

Humanities Diliman's July-December 2025 issue features current scholarship on art, graphic illustrations, photography, literature, and narrativity, drawing on a range of interdisciplinary critical approaches and perspectives to re-historicize and re-narrativize texts and cultural practices.

The first two articles re-position particular artists and their works in order to expand the narrative of Philippine art history.

Mark Louie L. Lugue's "Reflexive Spirituality and Ecological Eschatology: Situating Landscapes in Glenn Bautista's Abstractions" examines the creative process of Methodist artist Bautista, in particular the spiritual motivations behind his abstract landscapes. The groundwork for the analysis provides the readers with a clearer picture of how abstract landscapes have been considered *in* and *by* scholarship in the Philippines. Veering away from abstraction's usual foregrounding of the modern/ist individual, Lugue reiterates the importance of placing abstract landscapes in relation to matters beyond the self. He complements this with the concept of spirituality, which is deployed as a lens for reading Bautista's works and shows the connection between humanity and the environment. Such an ecological eschatology lens does not only enable a clearer perception of abstract landscapes in general; the approach likewise argues for the importance of Bautista's works amidst environmental crisis. The idea of landscape, thus, is no longer just a concept or genre of painting but an artist's medium to express his humanity in relation to, or even his responsibility toward others, the Divine, and the planet.

Whereas Lugue's use of eschatology, ecology, and spirituality allows him to unfold the vision of a particular artist, Gianpaolo L. Arago zooms out and revisits wartime and post-war Philippine art historiography to shed light on the construction of art history during the periods covered. "Sites of Memory as Prospects of History: An Exercise on Wartime and Post-war Art Historiography" takes off from Pierre Nora's notion of "sites of memory" in examining wartime publications such as *Shin Seiko* and *Philippine Review* accessed through Filipinas Heritage Library, the graduate thesis of Purita Kalaw-Ledesma from the University of the Philippines, and a course outline of Fernando Zobel in his 1954 graduate Contemporary Painting class in the Ateneo de Manila University.

All three, as “sites of memory” and read together as archival materials, provide a clearer view of how art institutions and discourses constructed the notion of “modern” and “Filipino identity” after the war. In terms of methodology, Arago’s study, as it is related to New Art History’s approach, challenges traditional paradigms in art history by accommodating various kinds of materials.

Also looking at the nexus of discourses and institutions in the production and circulation of texts is Adjani G. Arumpac’s “Watching the Photograph” which uses critical information literacy (CIL) as a framework in analyzing Raffy Lerma’s *Pieta*, a 2016 photograph of a woman cradling the body of her partner after he was shot dead as a result of former President Rodrigo Duterte’s war on drugs. Combining concepts from documentary filmmaking, library and archival studies, and digital media studies, the analysis proceeds to look into the virality of the *Pieta*, and the nature of its visibility from the year it was uploaded to 2025, a year that witnessed the effects of the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) examination into the human rights violations of Duterte’s drug campaign. Arumpac’s arguments—grounded in concepts such as narrativization, archival logic, and archival authenticity—demonstrate the “regenerative capabilities of media” amidst authoritarian rule and corporate driven platform. Acknowledging how information and knowledge have been shaped by digital media which at the same time paved the way for participation in public discourse, the study advocates for the strengthening of digital/media literacy, responsibility, and accountability.

The same discerning eye used in analyzing cultural texts is demanded by historical narratives. Emmanuel Jayson V. Bolata’s “Mga Senyales ng Panahon at ang Dalawang ‘Kaganapang Di-Naganap’ sa 1872” (Signs of the Times and the Two ‘Events That Did Not Happen’ in 1872) is thought provoking in its take on the significance of the year “1872” in Philippine history. Combining a historiographic and semiotic approach, the study analyzes 1872 (i.e., the year that references two historical events, the February 20 to 22 uprising and the hanging/execution of the priests Mariano Gomes, José Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora) as a sign/event signifying two concepts in Filipino/Tagalog—*kaganapan* and *pangyayari*—and further calls attention to two events that “did not happen” (i.e., *kaganapang di-naganap*). Bolata lays the groundwork for

his arguments by discussing the importance of dates as markers or turning points in the process of periodization, then proceeds to explain the root word and meaning of “pangyayari” or “kaganapan” for a sharp understanding of the implications of another argument posited in the study—the “kaganapang di naganap”. To illustrate the various significations of 1872 in Philippine history, Bolata provides readers with a sweep of scholars, writers, and historians—Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, Teodoro Agoncillo, Oscar Alfonso, Nicolas Zafra, Nick Joaquin, Gregorio Sancianco, Amado Guerrero, Leandro Fernandez, Samuel K. Tan, Resil B. Mojares, and Renato Constantino—who have all referred to and described 1872 in their writings. The year 1872, however, is important not only for what it represents—the execution of the three martyrs, the uprising, and the birth of a national consciousness—but also for what it means in terms of what did not happen. Bolata teases out the 1889 letter of Rizal and the 1958 statements of Teodoro Agoncillo for the implications of “kaganapang di naganap,” the reasons behind the reformists’ demands at the end of the 19th century and the move toward a new way of looking at Philippine historiography. What emerges as a critical point in Bolata’s unpacking of 1872’s multiple significations is the importance of having a deep awareness of history and historiography, which will force us to act in making things possible in the future.

The next four essays demonstrate the power of cultural texts, forms, and ideologies as they move across time and contexts.

Sanad Singha Goswami’s “Anselm Hollo’s Spirituality: More Finnish than Beat?” tracks the development of the Finnish-American poet’s spirituality as a result of intersecting religions and philosophies in the context of a world of materialism and conformity. A poet whose works from 1959 to 1977 illustrate how European modernist traditions fuse with the innovations of the American avant-garde, Hollo, with his distinctly Finnish literary heritage, engaged with the Beat movement’s poetic styles, techniques, and ideologies. Goswami’s discussion points at how despite Hollo’s fascination with the Beat aesthetics, his spiritual exploration must be understood against the background of a Finnish sense of spirituality in the 20th century.

Harvey James G. Castillo's essay in this issue extends his earlier studies on graffiti and latrinalia and probes into how they convert public spaces into platforms of personal and political expressions. In "Tinig-Karakter sa mga Pader: Graffiti, Bandalismo, at mga *Banyulatin* sa Piling Panitikang Filipino" (Character-Voices on Walls: Graffiti, Vandalism, and Latrinalia in Select Philippine Literature), Castillo considers alternative renderings and readings of graffiti and latrinalia (i.e., not as examples of nihilism and anarchy) as provocative expressions of marginalized voices. Beginning his study with how graffiti has been generally considered by the Philippine government, Castillo argues that the State's attitude towards graffiti and vandalism has been one of intolerance and condemnation. He then turns to literature in Filipino and explains how in the texts, graffiti articulated the voices of those at the margins of society and/or history. Castillo's close reading calls attention to what is said and not said about graffiti; it serves as an avenue for self-expression (i.e., including of one's sexuality) and a space for engaging with issues such as revolution, counter-revolution, and nationhood. And as for graffiti that occupy public spaces, these are expressions of political resistance, hope, and aspirations. Castillo encourages more studies on graffiti, in particular those in the regions, and in other genres such as plays, film, and novels.

In our troubled times, perhaps it is apt to close this issue with two studies that continue to find hope in humor, a powerful tool that has allowed Filipinos to confront adversity head-on. Despite criticisms against how humor has been used to perpetuate the idea of Filipino resiliency amidst disaster—political, social, and environmental—and thus condones passivity, humor remains an integral part of our nation's fabric.

"Seriously (Un)funny: Humor in Selected Political Illustrations During the 2022 Philippine National Elections as Portrait of Resistance" by Paolo Alejandrino, Diana Marie Igual, and Karl Patrick R. Mendoza analyzes twenty-five illustrations by artists Tarantadong Kalbo, Cartoonist Zach, Political Idiot, and Isang Tasang Kape. Created during the 2022 Philippine National Elections, the illustrations' re-working of political rhetoric vis-à-vis historical and religious symbols served as critiques of the possible return to authoritarian rule or a political governance propped up by the same ideology. The study provides

readers with a general background on humor before exploring what is usually referred to as “Filipino humor” for a better appreciation of Filipino political humor which was already visible even during the Spanish colonial period. By employing a multimodal social semiotics framework which complements the nature of the graphic illustrations uploaded in the internet, the study examines the techniques and strategies used by the artists to comment on the 2022 elections. As a discursive practice, the illustrations’ ability to shape opinion lies not only in the strategic use of humor, but also in their presence in the digital landscape.

Humor, with its various manifestations, articulations, and possibilities, is likewise at the core of this issue’s last essay on a cultural figure that continues to provide scholars and critics with a way of reading contemporary political and cultural characters. Once again, the popular Filipino folk character Pusong makes its appearance in an extensive analysis titled “Ang Pagdakip sa ‘Pseudo-Pusong’: Isang Panimulang Pagbasa(g) at Reklamasyon ng Kontra-Pusong sa *Dx Machina 4*” (The Apprehension of the ‘Pseudo-Pusong’: A Preliminary Reading and Reclamation of the Counter-Pusong in *Dx Machina 4*) where John Carlo S. Gloria theorizes on the transgressive and elusive nature of the *pusong* (trickster). His critical take on the *pusong* reminds readers of the latter’s different embodiments in several Philippine regions—Pusong for the Bisaya, Juan Tamad for the Tagalog, Pilandok for the Maranao and Tausug, and Juan Pusong for the Bicolano people. Considering the many permutations of this figure, the study is wary of oversimplified readings of *pusong*. Gloria maps the complexity of the trickster and engages with the concept of the *sovereign trickster* which has been used to explain the “appeal” and popularity of former President Rodrigo Duterte, a powerful figure who, in his use of language and humor endeared himself to the people as he controlled and manipulated the repressive State machinery. The thorough deconstruction of the sovereign trickster reveals its loopholes and weakness; this figure is actually not quite the *pusong* in folk narratives but a pseudo-*pusong*. Gloria’s incisive analysis offers a dialectical counterpart to the pseudo-*pusong*, the *kontra-pseudo-pusong*, which could be seen in the collection *Dx Machina 4: Philippine Literature in the Time of COVID-19*. True to its form, the *pusong* has once again proven its relevance in contemporary times.

We hope that the eight essays in this issue direct scholars to similar areas of study and contribute to the sharpening of discussions on the dynamics of culture, politics, and history. The studies here attest to the mindful consideration of texts, critical approaches, and the limitless potential of readings and re-readings. As scholars in the humanities, we have proven that familiar texts often, if not always, yield new insights when revisited and positioned in the context of the 21st century.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RP' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

RUTH JORDANA L. PISON
Editor-in-Chief