

Press release, June 26, 2025

## Philippines at World's Doorstep with Guest of Honour Pavilion Program at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025

Frankfurt (Main), Germany – The Philippines unveiled the full scope of its Guest of Honour (PHL GOH) program for the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2025 during a press conference in Frankfurt today, positioning the archipelago as a rising force in global publishing. The country announced it has organized over 77 literary events, with 100 authors and creatives, and 50 artists across exhibitions, performances, and films. Inspired by a line from Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, the country's theme—*The imagination peoples the air*—captures the deep interplay of Philippine literature, culture, and history, inviting the world to engage with its stories.

The program included speakers **Juergen Boos** (CEO and President, Frankfurter Buchmesse), **Patrick Flores** (PHL GOH curator), **Karina Bolasco** (PHL GOH head of literary program and curator of books), **Stanley Ruiz** (designer of the Philippine GoH Pavilion) and a video message from project advocate **Senator Loren Legarda**. Filipino authors with newly released German edition books **Blaise Campo Gacoscas** and **Candy Gourlay** had a conversation moderated by author and translator **Annette Hug**. The award-winning **Philippine Madrigal Singers** rendered a performance.

**Karina Bolasco**, the PHL GOH's curator of books and head of literary program, said that "As we occupy center stage at the global literary marketplace, in this time when the world is malignantly divided, our spaces: the Pavilion, the Asia Stage, and our National Stand—are for dialogue, for listening and reflection with clarity of purpose, and respect for one another. These are forums to engage in ideas, guided by memory, and driven by resistance to any injustice, emerging or entrenched."

**Patrick Flores**, curator of the Philippine Guest of Honour, remarked, "The Philippines aims to foreground 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."

**Juergen Boos** stated, "This year's Guest of Honour presentation is opening a gateway to the rich cultural variety of the Philippines. A country which is unknown to many in Europe. I am very excited that the stories from 7,641 islands with more than a 100 different languages are coming to Frankfurt to show us the lively, vibrant and contradictory history of our guest country. We will experience Philippine literature live through numerous events – from readings, discussions and talks to flitop rap performances that tell of everyday life and new beginnings, of political upheavals, inner struggles and self-empowerment. Through Philippine literature we will get insights into colonialism and societal changes and learn

more about climate fiction. Under the motto ‘The imagination peoples the air’, a program is being created that builds relationships: between continents and generations; between colonial heritage, climate change and visions of the future.”

**Senator Loren Legarda**, principal advocate said, “We are a nation that reads itself into being, a people who have written our way through disasters, colonialism, dictatorship, and diaspora, and emerged louder, more insistent, more human. What we bring to Frankfurt is a gathering of voices that defies singular narratives, each telling a part of the whole, offering a portrait of humanity in its most intricate and truthful form.” She concluded, “For ours is not an imagination that escapes. It is awake. It questions, it dreams, and it dares—a way of seeing with eyes wide open to the world as it is, and to what our world could yet become.”

## The Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion

In his presentation, **Patrick Flores** explained that the architectural design and scenography of the Philippine Pavilion as Guest of Honour create a warm and fair space for introspection and wonder. He stated, “As an honoured guest, the Philippines cherishes this invitation and hospitality at the same time that it cohabits the site with its own historical experience and interests in a present driven by intense conflict and inhumanity.”

The Pavilion alludes to an archipelagic clearing, enlivened by books and moving images from **contemporary artists** responding to the literature of the country across the seasons. There are four zones, each dedicated to the oeuvre by and on the National Hero Jose Rizal; the work of National Artists and National Living Treasures; the history of books in the Philippines; and books on the Philippines published outside the country in the last five years.

Designed by **Stanley Ruiz**, the Pavilion integrates local materials with modular architecture that is also furniture. Dominant materials involved in the construction are kapis (shells), bamboo, and pineapple fabric, alongside steel and fabrics. Central in his imagination are the integrity of Philippine materials and technologies as well as the intuition to repurpose and refunction. It includes elements like circular layouts suggestive of gathering and sharing across Philippine communities.

