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PHILIPPINES

GUEST OF HONOUR

FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2025



The imagination peoples the air



PHILIPPINES GUEST OF HONOUR
FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2025

02	PRESS RELEASE The World Deserves to Hear Philippine Voices, 135 Languages and a Market of Untold Stories
06	THEME The imagination peoples the air
09	DESIGN The Philippines Guest of Honour Pavilion
14	LITERARY PROGRAM OVERVIEW We Stand By Our Stories
19	CULTURAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW
21	PROFILES
26	EVENT SCHEDULE Our Spaces
28	DELEGATES The Philippine Delegates
32	BOOKS The Philippine Books at the Guest of Honour Pavilion
34	TRANSLATION Philippines In Translation
36	PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE Philippine Publishing Landscape 2025 by the National Book Development Board
47	HISTORY AND TIMELINE The History of the Philippine Participation
53	AGENCIES An Interagency Project
56	CREDITS Behind The Scenes



The World Deserves to Hear Philippine Voices, 135 Languages and a Market of Untold Stories

The Philippines, as this year's Frankfurt Book Fair Guest of Honour country, positions its literature as a driver of global dialogue, co-publishing ventures, translation, and other rights sales.

Five hundred titles available for rights selling, 102 official delegation of creatives—authors, illustrators, artists, and publishers—will be present at the Philippine spaces at the Frankfurter Buchmesse (FBM). These are prime hubs for negotiations, partnerships, and literary discovery.

The Philippines Guest of Honour (GOH) presence spans three venues: the Philippine GOH Pavilion (Forum 1) with its rich literary and cultural program, Philippine Stand (Hall 5.1 A95 and B95) and Asia Stage (Hall 5.1 A75) for rights and co-publishing, and the Comics Stand (Hall 6.1 A38).

From ancient epics like the *Hudhud* and *Darangen* to the works of national hero and writer Jose Rizal, today's writers in the Philippines and its diaspora create stories that embody centuries of memory and imagination. Rooted in oral traditions, indigenous culture, and shaped by its colonial history and political struggle, Philippine literature remains culturally distinctive.

Its 135 languages spread across 7641 islands is one of its greatest strengths. Each language carries its own worldview and rhythm, with stories that are layered, original, and adaptable. For international publishers, this richness offers a steady pipeline of narratives that potentially stand out in translation markets and connect deeply with readers worldwide.

"The Philippines strengthens support for its authors and publishers, by building lasting global collaborations and advancing cultural diplomacy. When we share our stories, we add proof of the importance of democracy, human rights, and the values our people continue to fight for until this very day," said Senator Loren Legarda, project visionary and Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Culture and Arts.

CLIMATE, THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Philippines' climate fiction is rooted in islands and communities facing rising seas and violent storms, as read in Darryl Delgado's award-winning novel *Remains* (German: *Überreste*) set against the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan.

Young adult novels like Candy Gourlay's acclaimed *Wild Song*, a critically lauded coming-of-age novel set in the mountains of the Cordilleras, gives readers an entry point into Philippine indigenous culture while telling a universal story of identity and belonging.

Philippine writing moves fluidly between fiction and nonfiction, often blurring the personal and the political. Jose Dalisay's macabre yet lyrical *Soledad's Sister* (German: *Last Call Manila*) portrays the lives of diaspora and migrant workers.

Katrina Tuvera's *The Collaborators* (German: *Die Kollaborateure*) revisits complicity during the various political epochs including the Marcos dictatorship, while Jessica Zafra's *The Age of Umbrage* (German: *Ein ziemlich böses Mädchen*) captures with wit and humor society's class fractures. Allan Derain's *Aswanglaut* (German: *Das Meer der Aswang*), grounded in his research on the islands, reimagines myth and folklore to illuminate how the supernatural intersects with history and contemporary anxieties.

In nonfiction, Maria Ressa's *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* and Patricia Evangelista's *Some People Need Killing* confront authoritarianism, disinformation, and the cost of resistance. Together, these works show why and how Philippine literature keeps its cultural identity while being globally relevant.

Nobel Laureate Ressa, Dalisay, Tuvera, Derain, Evangelista, Zafra, and National Artists for Literature, Film and Music, and more award-winning writers will participate in over 150 talks, festivals, performances, exhibitions, workshops, and conversations at the Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion, at stages of the Frankfurt Book Fair, and in museums, galleries, and libraries in Frankfurt am Main.

A VIABLE SOURCE FOR PUBLISHERS

With a translation subsidy program announced only in late 2023, more than a hundred, 173 to date to be exact, international translations across literary genres have been sold across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, with editions already out in Germany, Spain, Egypt, and France.

The Philippine comics sector is thriving, leading is Budjette Tan and Kajo Baldesimo's *Trese* which blends folklore with urban noir, proving how comics can leap from page to global screen through its Netflix adaptation.

Sa Wala, the work of Ren Galeno, the 2024 Pulitzer Prize finalist, is a horror novel that doubles as social commentary and has become one of the most widely translated Philippine works with editions in Portuguese, French, Thai, Spanish, German, and more.

The National Book Development Board (NBDB) is eyeing over PHP 60 million, or roughly 885,000 €, to translation and rights support over the next five years. International publishers have already received subsidy backing, guaranteeing they will continue to find export-ready manuscripts backed by government programs and professional networks.

The Philippines' competitive edge lies in its English-language proficiency, enabling many authors to write directly for international readers. Combined with programs such as the NBDB's Translation Subsidy Program, this makes Philippine titles especially attractive for rights buyers seeking content ready for the global market.

With a median age of 25.3, the Philippines boasts one of Southeast Asia's youngest readerships—fuelling a new wave of trendsetting in genres like new adult. Authors such as Mina Esguerra and her #RomanceClass community, many of whom self-publish, are cultivating loyal audiences and redefining how books find their readers.

ENGAGE WITH THE PHILIPPINES AT FRANKFURT

From October 15–19, more than 150 events will take place at the Frankfurter Buchmesse, alongside exhibitions, concerts, performances, and films across the city.

At the official FBM Opening Event, Senator Loren Legarda will deliver the Philippine address, followed by two literary numbers *Halad: A Poetry Trilogue* by poets Merlie Alunan, Marjorie Evasco, and Mookie Katigbak Lacuesta. A musical number, from chant to choir, with National Living Treasure Rosie Sula and The Philippine Madrigal Singers, will show how oral tradition and musical performance remain inseparable from Philippine literature.

The Philippines' Guest of Honour (PHL GOH) participation is a project of the National Book Development Board (NBDB), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Office of Senator Loren Legarda.

Senator Legarda's visionary leadership and steadfast support have been central to making this possible, with curators Karina Bolasco and Patrick Flores, and execution led by co-directors Charisse Aquino-Tugade (NBDB) and Aurea Brigino Lopez (NCCA). They are joined by a core team of publishing and creative veterans—Ani Almario, Kristian Cordero, Neni Sta. Romana-Cruz, and Nida Ramirez—together with a wide network of cultural workers and partners.

The book fair runs from October 15 to 19, 2025.

To know about our events page: philippinesfrankfurt2025.com/events

THEME

The imagination peoples the air

*Pinupuno
ang hangin
ng hiwating*

***Fantasie
beseelt
die Luft***



The Guest of Honour spaces of the Philippines of the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025 plays 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. 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 "hiwatig" becomes more apt because it considers premonition, instinct, presentiment, suspicion, 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 key words 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 is the space, the climate for sharing: democratic, deliberative, daring, convivial, peopled by imagination, prompted to action by speculation. 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 book makers, book lovers, and their broad public. It is this substantial Philippine air—metaphoric, elemental, metamorphic—that is 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 complicate the primacy of the written culture. The pavilion brings to the fore both the literacy and orality in the Philippines, the literature of both voice and word.

