaus Wagenbach	2025	Fiction

German Title	Author	Translator	Illustrator	Publisher	Year of Publication	Genre
Dekada '70	Lualhati Bautista	Annette Hug		Orlanda Verlag	2025	Fiction
Strange Natives: The Boy with Capiz Eyes	Paolo Herras	Jens R. Nielsen	Carlo Clemente	Dantes Verlag	2025	Graphic Novel
Noli Me Tangere	Jose Rizal	Annemarie del Cueto-Mörth		Insel Verlag	2025	Fiction
Cabinet of Curiosities	Ambeth Ocampo			Edition Tincatinca	2025	Non-Fiction
Die Teufel in den Philippinen, mit einem Vorwort von Benedict Anderson	Isabelo delos Reyes	Annette Hug		Edition Tincatinca	2025	Fiction
Wie es mir Gefällt. Über Liebe und nicht-exklusives Begehren	Deepa Paul	Janine Malz and Christiane Burkhardt		Carl Hanser Verlag	2025	Fiction
Vier Wünsche ans Universum	Erin Entrada Kelly	Birgitt Kollmann	Isabel Roxas	DTV	2018	Young Adult
Charlotte&Ben: Ein Freund kann alles verändern	Erin Entrada Kelly	Birgitt Kollmann		DTV	2020	Young Adult
Die Nelsons greifen nach den Sternen	Erin Entrada Kelly	Beate Schäfer		DTV	2022	Young Adult
Irgendwo wartet das Leben	Erin Entrada Kelly	Birgitt Kollmann		DTV	2023	Young Adult