# Abstract

More than half of all presidential issuances between Ferdinand Marcos’ declaration of martial law in 1972 to 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 assassinations. Coinciding with over a decade of coercion, control and suppression, however, was a flourishing art scene which developed within the walls of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, a concrete edifice constructed largely due to Imelda Marcos’s political and personal commitment to the arts and cultural diplomacy. Whereas prior scholarship on Philippine art under Marcos martial law has focused on social realism as resistant art and the CCP as an icon of the Marcoses’ patronage and an architectural symbol of the conjugal dictatorship’s thirst for power, insufficient scholarship has been written on the conceptual artists who frequently exhibited in the CCP 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 affiliation with the Marcos dictatorship, the dissertation examines how art performed or displayed at the CCP was not beholden to the ideology of its creators. Combining textual analysis of artist interviews, archival documents, and art criticism with sustained formal analysis of conceptual performances, installations, and objects, *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, particularly in comparison to their social realist counterparts, I counter that the Marcoses manipulated truth and fabricated instances of dissent to justify the need for consolidated power. Thus, conceptual art’s ambivalent form provides a model of how refusal could operate under surveillance on uncertain terms by challenging sensorial experiences specific to the Marcoses’ technological and socio-political concerns. Through analysis of works by Maceda, Chabet, *Shop 6*, and Junyee, I reveal how these seemingly politically innocuous artworks demonstrate resistance that manifests in elastic and uncertain forms.