The pavilion offers a trajectory that pursues 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 takes place.

PATRICK FLORES

Curator

Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion

DESIGN

The Philippines Guest of Honour Pavilion



The architectural design and scenography of the Philippine Pavilion as Guest of Honour create a warm and fair space for introspection and wonder. As an honoured guest, the Philippines cherishes this invitation and hospitality at the same time that it inhabits the site with its own historical experience and interests in a present riven 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 in the pavilion, 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.

The Philippine Pavilion, designed by Stanley Ruiz, integrates local materials with modular architecture that is also furniture. The presence of local form speaks to age-old and contemporary creative disciplines but also to emerging innovation, bringing together distinct sensibility and the talent in deconstruction and improvised assembly, viewed as an exploration rather than a fixed and fixated final look of identity. The construction features bamboo in the furniture, Philippine materials and techniques in conversation with industrial elements like steel. 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 are translucent membranes that recall the quality of kites or lamps, both referencing anecdotes around Jose Rizal. The said surfaces are also screens on which are projected the moving-image project of **Gary-Ross Pastrana** and the drawings of **David Medalla** as animated by **Mervin Malonzo**. The flipbooks of **Miljohn Ruperto** that ruminate on time and space are distributed across the zones. 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.

PATRICK FLORES

Curator

Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion







We Stand By Our Stories



“The imagination peoples the air” is our theme as this year’s Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair. It is taken from a line in a chapter of the subversive novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, that in the 19th century inspired the first anti-colonial revolution in Southeast Asia. The writer, Jose Rizal, like many of our ilustrados who went to Europe to fight for reforms in the Spanish colonial administration of our government, had to write and publish it while in exile, away from his country where he could be executed. It was printed in Berlin in 1887; when Rizal returned home, he was ordered shot by firing squad in Manila in 1896.

This is a historical connection to Germany that brought us here, two countries forged so differently by their past and collective remembrance. What we bring over is our literature, described by National Artist Bienvenido Lumbera as “an alternation of assertion and acquiescence by the creative Filipino imagination within a cultural setting fostered by our people’s interaction with two different sets of colonial masters.”

Our narrative of struggles against European colonization will play out in a space, which in the last 500 years, has been seen safe for free critical international engagement, and where the currency is the book.

The imagination peopling the air is exactly what writers do— they create worlds and the characters who people them. Our literature’s wide expanse is from air to air, from oral forms to digital. Our literature is the entire body of works spoken, chanted, sung as epics and folklore, written as novels, poetry, essays, and drama, by all of our creative citizens in and out of the country, expressed in their many beautiful languages, and mirror our multidiverse culture, entangled in our complex history of colonization and suppression, resistance and survival.

“The imagination peoples the air with specters,” is the complete line from the story of a mother turned mad by the specter of death of a young son, a sacristan relentlessly abused by their Spanish parish priest. *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, Rizal’s two novels were incendiary and led to the Philippine Revolution of 1896, whose spirit and energy will reverberate at the FBM while the world painfully watches the genocide in Gaza, the invasion of Ukraine, and the atrocities in Syria and in Sudan.

Literature is absolutely a rich way to know and understand a people and their culture. It is never static and continues to form a people’s consciousness and well being, fortify or disrupt their beliefs and values, or preserve their sacred traditions.

It is one thing to define and describe our national literature and our vibrant literary landscape, it is another, and extremely much more difficult, to represent it in one wholistic literary program.

At the core of the challenge is a tension. On the one hand, we have all these recovered stories, not like archaeological artifacts from the deep ground, but living pulsating stories we now know with certainty, should be shared with the world. We stand with them, by them, and for them. We speak them back.

On the other, because the rest of the world has not heard of us, we tend to calibrate the many ways of engaging, of holding attention, of baring and sharing the stories as force for truth, solidarity, and critical reflection.

As we occupy center stage at the global literary marketplace, in this time when the world is malignantly divided, our spaces: the **Philippine 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.

Mindfully lined-up on two stages of our Guest of Honour Pavilion, in both the proscenium and the arena are talks, conversations, interviews, panels, annotated readings, performed poetry, rap and flitop, chants, music and dance, live drawing, language teaching, annotated film excerpts, and other performances inspired by books. They are clustered into the following themes:

1. **“That You May Know Us”** is not driven by what image of ourselves can we pitch to sell translation rights but rather refers to the fundamental characteristics of our nature as humans, of our arts and culture — what is the Filipino spirit? What is Filipino imagination? How does a National Artist poet write for a nation? How is music our heart? What are our traditional poetic forms in the different regions? How are our stories mythical and spiritual?
2. **“What Moves Us”** are the many stories spun into film and documentary, the graphic novel which seems new in form but really, old and wise in soul, our food history and culture, and our tales borne by disaster and poverty, which all tie us up with the global south.
3. **“While We are Away”** covers worlds shaped by memories of home, and those which critically study home from far away.

4. **“What Bewitches Us”** is the literature of the body moved by melodies of the wind and sea, simply by poignant and powerful storytelling.

5. **“What We Imagine”** includes the bounty of our literary output, and the width and depth of our artistic explorations for our children and young people.

6. **“What We Keep and Remember”** is our history of resistance and struggles against inequality and repression; the haunting of spaces outside of the imperial city; and our openness to our indigenous spiritualities and multiple spaces. The Poetry for freedom, justice, and peace, featured twice a day, is reflection and dialogue via poetry. The talks are dovetailed by musical performances of voice and instrument.

As important is our program on the Asia Stage, co-hosted by Rex Education and the Buchmesse, where we will talk to our neighbors, who like us have also been colonized by European imperial powers. Here we rediscover and recover our ties, our taste for one another’s commerce, strongly visible in our robust pre-colonial trade in the region.

Appreciative of our very own, our tongue different as it may be from one country to another, we can now participate in our common but diverse artistic and cultural conversations.

Our National Stand, all of 300 square meters, shall showcase thousands of titles for rights sales and international distribution in Frankfurt Book Fair — the largest and oldest marketplace for books. It will be a venue for launches of international editions of Philippine works, for micro-conversations and publishers’ meetings, for readings and book signings.

Complementing these main spaces are libraries, museums, galleries, and film institutes in Frankfurt City and other nearby towns, which will hold their own literary festivals, mount and host exhibitions of art and artifacts, and where films will be screened and discussed.

We shall bring a delegation of over 100 creatives, with three national Artists: for Literature, for Film, and for Music. With us too are a chanter who is a National Living Treasure, and our Nobel laureate for Peace.

A big group are publishers and authors whose books now have German or foreign editions ready by October. The PhlGOH Core Team knows it is important to support our partner German and foreign publishers by bringing the authors over for bookstore readings and signings, and media interviews within and outside the Fair.

We have invited the best to represent and speak about our history and heritage, arts and culture especially our literature, and they, who by themselves are established authors and respected names in their genres.

In all, we are mindful of being as inclusive as we are richly diverse, democratic and contemporary, deliberate in partnering the wise and the emergent writers and creatives in the many conversations over pressing issues as voice, identity, survival, justice, and dignity for all.

This participation is a political act, not a posture of neutrality, but a declaration of the nation's lived struggles, and of its literary vision to claim its own seat at an equal global table.

For books forge our beliefs, interrogate our assumptions, involve us in important conversations that may impact this complex world. They argue bravely for the dignity of all humanity— they hold us by the hand to where we may imagine a clear path to a just future.

The delegation believes that literature must speak boldly and categorically against injustice and oppression, as we have, many times, over the centuries.

To be present is to meet head-on the difficult and complex stories, not turn away from them, but stand by them, this time, from our many peoples' points of view— through words wisdomed by our various experiences— they now inspire us to come together as a literary and cultural force.