Configured like islands, the structures are dispersed and yet the pathways into each other are fluid, meandering like routes of water or trails of the hills. The skin of the structures consists of translucent membranes that recall the quality of kites or lamps, both referencing anecdotes around Jose Rizal. The said surfaces also function as screens for moving-images by **Gary-Ross Pastrana** and the drawings of **David Medalla** animated by **Mervin Malonzo**.

“The overall feeling in the Pavilion is one of airiness, lightness, generosity. It is an open situation for honoring the gifts of writing and reading in an unnerving but hopefully irrepressible world, conceived by a guest who peoples the imagination,” Flores stated.

A **press tour** through the Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion will be offered on October 14, 2025 at 12:30 pm.

## The Literary Program

At the core of the PHL GOH program is a robust literary agenda featuring over 100 delegates—a Nobel laureate, National Artists, authors, poets, creatives, publishers, authors with new international editions, and cultural figures.

The program spans talks, performances, book launches, and rights negotiations, underscoring the country’s growing global presence in publishing. Events will unfold across the Philippine Pavilion, the Asia Stage, and a 300-sqm National Stand.

The **Philippine Pavilion** with its two stages will host sessions hourly including talks, conversations, interviews, panels, annotated readings, performed poetry, rap, fliptop, poetic jousts, chants, music and dance, live drawing, language teaching, annotated film excerpts, and other performances inspired by books. They are clustered into the following themes: *That You May Know Us*, *What Moves Us*, *While We Are Away*, *What Bewitches Us*, *What We Imagine*, and *What We Keep and Remember*. Helmed by Bolasco, the Pavilion will also present more than 500 books under the framework of: Diversity, Histories, and Hope and Faith.

The **Philippine National Stand**, spanning 300 square meters, will feature thousands of titles available for rights sales and international distribution.

The **Asia Stage program**, co-hosted by Rex Education and the Frankfurter Buchmesse, highlights regional dialogue among the Philippines and its Southeast Asian neighbors.

“As the world gathers in Frankfurt, the Philippines shall bring with its books, its voice—firm, open, critical, and fiercely hopeful that storytelling remains one of humanity’s most powerful tools for truth and transformation,” **Bolasco** stated.

## Cultural Program

Running throughout 2025, the cultural program spans multiple cities—Heidelberg, Berlin, and Frankfurt (Main)—and includes **exhibitions, performances, film presentations, and publications** that present both traditional and contemporary Filipino artistry.

For its inaugural exhibition, the country launched *Oculus* at the Heidelberger Kunstverein, and featured the works of contemporary artists Stephanie Misa and Joscha Steffens. It ran from March 15 to May 18.

Highlights of the upcoming exhibitions include *Sulog: Filipino Architecture in the Crosscurrents* at Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM), *New Beginnings: Philippine Photographic Art* at Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF), and storytelling traditions like the *Pasyon*, and *Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang (Stories of Grandmother Basyang)* at Haus am Dom. Furthermore, the program features an immersive sound installation at Humboldt Forum Berlin by **meLê Yamomo**, concerts by the **Philippine Madrigal Singers**, the festival *Sincerely Yours, the Philippines Festival für Tanz, Performance, Karaoke* led by contemporary artist **Eisa Jocson** at Künstler\*innenhaus Mousonturm, and a film series by **Kidlat Tahimik** and **Nick Deocampo** at the Deutsches Filminstitut Filmmuseum (DFF).

A publication on Rizal will be released- a monograph about the textile collection housed at the Berlin Ethnological Museum, and the entomological and herpetological specimens held at the Senckenberg Naturhistorische Sammlungen Dresden.

Together, these events offer a multi-sensory experience of Philippine culture. Full details are available in the press kit.

The Philippine Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025 is a collaborative undertaking of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the National Book Development Board (NBDB), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Office of Senator Loren Legarda.

Information about the theme and full event details can be found on the official website **[philippinesfrankfurt2025.com](https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com)**, or download the **digital press kit**. Stay updated through the **official social media channels** @philippinefrankfurt2025 on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn.