# Abstract

More than half of all presidential issuances between Ferdinand Marcos’ declaration of martial law in 1972 and his deposition in 1986 had immediate bearing on the relationship between the arts and the state in the Philippines. Declaration of martial law resulted in the elimination of independent press, the limitation of assembly and movement due to strict curfews, and covert junctures of violence and secret assassinations. Yet, coinciding with over a decade of coercion, control, and suppression was a flourishing art scene that developed within the walls of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, a concrete edifice constructed largely to fulfill Imelda Marcos’ political and personal commitment to the arts and cultural diplomacy. Whereas prior scholarship has focused on the CCP as an icon of the Marcoses’ patronage and an architectural symbol of the conjugal dictatorship’s thirst for power, insufficient attention has been given to the artworks inside. Conceptual artists who frequently exhibited in the CCP have been understudied due to their affiliation with one of the most violent dictatorships in recent Philippine history. Though artists who exhibited at the state-supported CCP were later censured due to their presumed elitism and collusion with the Marcos dictatorship, the dissertation examines how art performed or displayed at the CCP was not beholden to the ideology of the institution.

*Material Conceptualisms: Philippine Art Under Authoritarianism,* *1968–1986* examines conceptual art as a broad aesthetic category that offered a new field of action in the Philippines under Ferdinand and Imelda Marcoses’ dictatorial control through four case studies: Jose Maceda, Roberto Chabet, artist collective Shop 6, and Luis “Junyee” Yee, Jr. While works by these artists were dismissed as complicit with the regime and too formalist or illegible to the local Philippine people, I counter that overt dissension would have further justified the Marcoses’ need for consolidated power. Thus, in lieu of open resistance, conceptualism’s ambivalent form provides a model of how refusal could operate under surveillance by instead challenging sensorial experiences specific to the Marcoses’ technological and socio-political concerns. Combining textual analysis of artist interviews, archival documents, artist essays, and art criticism with sustained formal analysis of conceptual performances, installations, and objects, the dissertation reveals how these seemingly politically innocuous artworks by Maceda, Chabet, Shop 6, and Junyee propose everyday resistance as an unstable force that manifests in elastic and uncertain forms.