As the world gathers in Frankfurt, the Philippines shall bring with its books, its resplendent voice—firm, open, critical, and fiercely certain that storytelling remains one of humanity's most powerful tools for truth and transformation.

Good books, great literature, beyond time and place, seize human nature by its collarbone, and dissect it, to know how and why it descends from dark to darkest, but also to imagine as palpably as possible that it can, and will, leap back into the light.

KARINA AFRICA BOLASCO

Head, Literary Program
Curator of Books

Cultural Program



The cultural program of the Philippines as Guest of Honour Country at the Frankfurt Book Fair shines a light on the robust contemporary art as well as scholarship on Philippine cultural materials in Germany. They are represented by artists and scholars who live and work in the Philippines and those who have migrated overseas.

The program includes: a film screening of the select works of two filmmakers; a performance of movement; a publication of Philippine artifacts in Germany; an immersive sonic event; a musical concert of Philippine songs; and a series of exhibitions on: Philippine ethnographic collections and responses of contemporary artists; the Philippine Passion called *Pasyon*; Philippine contemporary photography and architecture; the relationship between National Hero Jose Rizal and Heidelberg; and a revered teller of stories for children and contemporary painting of living folklore.

PATRICK FLORES

Curator

Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion

To know more about the cultural program and its schedules visit: <https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com/cultural-programs/>

Profiles





SENATOR LOREN LEGARDA

Project Advocate

Senator Loren Legarda is the visionary and project principal of the participation of the Philippines as Guest of Honour country in the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2025.

Since 2016, Legarda has pushed for this distinction as Guest of Honor at the world's oldest and most prestigious book fair. It was late in 2015 when Karina Bolasco, then Director of the Ateneo de Manila University Press, presented the idea to support the Fair, and Legarda has done so ever since.

Legarda has long been an advocate of cultural preservation. Through her vision and leadership, the Philippines is now actively participating in the Venice Biennale, returning after 51 years to the 2015 Art Biennale and joining for the first time in the Architecture Biennale in 2016.

The four-term Senator is currently the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Culture and the Arts. She has legislated several measures, including RA 11961 or the Cultural Mapping Law, which mandates the creation of an inventory of our cultural wealth. She has also promoted our country's cultural discourse with universities abroad through the Philippine Studies Program, under the Department of Foreign Affairs.

In appreciation for her lifelong advocacy to protect and preserve our culture, heritage, and the arts, Senator Legarda was conferred the *Dangal ng Haraya* (Achievement Award) by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Through her efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with other countries, the Senator was bestowed with the title of Knight in the French National Order of the Legion of Honor, Knight in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, the Commendatore to the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and the Award of Distinction by the European Union.



MARIA KARINA A. BOLASCO

Head of Literary Program and Curator of 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 2023, she was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Manila Critics Circle and The Hildegard Award for Changemakers in Media.



PATRICK FLORES

Curator, Philippine Guest of Honour 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 56th 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.



STANLEY RUIZ

Designer, Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion

Stanley Ruiz is an industrial designer and principal of Estudio Ruiz - a Manila-based design consultancy he founded after working in Bali and New York City. With an extensive background in craft design and production, his work explores the commonplace to bring about new meaning and interpretation to object archetypes.

His works have appeared at the Museum of Arts and Design and at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. He has exhibited at Salone Del Mobile in Milan, International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York, Maison & Objet in Paris and Singapore, Ambiente in Frankfurt, Bangkok International Gift Fair, Philippine International Furniture Show, Manila FAME, Singapore Design Week, and Tokyo Gift Fair.

Stanley has been featured internationally in a number of books, magazines, and newspapers, and received several accolades including three *Katha* awards (Manila), Coup De Coeur prize at Maison & Objet (Paris), Talents selection at Ambiente (Frankfurt), Outstanding Asian Talent (Bangkok), Rising Asian Talent award at Maison & Objet (Singapore), and was hailed as an Avant Guardian by Surface magazine (New York).

Notable projects include lighting fixture design using renewable materials for Design Center Philippines, furniture design for Areté and the Ateneo Art Gallery, sculptural pieces for Conrad Hotel Manila, installation for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit commissioned by the Cultural Center of the Philippines, collaboration with glass makers in the Czech Republic, and creative direction for the Philippine delegation at NY NOW – the biggest design show in the US.

In 2024, he was conferred the *Gawad Yamang Isip* for Industrial Design by the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines for his contributions in the field of design.

EVENT SCHEDULE



Our Spaces

Philippine Guest Of Honour Pavilion | **FORUM 1**

Philippine Stand | **HALL 5.1 A95 & B95**

Asia Stage | **HALL 5.1 A75**

Comics Stand | **HALL 6.1 A38**

AT THE FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2025

The Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion (Forum 1) at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025 will present over 100 talks, readings, and performances. Meanwhile, at the Philippine Stand (Hall 5.1 A95), Asia Stage (Hall 5.1 B95), and Comics Stand (Hall 6.1 A38) - programs highlights the country's publishing strengths across fiction, graphic novels, children's and young adult titles, romance, nonfiction, poetry, and new adult.

The Philippine Stand will serve as the central hub for rights and business negotiations with 52 publishers, while the Asia Stage, co-sponsored by Rex Education and Frankfurter Buchmesse, will host B2B discussions on topics such as censorship, comics, and generative AI.

OTHER STAGES WITH PHILIPPINE AUTHORS

Filipino voices will resonate across multiple venues beyond the Philippine stages—including the Frankfurt Book Fair's Center Stage. From conversations on fake news, democracy, and historical memory to explorations of translation, technology, and storytelling, these events reflect the range and vitality of Philippine literature and thought. Featured participants include Maria Ressa, Patricia Evangelista, Jessica Zafra, Allan Derain, and many others, alongside international partners and moderators.

BEYOND THE FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2025

Beyond the fairgrounds, the Philippines is partnering with German institutions and museums to mount exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, and events across Germany and Europe.

The literary program features Filipino authors in readings and signings of newly translated works at major festivals, including the Harbourfront Literaturfestival Hamburg, and Literaturtage Zofingen. Highlights in Frankfurt include *Jose on the Go: A Rizal Stroll* with Ambeth Ocampo, *Filipino Plot Twists* with Jose Dalisay and Beverly W. Siy at the Zentralbibliothek, *Komiks Live!* at Romanfabrik, *Liwaliw* at Kulturforum Hanau, celebrating Filipino food, games, and music.

Link to our events page with full PDF calendar available on our digital press kit: <https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com/events/> or go to Frankfurt Connect <https://connect.buchmesse.de/newfront>



DELEGATES

The Philippine Delegates



More than 400 delegates—authors, illustrators, artists, creatives, cultural practitioners, publishers, stakeholders and supporters—will take part in the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025, bringing a Philippine perspective rich in imagination, identity, and unique stories to the world’s largest stage for books and ideas.

OFFICIAL DELEGATION

The official delegation of 102 supported includes those who responded to the National Book Development’s call for delegates, Filipino authors with German translations, and experts in their fields. Represented are independent publishers, academic and textbook producers, established commercial houses, and specialty presses across genres. Together, they embody the full spectrum and professionalism of the Philippine publishing industry.

THE OFFICIAL DELEGATES

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Camille Abaya | 26. Carlorozy |
| 2. Patricio N. Abinales | 27. Stephanie Marie Co |
| 3. Manix Abrera | 28. Ryan Cuatrona |
| 4. Darwin Absari | 29. Jose Dalisay |
| 5. Filomeno Aguilar | 30. Trixia Vail Dalumpines |
| 6. Aldy Aguirre | 31. Kawayan de Guia |
| 7. Gigo Alampay | 32. Nick Deocampo |
| 8. Roby Alampay | 33. Allan Derain |
| 9. Miguel Alcazaren | 34. Beth Parrocha |
| 10. Fr. Albert Alejo | 35. Gladys Doronila |
| 11. Dean Francis Alfar | 36. Ace C. Enriquez |
| 12. Aurora Almendral | 37. Mina V. Esguerra |
| 13. Merlie M. Alunan | 38. Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla |
| 14. Bambi Eloriaga-Amago | 39. Patricia Evangelista |
| 15. Ardie Aquino | 40. Rey Evangelista |
| 16. Maria Rilkë Arguelles | 41. Danielle Florendo |
| 17. Jane Arguelles | 42. Liza Flores |
| 18. Yasmin Arquiza | 43. Marcus Flores |
| 19. Genevieve L. Asenjo | 44. Tara Frejas |
| 20. Kyra Ballesteros | 45. Blaise Campo Gacosc |
| 21. Albert Banico | 46. Kata Garcia |
| 22. Nikki B. Carsi Cruz | 47. Luis Gatmaitan |
| 23. Ian Rosales Casocot | 48. Candy Gourlay |
| 24. Paul Alcosoba Castillo | 49. Annette Hug |
| 25. Aria Chelabian | 50. Jay Ignacio |

51. Patricia May B. Jurilla
52. Dione Kong
53. Sarge Lacuesta
54. Mookie Lacuesta
55. Robert Laurio
56. Rio Lim
57. Avid Liongoren
58. Alreena Levy
59. Ipat G. Luna
60. Lio Mangubat
61. Jerico Marte
62. Dorian S. Merina
63. Russell L. Molina
64. Ace Vincent Molo
65. Asa Montenejo
66. Ambeth R. Ocampo
67. Dina Ocampo
68. Katrina F. Olan
69. Charlson Ong
70. Frances Ong
71. Marga Ortigas
72. Benedict Parfan
73. Chuckberry J. Pascual
74. Marjorie Evasco
75. Ralph Kristoffer Porio
76. Katrina Tuvera
77. Ige Ramos
78. Danton Remoto
79. CJ Reynaldo
80. Analyn Salvador-Amores
81. June Sandoval
82. Robin Sebolino
83. Howie Severino
84. Beverly W. Siy
85. Isa Songco
86. Ian Sta. Maria
87. Noelle Sy-Quia
88. Fr. Dennis G. Tamayo
89. Budjette Tan
90. Yvette Tan
91. Claude Tayag
92. Ergoe Tinio
93. Renato C. Tranquilino
94. Rowena Festin
95. Randy Valiente
96. Arianne Velasquez
97. Jane Vergara
98. Ronald II Verzo
99. Cindy Wong
100. Alaric "Anygma" Yuson
101. Tanya Yuson
102. Jessica Zafra

For their complete bio go to
philippinesfrankfurt2025.com/authors-books/



INDEPENDENT DELEGATES

Alongside them are 300+ independent creatives: writers, illustrators, performers, publishers, cultural workers and stakeholders —who are traveling to Frankfurt on their own. They do so because they believe in the project, support fellow Filipino authors and creatives, and are eager to represent the Philippines in this landmark cultural moment. Their presence underscores the solidarity and passion of the creative community, adding vibrancy and diversity to the official program.

A COLLECTIVE PRESENCE

Together, the official and independent delegates present the strength of Philippine publishing and creativity. They carry the shared vision to connect with global audiences, secure translation and rights opportunities, and position the Philippines as both a cultural force and a competitive player in the international book industry.

For authors bio go to the link:

<https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com/authors-books/>

BOOKS

The Philippine Books at the Guest of Honour Pavilion



How were they selected?

The Philippine Guest of Honour Pavilion at the Frankfurt Book Fair features more than 500 books curated by a Selection Team of experts in various fields. Convened by the Curation Committee under the leadership of Karina Bolasco, the Team presents to an international audience the country's literary canon. Available throughout the Pavilion, the collection invites authors publishers, editors, and book lovers to engage with the Philippines' imagination, history, and creative future.

The selection is anchored on four key nodes (1) A Tribute to Rizal, (2) Books on the Philippines, (3) National Artists/ National Living Treasures and (4) History of Books.

Further, the History of Books is organized into three themes: Diversity, Histories, and Hope and Faith. Diversity covers books on indigenous peoples and knowledge, gender studies, climate justice, food history and culture, urban studies, and translation traditions. Histories features books on patriotism, resistance and protest, our heroes and patriots, and the evolution and growth of our arts. Hope and Faith includes books on our Catholic piety and spirituality, and the works of all our great storytellers: the wise and emergent, those in diaspora, and those for our youth: children's books, young and new adult, and graphic novels.

Taken together, these books position the Philippines as a dynamic literary market and cultural partner, offering stories that are deeply rooted yet globally relevant. They remind every visitor that the Filipino imagination does not merely dwell on the page: it lives, it resists, and brings new ways of looking.

THE PHILIPPINE STAND: BOOKS FOR RIGHTS SELLING

Scan the code: <https://books.gov.ph/catalogs/>



TRANSLATION

Philippines in Translation



Central to the GOH presentation is the NBDB's Translation Subsidy Program, supporting 43 titles across fiction, children's literature, poetry, and graphic novels for translation in 2025. Twenty-seven publishers from 25 countries—including Germany, Japan, UAE, Canada, and the UK—have committed to translating and publishing Philippine works. Since 2024, the program has supported the translation of 173 titles.

TRANSLATION SUBSIDY

As the Philippines assumes its role as Guest of Honour at the 77th Frankfurter Buchmesse in 2025, foreign publishers are invited to participate in bringing Philippine literature to international audiences. Through the National Book Development Board's Translation Subsidy Program, publishers may access financial support to translate and publish Philippine works in their local languages, thereby introducing new voices, enriching their catalogues, and fostering cultural connections with readers worldwide.

Foreign publishers—whether micro, small, medium, or large enterprises legally registered outside the Philippines—are eligible to apply if they have acquired translation rights from a Philippine publisher. At the time of application, a signed translation contract must be in place between the applicant and the Philippine publisher, with retroactive applications accepted for contracts executed within the past three years. The Philippine publisher must hold an active NBDB registration and be duly authorized by the original rights holder to transact for the work to be translated. Applicants must also confirm that they are not receiving any other translation grants or subsidies from PhlGoH2025 member agencies. Eligible works must be originally published in the Philippines, written in any Philippine language, and not yet translated into the target language proposed in the application.

Subsidies range from PHP 70,000 (USD 1,200) for children's literature to PHP 250,000 (USD 4,500) for classics, contemporary fiction, nonfiction, historical, and cultural works. Most other genres—including young adult, culinary, travel, graphic novels, poetry, and experimental or new media—are supported at PHP 150,000 (USD 2,600).

Application Period: 01 August - 30 November 2025

Deadline for Applications: 30 November 2025, 11:59 PM (PH Time/GMT+8)

Announcement of Beneficiaries: on or before 15 December 2025

Application Period: 16 February - 17 April 2026

Deadline for applications: 17 April 2026; 11:59 PM (PH Time/GMT+8)

Announcement of beneficiaries: on or before 31 May 2026

More information here:

<https://philippinesfrankfurt2025.com/translation/>

PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE

**Philippine
Publishing
Landscape
2025
by the
National Book
Development
Board**



Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. The Philippines, renowned for its scenic islands and biodiversity, derives its true wealth from its people. With a population of approximately 109 million spread across 7,641 islands, Filipinos encompass at least 135 ethnolinguistic groups. This diversity shapes Philippine literature, reflecting a history of conquest, resistance, and cultural resilience. Epics, myths, and stories, preserved through centuries of colonization, have been passed down orally and in print, forming the foundation of contemporary writing.

This interplay has created a unique literary tradition that blends indigenous and Southeast Asian roots with European influences, American education, and the distinct voice of modern Filipino writers.

YOUTHFUL DEMOGRAPHIC

With a median age of 25.3 years, the Philippines boasts one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia. The energy and creativity of this young population fuel the growth of varied literary genres and innovative storytelling, positioning the Philippines as a hub for new voices in the global literary scene.

READING HABITS

Philippine literature today produces a wide range of genres, including speculative fiction, climate fiction, new adult, and graphic novels and comics, reflecting the nation's multifaceted cultural influences and global outlook.

While English and Tagalog dominate as the primary languages of published works, regional languages like Cebuano, Ilocano, Bikolnon, and Hiligaynon thrive, preserving linguistic richness across the country. The growing popularity of bilingual books and those that incorporate code-switching celebrates the Philippines' diverse linguistic heritage, making literature more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of readers. The Filipino diasporic population of 10.8 million, spread across the globe, further enriches these narratives by infusing global perspectives into local traditions, creating a dynamic interplay of identities and stories.

BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Philippine book publishing industry is supported by a network of bookstores and libraries. Major bookstore chains, alongside independent retailers, serve urban centers, while the **National Book Development Board (NBDB)** works to expand access in rural areas. Public libraries, though often underfunded, remain vital for community access to literature, with initiatives to modernize and digitize.

READING CHALLENGES

Despite a strong foundation, leisure reading faces challenges, with many Filipinos favoring other entertainment options over books. Limited access to bookstores and libraries in remote areas, a shortage of books in local languages, and high book prices restrict widespread engagement with literature. The NBDB addresses these issues through programs promoting reading, supporting local publishers, and improving distribution networks to ensure that the wealth of Filipino stories reaches every corner of the archipelago.

This diverse and evolving literary landscape, shaped by a youthful population and a rich cultural heritage, underscores the Philippines' unique position in global literature. As the NBDB works to fulfill its mandate, the nation's stories—rooted in history, yet ever-adapting—continue to captivate and inspire.

LITERARY LANDSCAPE

The dynamics of Philippine book publishing are largely defined by an ecosystem of close-knit literary communities and publishing entities to create an environment that is conducive to close collaborations between publisher and author. Long-standing industry associations such as the **Book Development Association of the Philippines** and the **Philippine Educational Publishers Association**, among others, further strengthen these already established networks of authors, editors, illustrators, designers, and publishers that produce a diverse array of genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, romance and new adult, children's books and young adult, and graphic novels and comics.

Each genre has sub-categories: Fiction has expanded to speculative, noir, and climate fiction; new adult and young adult 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.

Historically, the Philippine literary scene was shaped by colonial influences, particularly from Spain and the United States, which prioritized foreign languages and imported books. As the primary medium of instruction for much of the 20th Century, English often overshadowed local languages and stories. Despite this, Filipino writers persisted, producing works in Filipino and regional languages,

often rooted in oral traditions and folklore. The post-independence era saw a resurgence of interest in local narratives, with writers like Jose Garcia Villa and Nick Joaquin gaining prominence.

Literary awards such as the **Palanca Awards** (established in 1950) and writers' organizations like **PEN Philippines** (founded in 1957) and **Unyon ng Mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas** (UMPIL, founded in 1974) laid the foundation for a robust literary culture, nurturing talent and fostering national pride in Filipino storytelling.

Today, the literary landscape thrives through a cycle of creation, engagement, and recognition. Unlike global markets, the Philippines lacks literary agents that enables direct author-publisher relationships and enhance collaboration. Indie presses are rising, often earning various accolades and winning awards for innovative works, while the **Palanca Awards** and the **National Book Awards**, co-administered by the Filipino Critics Circle (established in 1981, formerly known as the Manila Critics Circle), continue to honor literary excellence. Literary events, such as book launches, readings, writing workshops, and festivals like the **Manila International Book Fair** (45 years running) and the PBF draw large audiences and expand access to local literature. The **Silliman Writers Workshop**, Asia's oldest university-based workshop at 63 years, alongside similar programs at top universities, continues to develop new voices.

However, challenges persist. Imported books, primarily from the United States and the United Kingdom, dominate major bookstore chains due to historical trade policies from the American colonial period, marginalizing locally published works. Further, the implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) under Republic Act 10533 of 2013 faces hurdles in producing sufficient regional-language materials, despite encouraging the development of local stories. Limited funding, uneven distribution networks, and low readership rates further hinder the industry's growth.

It is worth noting that the Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes the need to spur the development of more local books for use in the country's libraries and library hubs. To support this, the DepEd has increased the budget for the National Reading Program (NRP) to PHP 644.3 million (US\$11.3 million) under the 2023 Continuing Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) Funds. Additionally, through the policy recommendation of the NBDB, the total budget for procuring Supplementary Learning Resources (SLRs), which include books, online resources, educational toys, and other materials to enhance and support the curriculum for teachers and learners, has been raised to about PHP 2.54 billion (US\$44.47 million).

WHAT KINDS OF BOOKS DOES THE PHILIPPINES PRODUCE?

While the Philippine book market is relatively young, with much room for increased production, it is shaping up to be one of the fastest-growing in Southeast Asia, having seen an expansion in recent years in sectors such as translation, children's books, nonfiction, and graphic novels and comics.

Translation and graphic novels, in particular, are promising sectors that the NBDB is keen on developing, with programs such as its Translation Grant and literary festivals that focus on Philippine graphic novels and global rights sales.

The Philippine book market produces an average of 13,018 new titles per year, based on 2024 ISBN registrations. In terms of book consumption, approximately 30% of sales are retail purchases by individual readers, while the remaining 70% come from wholesale buyers, with the Department of Education serving as the primary institutional purchaser.

In terms of the industry's composition, the Philippine book publishing landscape is very diverse, with various markets that cater to different kinds of readers: there is the romance and new adult sector, perhaps one of the Philippine book market's largest and most prolific, and a children's book sector made up of several industry stalwarts that have shaped the trajectory of stories read by young readers.

The Philippine book market also has a burgeoning comics and graphic novels scene, which, in the past decade or so has seen the rising popularity of Philippine mythology and fantasy. Its growth and progress in both scope and content can be credited to publishers.

There is also a strong, long-standing tradition of literary and academic titles through the country's academic presses, which publish both literary fiction and poetry, and pioneering scholarship and nonfiction. The country's fiction notably features historical narratives, making sense of its colonial past via stories set in modern Philippine society, as well as stories about the lives of the Philippine diaspora.

Contemporary fiction and nonfiction are replete with progressive themes and narratives courtesy of young radical voices and independent publishers—the latter having been on the rise in the past five years, pushing the boundaries of

content and form. Some notable independent publishers include **Balangay Books**, **Everything's Fine**, and **Exploding Galaxies**, which is producing the first Philippine editions of “lost” and out-of-print classics of Philippine fiction.

ROMANCE & 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 diverse and emergent romance fiction industry in the Philippines. Each of these sectors is also connected to the media industry and sites of bookish reception in the Philippines in distinctive ways.

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 PHP20 (US\$0.36) to PHP40 (US\$0.71) per copy.

These 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.

Traditionally published romance novels are also on the up and up. Big producers are **Anvil Publishing**, the publishing arm of National Book Store, the country's largest book retail chain, and **Summit Books**, through their Pop Fiction platform. In recent years, global digital writing and reading platforms such as Wattpad and others have leveraged their 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 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, **Gwy Saludes's** popular **University Series** (first published on Wattpad) was adapted into a hit television series distributed by production companies Viva One and TV5. Famous Filipino love teams have also starred in films adapted from traditionally published romance books.

Meanwhile, 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.

The demand for Philippine children's books remains high, as evidenced by their significant sales at local book fairs and their continued popularity among readers. On average, brand-new children's books are priced between PHP150 (US\$2.63) and PHP200 (US\$3.51), while board and activity books for early readers typically range from PHP100 (US\$1.75) to PHP300 (US\$5.26).

Secondhand options are also widely available, with paperbacks usually sold for PHP100 (US\$1.75) to PHP200 (US\$3.51), and weight-based deals offering even lower prices—sometimes as little as PHP80 (US\$1.40) per book. Popular titles, however, can still fetch upwards of PHP300 (US\$5.26), even in thrift shops.

In terms of content, 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, emphasizing values such as peace and a strong sense of country, while also tackling challenging topics like war, famine, death, grief, and the nation's historical tragedies to remain relevant and reflective of real life.

In recent years, Philippine children's literature has embraced more progressive and inclusive themes, featuring LGBTQIA+ families and stories that challenge traditional norms. For instance, **Mary Ann Ordinario's** *Bulul* follows a young girl navigating her grandfather's death, using the metaphor of a carved wooden figure to nurture emotional understanding and resilience in children facing grief, offering a tender exploration of loss. Similarly, *Ako ay May Kiki* by **Glenda Oris** features a five-year-old girl who learns from her mother about proper hygiene and the importance of privacy and personal safety, fostering awareness about self-protection in a culturally sensitive way. In *Ang Pambihirang Buhok ni Raquel* by **Dr. Luis Gatmaitan**, a girl learns about her cousin's leukemia through her colorful wigs, cultivating a

deeper understanding of health and individuality that resonates with young readers. These narratives grant protagonists agency, blending quintessential Filipino humor and values to captivate young audiences and deepen the impact of children's literature in the Philippines.

GRAPHIC NOVELS & COMICS

The Philippine comics and graphic novels sector, or komiks, has had significant growth over the past decade, driven partly by community-driven initiatives that engage creators and readers alike.

Currently, the comics and graphic novels sector is the fastest-growing segment of the Philippine publishing industry. It also holds the distinction of having the most rights sold internationally, having sold over 100 rights across several territories in the past four years of selling rights.

The thriving community support, combined with affordable pricing—graphic novels and comics typically range from PHP350 (US\$6.14) to PHP750 (US\$13.16)—makes the medium widely accessible and particularly appealing to younger readers and collectors alike.

Self-published authors and social media platforms have also made significant contributions, allowing creators to share their work directly with readers. Philippine graphic novels often explore themes rooted in folklore and mythology, supernatural or horrors of reality, slice-of-life stories, and even high fantasy. In the past five years, there has also been a surge in the production of progressive comics, tackling queer narratives and difficult, taboo topics. Artistically, Filipino comics are an amalgamation of Western and Asian influences, creating unique and diverse visual styles that appeal to both local and international readers.

After NBDB included Filipino comics in the book selection of the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2021, the immense response validated the global demand for komiks. This momentum led to the most successful participation of the Philippines in other rights markets such as the Angoulême International Comics Festival, Bologna Children's Book Fair, London Book Fair, and the Lakes International Comic Art Festival. Numerous publishing leads followed through with international editions in France, Italy, Germany, Brasil, Turkiye, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Iran, Myanmar, UK, and the USA.

CRIME FICTION

There are at least seven major publishing houses producing crime fiction in the Philippines. Among them are commercial publishers such as **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, while other crime fiction books are self- and independently published. Most crime fiction novels are affordably priced, typically ranging from PHP250 (US\$4.39) to PHP450 (US\$7.90), making them accessible to a broad range of Filipino readers.

Crime fiction in the Philippines differs from what is usually published in Europe and the United States, which often focuses on solving the crime, and features the police or investigators as protagonists. In the Philippines, crime fiction takes the victims' point of view, with authorities or even the police being the aggressors. Crime fiction in the Philippines is also intertwined with the country's political climate, and often tackles themes of corruption, poverty, and justice, as with **Jose Dalisay's** *Soledad's Sister* (*Last Call Manila*, *Transit Buchverlag*, German edition). While not a traditional crime novel, it deals with the mysterious death of a Filipina overseas worker and the subsequent investigation. It touches on themes of identity, migration, and police work in the Philippines. Crime fiction in the Philippines blends local color, customs, and socio-political context of the country with traditional crime fiction elements, making them distinct from their Western counterparts.

Others make it big while others find niche readership. **PsiCom** and **Precious Pages**, for example, have a very wide readership for their books. Crime fiction in the Philippines mainly talks about the ills and injustices of society rather than focusing on the whodunnit genre. As mentioned above, the point of view is that of the victims of aggression rather than investigators trying to solve a crime.

BOOK CROSSOVERS TO THEATER, FILM, & 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*, the graphic novel by **Budjette Tan** and **Kajo Baldesimo**, brought Filipino supernatural folklore to the global stage, gaining international acclaim and marking a turning point for Philippine graphic literature in the streaming era.

Other notable adaptations include cinematic retellings of national hero **Jose Rizal's** *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tángere*, as well as **Nick Joaquin's** *Tatarin* and *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*. In theater, literary pieces like **Carlo Vergara's** *Zsazsa Zaturmah* and **Severino Reyes' Tatlong Kuwento ni Lola Basyang** have been

successfully staged. Children's books have also found a second life on stage, with productions based on *Sandosenang Sapatos* by **Luis Gatmaitan** and *Isang Harding Papel* by **Augie Rivera**. The theatrical adaptation of **Ricky Lee's** *Para Kay B*, which began in 2011, continues to be updated with each reiteration, keeping the story fresh and relevant for contemporary audiences. Classic and contemporary novels alike continue to inspire filmmakers. *Dekada '70* by **Lualhati Bautista**, *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* by **Edgardo M. Reyes**, and *Smaller and Smaller Circles* by **F.H. Batacan** have been adapted into critically acclaimed films, offering commentary on Philippine society through cinema.

Recent years have seen more literary adaptations: *An Errand*, based on the eponymous short story by **Sarge Lacuesta**, was adapted into a film that premiered at the country's prestigious Cinemalaya Film Festival. **Gwy Saludes'** novel *The Rain in España*, a story of love and self-discovery set in a university backdrop, was adapted into a teen romantic drama television series. The growing interest in adapting Filipino literature also coincides with more robust efforts from publishers, writers, and producers to engage in cross-platform storytelling. With stories that are rooted in the Filipino experience, Philippine literature continues to expand its reach beyond the printed page, breathing new life into beloved works while elevating new voices to wider platforms.

THE ACCELERATION TO DIGITAL

It is possible that the global health emergency that forced people to remain in their homes may have been a blessing in disguise for the Philippines, as it hastened the efforts of going digital in ways that were never imagined before. Cashless payments and online fund transfers became somewhat of a norm since most families and businesses were on lockdown. For the first time in history, the demand for digital technology was propelled by public health considerations rather than modernization. E-commerce in the Philippines continues to grow steadily, though still slow compared to other Southeast Asian economies. But the potential for growth remains the highest given the amount of time Filipinos spend daily online. Key in this growth is access to mobile phones, where there are more mobile connections than people, and mobile internet speed outpaces non-mobile connections.

However, this digital shift remains uneven. Urban areas have become increasingly digitalized, benefitting from better infrastructure and connectivity. Rural areas, on the other hand, continue to face challenges in stable internet access and electrification, which hinders full participation in the digital economy. Initiatives like Starlink have shown promise in bridging connectivity gaps in remote regions, though access remains limited due to cost and infrastructure requirements.

DataReportal, an online reference library, said there were 117.4 million active mobile phone connections in the Philippines in early 2024, or about 107.67% of the population, with 86.98 million internet users in the Philippines for that period, and an internet penetration rate at 79.77% of the total population. The e-commerce market in the Philippines, according to Statista.com, a global data and business intelligence platform, was estimated at USD 15 billion back in 2022, and is estimated to grow further to USD 60 billion by 2030.

While more Filipinos now participate in digital platforms, reading preferences still reflect a strong attachment to printed books, especially among older generations and in academic contexts. However, online reading platforms like Wattpad continue to surge in popularity among younger audiences, who are drawn to interactive and serialized storytelling formats that reflect contemporary experiences. These platforms not only offer a space for reading but also serve as launching pads for aspiring writers and fan communities.

For full publishing landscape including directory of publishers scan the QR code or go to the link below.



<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dakxvVO4hhLo2VuzuE7RbowPQaakgTet>

HISTORY AND TIMELINE

The History of the Philippine Participation



PHL PARTICIPATION IN THE FBM (WITH BOOTH)

The first-ever NBDB participation in the FBM was in 1998 (Oct. 6-12) with 302 book titles displayed from 45 all-Filipino book publishers with the theme “Centennial of the Philippine Independence”. The Philippine booth size was 8 square meters in size at Hall 9.D22 (4th floor). NBDB shouldered the amount for the stand with electricity connection and carpet at €2,460,13 as well as the shipment of 277 books.

NBDB delegates were:

From the Governing Board:

Former NBDB Chair - Atty. Dominador Buhain

Former Member - Juan P. Dayang

Former Member - Carolina Javier

From the Secretariat:

Former Executive Director III - Dr. Nellie R. Apolonio

Former Dep. Exec. Director III - Romeo Orlando A. De Guzman

The second participation was the following year, in 1999 (Oct. 13-18), for the same booth size of 8 square meters. It was a fully furnished stand and NBDB shouldered the amount of €2,985.38 as well as the shipment of 121 pcs. of books, brochures, and CD-ROMs.

NBDB delegates were:

From the Governing Board:

Former NBDB Chair - Atty. Dominador Buhain

Former Member - Dr. Leonardo De Castro

Former Member - Dr. Edgardo C. Paras

Former Member - Carolina R. Javier

From the Secretariat:

Former Dep. Exec. Director III - Romeo Orlando A. De Guzman

Former Director I - Felix R. Sario

The third participation was in 2000 (Oct. 18-23) in cooperation with the Book Exporters Association of the Philippines (BEAP) with an expanded space of 12 square meters at Hall 9.2E. It was a fully furnished stand and NBDB shouldered the amount of €2,390.30 or 2/3 part of the booth while the 1/3 part was shouldered by BEAP. The shipment of the 195 titles of books and CD-ROMs was also shouldered by NBDB.

According to the terminal report from the BEAP, no official delegation from NBDB was sent. The BEAP sought the help of Ms. Mariflo Kantuzer, who is based in Germany. She is the sister of a former member of the Governing Board, Ms. Carolina Javier. She was requested to man the booth and receive visitors.

After a long absence at the Frankfurt Book Fair, it was only in 2015 (Oct. 14-18) that the NBDB again participated in cooperation with the Book Development Association of the Philippines (BDAP). NBDB paid the partial rental of the 60-square-meter Philippine booth stand in the equivalent amount in Philippine Peso (P250,000.00), and NBDB sent two delegates, then NBDB Chair Flor Marie Sta. Romana Cruz and Executive Director III Graciela Mendoza Cayton, who had gone the year before in 2014 on an exploratory visit.

Since there was no budget for designing the country stand, Karina A. Bolasco, then Director of Ateneo De Manila University Press and NBDB Board member, reached out to Senator Loren Legarda in 2015 as she knew SLL to be one who was committed to passionately supporting the arts and culture sector, especially international exhibitions. The Senator helped by referring this matter to an agency that could provide support to the participants. But the year after (2016) and to date, Senator Loren Legarda has given the NBDB the additional budgetary support for the Philippines' participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair.

In 2016 (Oct. 18-23), a Philippine stand was erected and this was located at Hall 4.0 C.93 along with other country stands from neighboring Asian countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, and Japan.

In 2017 (Oct. 11-15), the NBDB participated for a second consecutive year with the same stand size.

In 2018 (Oct. 10-14), the NBDB participated for a third consecutive year with the same stand size. Design Center of the Philippines (DCP) updated the design and changed it to a teal color.

In 2019, NBDB, through the assistance of Senator Loren Legarda, doubled the size of its stand, measuring 120 square meters. This was a requirement in preparation for the bid to be the Guest of Honour.

In 2020, there was no on-site booth due to the pandemic. The Philippines, through the NBDB, participated in the all-digital edition of the fair by hosting two online events. The first was a literary rights seminar with guest speakers discussing “rights management concepts, best practices and red flags in rights selling and buying, best practices in querying, and the importance of literary agents.” The second event, titled “Frankfurter Buchmesse—All Together Now Culminating Event at the Philippine Exhibit”, featured different stakeholders from the Philippine Congress to comics publishers to speak about and provide a context for the evolving character of Philippine literature and publishing.

In 2021, the FBM took a hybrid approach for its 73rd edition with the theme “Re: Connect.” NBDB prepared a 48 square meter stand which carried over a hundred of the best recent Philippine titles, from contemporary fiction to graphic novels, children’s books, and award-winning books.

In 2022, the NBDB participated in the 74th edition of the FBM on October 19-23, 2022. With a return to in-person programming after the pandemic years, FBM attracted over 90,000 trade visitors and 4,000 exhibitors.²

SENATOR LOREN LEGARDA AND THE PHILIPPINES’ BID TO BECOME GUEST OF HONOUR IN THE FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

In 2015, SLL, the project visionary behind the country’s bid for the Guest of Honour, was informed of the Frankfurt Book Fair and its importance by Ms. Karina Bolasco, then Director of the Ateneo de Manila University Press.

In 2017, Senator Legarda hosted a get-together for FBM officials led by Mr. Juergen Boos, President and CEO of the FBM, during their visit to Manila. It was during this time that the idea of becoming the Guest of Honour was discussed. Also, in 2017, the Philippines submitted its Letter of Intent for Guest of Honour, through then NBDB Chairperson Neni Sta. Romana-Cruz.

In 2018, Senator Legarda visited the Philippine booth in Frankfurt and saw the importance of becoming the Guest of Honour. Through the years, she worked tirelessly to push for this project and distinction. She met Mr. Boos and during this meeting, she expressed her support and pushed for the bid of the Philippines to become Guest of Honour in 2024.

In October 2019, Senator Legarda again met with Mr. Juergen Boos in Frankfurt, where she was accompanied by then Philippine Ambassador to Germany Theresa de Vega, Deputy Consul General Emil Fernandez, NBDB Chair Flor Marie Sta. Romana-Cruz, NBDB Board Member Maria Karina Bolasco, while the latter was accompanied by FBM Vice President Claudia Kaiser. Senator Legarda inquired about the requirements for bidding for the Guest of Honour country.

Senator Legarda again met virtually with the Frankfurt Book Fair officials in July 2020, at the height of the COVID pandemic. This was a follow-up meeting on how things were faring as regards the Philippines' bid as Guest of Honour. It was during this time that discussions were focused on how COVID has affected the bids, but SLL still stressed that the Philippines remained committed to complying with the requirements and becoming the Guest of Honour. It was during this meeting that the year to become GOH had to be delayed to 2025 due to the pandemic.

In June 2023, Senator Legarda met again virtually with the FBM Officials, led by Mr. Boos. This time, Mr. Boos gladly announced that the FBM Board had approved the proposal for the PHL to become GOH in 2025. Administrative requirements were discussed again during this meeting.

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

On August 22, 2023, an interagency meeting was held at the National Museum of Anthropology with Senator Legarda, Frankfurter Buchmesse officials led by its President and CEO Juergen Boos, and officials from NBDB, DFA, DepEd, DTI, NCCA, and NHCP.

Another meeting between Senator Legarda and Mr. Juergen Boos was scheduled on August 28, 2025.

Since 2016 up to the present, Senator Legarda has given the NBDB the additional budgetary support for the Philippines' participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair.

2025 GUEST OF HONOUR PARTICIPATION

20 March 2025 (Berlin, Germany)

Press Conference for the PhlGoH2025 at the FBM: Organized to introduce and promote the country's literary program on translated Philippine books into German, the conference was attended by 40 representatives from the media.

Booksellers' Event: A networking event where bookstore owners asked PhlGoH2025 core group members some questions on available Philippine titles in German. It was attended by 40 bookstore owners and press representatives from Berlin.

27 to 30 March 2025 (Leipzig, Germany)

Leipziger Buchmesse: The Philippines participated in the second-largest book fair in Germany, where most titles sold are in German and book-related merchandise.

31 March to 3 April 2025 (Bologna, Italy)

Bologna Children's Book Fair: This is the biggest rights-selling book fair for children's content in the world. The NBDB awarded a travel grant to eight (8) individuals: three (3) are creatives, and five (5) are representatives of children's book publishing houses. Two Philippine children's book creatives got nominated for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Awards 2025: Dr. Luis Gatmaitan and Ergoe Tinio from the Center for Art, New Ventures & Sustainable Development (CANVAS PH).

31 March to 3 April 2025 (Quezon City, Philippines)

Gear Up! Primera (Capacity-Building for FBM Delegates): A series of activities to capacitate the Philippine delegation to the FBM to look for a compatible book market and rights selling. It was attended by 50 publishers and creatives who had undergone sessions on Pitch Refining, Deal Security, International Market Situation, Legal Contract Essentials, and Licensing Agreements.

26 April to 5 May 2025 (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates)

Abu Dhabi International Book Fair: It is one of the leading rights and retail fairs in the Middle East, particularly for the Arab market. The Philippines' booth was managed by the NBDB and the Book Development Association of the Philippines (BDAP). Various Philippine publishers and authors were also part of the delegation.

From June to October, there will be a series of events held in various cities in Germany, as well as in the Philippine Pavilion, the Asia Stage, and the Philippines' National Stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

AGENCIES

An Interagency Project



PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS: COLLABORATIVE UNDERTAKING

The Philippines Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair is a project 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.

The **National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)** is the Philippines' overall policy-making body, coordinating and grant-giving agency for the preservation, development, and promotion of Philippine arts and culture.

<https://www.facebook.com/NCCAOfficial>

The **National Book Development Board (NBDB)** is a national agency created through Republic Act 8047, also known as the Book Publishing Industry Development Act, showing the government's commitment to the vital role of books in shaping our nation. NBDB is responsible for creating and carrying out a National Book Policy and a National Book Development Plan to help grow the book publishing industry.

<https://www.facebook.com/NBDBPhilippines>

The **Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)** is the primary agency responsible for Philippine policy through its foreign service posts and is the primary representative of the Philippine government overseas. <https://www.facebook.com/dfaphl>

Office of Senator Loren Legarda is composed of a dedicated team of government workers, legislative officers, and creatives who have helped realize the vision of its principal, the Office supports Senator Loren Legarda, a four-term Senator and the longest-serving female senator in the Republic of the Philippines.

Internationally recognized for her leadership in climate action and resilience, she is the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Global Champion for Resilience, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) National Adaptation Plan Champion, a Commissioner of the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA), and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Ambassador for Parliaments.

She has also been honored as a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Laureate, a Global Leader for Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum, and the Global Ambassador for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change, and Environment of Women Political Leaders.

Senator Legarda is a lifelong champion of environmental protection, women's and children's rights, and the promotion of Philippine arts and culture.

<https://lorenlegarda.com.ph/>

CREDITS

Behind the Scenes



The Philippines' role as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025 is a landmark international initiative.

Spearheaded by key institutions of the Philippines—the **National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)**, **National Book Development Board (NBDB)**, **Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)**, and the **Office of Senator Loren Legarda (OSL)**. The overall direction is led by the Hon. Senator Loren Legarda, visionary and project principal and her entire Office.

A committee-based organizational structure was established in 2023 composed of key leaders of the cooperating agencies and from the private sector.

Overall management, crafting, and operationalization of the plan are being led by the PhlGoH core committee, with Phl GoH Directors **Aurea Brigino** (NCCA) and **Charisse Aquino-Tugade** (NBDB Executive Director). The composition of the structure and the PhlGoH Project teams are as follows:

TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

Responsible for planning, selection, and management of the Translation Subsidy Program for Foreign Publishers and ensure many Filipino titles are translated into German and other languages

Heads: Flor Marie Sta. Romana Cruz and Kristian Cordero

Members: Maria Christina Pangan-Cagalingan, Mitchelle Jesallyn Balladares, Arvin Sia, and Joriza Novio

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Focused on fostering business-to-business opportunities and engaging with authors, publishers, and investors.

Heads: Charisse Aquino-Tugade and Nida Ramirez

Members: Atty. Andrea Pasion-Flores, Paolo Herras, Barbel Becker, Arvin Sia, Catherine Orda, Virgie Nicodemus, Mhy San Miguel, Janine Binbing, and Shelle Arriola

CREATIVES AND PUBLISHERS AND CREATIVES ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Ensures the widest participation of Filipino creatives at FBM 2024 and 2025. The Committee is responsible for the building capacities of the sector.

Head: **Ani Almario** and **Charmaine Capuchino**

Members: **Myra Criselda San Miguel** and **Criscelle Arriola**

PHILIPPINE PAVILION COMMITTEE

Overall in charge of the concept, plan, research, design and mounting of the Philippine Pavilion as Guest of Honour in 2025

Curator, Philippine Pavilion: **Patrick Flores**

Book Curator: **Karina Bolasco**

Head Designer: **Stanley Ruiz**

Members: **Camille Martinez**, **Mapee Singson**, **Aurea Brigino**, **Stephanie Yebra**, **Tracey Santiago**, **Maria Christina Pangan-Cagalingan**, **Mitchelle Jesallyn Balladares**, **Arvin Sia**, and **Joriza Novio**, **Jeanne Severo**, **Jane Trisha Cariño**, **Sheila Ocumen**

LITERARY PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Plans and coordinates the Literary Program in the various stages of the Philippines Guest of Honour program

Head: **Karina Bolasco**

Members: **Camille Martinez**

CULTURAL PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Plans and manages the expansive Cultural of the Philippines in Germany including multi-site exhibition and performances

Heads: **Aurea Brigino** and **Patrick Flores**

Members: **Loen Vitto, Mapee Singson, Mark Cabrera, Mikka Cabangon,**

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

Responsible for the integrated communications across international media, local media, website, social media and branding

Head: **Aurea Brigino**

Members NCCA: **Karen Capino, Elisabeth Friedrich, Alexander Flöth, Celia Solf, and Damaris Schmitz, Ken Mercado, Gerson Lacdao,**

NBDB: **Divine Reyes-Caraecl, Vincent Paolo Naval, Catherine Anne Orda, Percival Palope, Marzeus Aur'c Alegre, Lowell Alojado, Ein Gil Randall Camuñas**

Visual Designer and Branding: **Dino Brucelas**

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Head: **Virgie Nicodemus**

Members: **Christian Dean Icalina, Anthonete Celis**



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**FRANKFURTER
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15-19 OCTOBER 2025
GUEST OF HONOUR PHILIPPINES