# Introduction

**[Fig. 0.1]** In a photograph taken at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) in 1979, a woman stands on top of a set of corrugated metal sheets nestled in an alcove within the CCP Main Gallery. The metal sheets have been arranged in a moderate incline reminiscent of a rooftop, which also serves as the title of the work—*Bubong* (Roof). Canned lights attached to the ceiling illuminate *Bubong* and reveal the woman’s mirthful expression. She smiles as she stands towards the top of the installation, her feet angled towards a corner of the alcove to maintain her balance on the sloped surface. Though *Bubong* fails to operate as an efficient covering or shelter, it effortlessly supported the weight of the woman—an inversion of a roof’s routine function. Two more women circle in front of *Bubong*. The women on the far right of the photograph looks down at the edge of the rusty rooftop while she moves towards it, as if she, too, is about to test the stability of the haphazard construction under her stacked heels.

*Bubong* is a work by Joe Bautista installed at *Five Contemporary Sculptors* at the CCP in 1979. As indicated by its straightforward title, the exhibition included works by five contemporary sculptors in the Philippines: Napoleon V. Abueva, Ed Castrillo, Allan Cosio, Ginny Dandan, and Bautista. Despite the description of these artists as “sculptor” and thus their artwork as “sculpture,” notes for the exhibition identify Bautista as an artist who “creates situations.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Instead of the conventional placement of sculpture on a pedestal, *Bubong* appears built into the alcove, as if it were an architectural attachment rather than a free-standing object. The press announcement for the exhibition notes that *Bubong* “seems to have come straight from someone’s house.”[[2]](#footnote-2)Art critic Leonidas Benesa, one of Fernando Zobel’s star pupils in art criticism from Ateneo de Manila University, described the work displayed at *Five Contemporary Sculptors* as “situational sculpture.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Benesa explained, “That is to say, the work being exhibited is not to be considered as something within a vacuum, but part of the entire ambiance, the surrounding, *in situ*. And the work is most successful if the spectator himself or herself is able to participate in the ‘concept’ or ‘experience’ of the artist-situationist.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The three spectators in the abovementioned photograph appear to do exactly that—participate and find pleasure in Bautista’s work as they experience the rooftop structure from a vantage point usually unavailable to women in heels and flowing skirts.

According to Bautista, however, *Bubong*’s installation in the CCP Main Gallery was short-lived. In an interview from the 1990s, Bautista recalled a conversation between First Lady Imelda Marcos and Lucrecia Kasilag, then president of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, that occurred upon Imelda’s viewing *Bubong*. He divulged that Imelda proclaimed, “This is not supposed to be here. We don’t have slums here. We are a developing county and I am promoting the Philippines. We don’t have slums here.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Bautista then denied in the interview that his rooftop installation had anything to do with slums, stating, “I wanted the viewer to experience...how it is to be on top of a roof. That is what I saw, rusty rooftops....I didn’t associate it with squatters.” [[6]](#footnote-6) Despite these objections, Bautista remarked that *Bubong* was taken down shortly after the incident, stating “I was even wondering why they had it removed...this is not rebellion—why, this is even relaxed, playful....A lot of people, wearing high heels, would actually go up.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Bautista also observed that during “that time of the exhibition there was a convention going on—MIFF (Manila International Film Festival) maybe,” suggesting that the presence of a large international delegation near the CCP might have further solidified Imelda’s insistence to erase the semblance of slums from the exhibition.[[8]](#footnote-8)

I begin with an extended discussion of *Bubong* because the work and its reception synthesizes many of the important themes or recurring tropes that appear throughout my dissertation, such as the participant role of the spectator, inefficient or un-functional employment of the everyday and found materials that engage with its surroundings, and the fluidity of rebellion or perception of it. The anecdote also prominently features representation from dominant players in discussing art in Manila from the 1970s: the artist, the spectator, the critic, and the autocratic State in the form of Imelda Marcos and the CCP. By beginning with a description of a photograph rather than of *Bubong* itself, I also wish to draw attention to two other important participants in this history—the photographer who documents the artwork and the contemporary viewer, myself included, who must analyze many of these ephemeral objects and installations through second-hand accounts and fallible memories of those present through the 1970s and 80s. Moreover, Bautista’s mistaken recollection that *Bubong* was removed due to an international event highlights some of the anxiety artists in the Philippines felt about art’s instrumentalization for diplomatic and economic ends.

*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. During his presidency from 1965 to 1986, Marcos imposed martial law in the Philippines from 1972 to 1981 under the guise of suppressing communist takeover and civil disobedience.[[9]](#footnote-9) 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.[[10]](#footnote-10) Coinciding with over a decade of coercion, control and suppression, however, was a flourishing art scene—one that included “situational sculpture” like *Bubong*—which developed within the walls of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, a gargantuan concrete structure constructed largely due to Imelda Marcos’s political and personal interest in the arts and cultural diplomacy.[[11]](#footnote-11) I argue that conceptual art—a term I will clarify further in the introduction—presented novel ways to challenge Ferdinand and Imelda Marcoses’ authoritarianism through visual, aural, and tactile acts that compromised the administration’s sociopolitical ideals.

According to an unpublished report by Cherubim Quizon, more than half of all presidential issuances between Marcos’ imposition 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.[[12]](#footnote-12) The significant amount of attention given to the arts by the Marcos administration undoubtedly occurred because of First Lady Imelda Marcos, whose “numerous attempts to spread beauty and culture,” historian Vicente Rafael claims, were “logical extensions of Ferdinand’s attempts to leave traces of his power everywhere.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Imelda played a key role in “projecting an international image for the Philippines” as she turned “state power into a series of spectacles, such as cultural centers, film festivals, historically themed parks, five-star hotels, and glitzy international conferences.”[[14]](#footnote-14) The First Lady, who was formerly Miss Manila, was known for using her beauty and formidable charm to secure the foreign funds that would develop the arts infrastructure in Metro Manila.

In *Edifice Complex*, Gerard Lico criticizes the Marcoses’ interest in developing infrastructure for the arts to their political ambitions of progress and internationalism. He writes:

To showcase the myth of modern progress under martial law, the Marcos regime never ceased to scout for every opportunity to host international events. For the first couple, hosting meant achieving media coverage, a chance to promote the Philippines globally, in order to gain acceptance. The promotion of urban image is of particular importance. ...What better way to sell a progressive image of Manila and simultaneously usher in a new era in the life of the nation than through distinctive modern architecture and leading-edge infrastructure programs? And of course, the modernization scheme and the spectacle of urban modernity would be incomplete without its emphasis on the finest details of art and culture.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Imelda sought artistic internationalism through inversion of its previous terms—the import of foreign actors and agents into the Philippines to establish it as an international center rather than the export of local artists to foreign exhibitions. On the one hand, art and infrastructure for the arts played an immensely important role in presenting the Philippines as a progressive nation worthy of international patronage under the Marcos administration. Yet, on the other, the regime’s support for the arts and arts infrastructure helped to fund an experimental art scene that took as its primary interests waste, abjection, and disorder that contradicted Imelda’s “urban beautification” efforts, which included “cleaning up the squatter community eyesores.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

During her campaign efforts for Marcos in September, 1965, Imelda remarked that one of her projects, in addition to a social welfare program, would be “the construction of a cultural center for the development of the Filipino soul, which...is just as essential to nation-building.”[[17]](#footnote-17) After her husband took office, Imelda immediately set about fundraising for her first of many architectural projects meant to house culture and the arts in the Philippines. The first of these projects was a theater of performing arts called the Cultural Center of the Philippines, often shortened as either the Center or the CCP in publications from the period. A sizeable donation, initially earmarked for an earlier theater for performing arts, for the CCP came from the Philippine-American Cultural Foundation.[[18]](#footnote-18)

President Marcos formally established the CCP through declaration of Executive Order No. 30 in 1966. The order specified that the Cultural Center be conceived “to awaken the consciousness of our people to our cultural heritage, and...to cultivate and enhance public interest in, and appreciation of, distinctive Philippine arts.”[[19]](#footnote-19) It further acknowledged the role of the State in cultural affairs, stating, “The preservation and promotion of Philippine culture in all its varied aspects and phases is a vital concern of the State.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Imelda commissioned Leandro V. Locsin—the architect who drew up the initial plans for the Philippine-American Cultural Foundation theater— to design the CCP, which officially opened in 1969 on Roxas Boulevard against the scenic backdrop of Manila Bay.

Ahmad Mashadi contends that the CCP’s “links to the Marcos regime and the apparent exclusion of artists identified with the political opposition compelled many to view the CCP as merely a cultural extension of Marcos’s rule.”[[21]](#footnote-21) The CCP as a “cultural extension,” he suggests, supported abstraction that aligned with the Marcoses’ desire to project an international and progressive image of the Philippines to the world.[[22]](#footnote-22) According to Mashadi, “Artistic developments in Southeast Asia from the 1950s on were affected by an increased access to Euro-American artistic models and an eventual shift towards ‘internationalism,’ expressed through the pervasiveness and institutionalization of abstraction and formalism as dominant modes of expression.”[[23]](#footnote-23) He notes that during the 1950s and 60s “the language of abstraction” became a dominant one to “facilitate international engagements” and to exercise “international fraternity...played...out through biennales and other large-scale, recurring international events.”[[24]](#footnote-24) By “displacing the conservatism of earlier styles,” abstraction also “attempted to reflect notions of national ‘progressiveness.’”[[25]](#footnote-25)

The pursuit of international recognition by artists began over a decade before the Marcoses’ control of the Philippines. In *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, a seminal account of twentieth century Philippine Art published in 1974, Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero disclose that during the mid-twentieth century:

The quest of cultural identity was pre-empted by the *drive towards internationalism*, which took the form of a desire to compete with the rest of the world. This was a very subtle trend; to crash the international scene, it was believed that one had to paint in the *international style*....Consequently it became the ambition of many Filipino artists to be represented in biennales.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Filipino artists realized their international ambitions through the Philippines’ entry into the Second International Contemporary Art Exhibition in India in 1953, followed by participation in the Spanish-American Biennale in Cuba in 1958, the Venice biennale in 1962, the Paris Biennale in 1971, and finally—according to *The Struggle for Philippine Art*—the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1971, which “capped” the “quest for recognition.”[[27]](#footnote-27) This waning desire for international exhibition occurred in part because many artists felt their entries were “lost in a sea of similar works, each working within the same school of abstract thought.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Marciano Galang, one of the entries into the Paris Biennale in 1971, proposed that the Philippines should no longer take part in international exhibitions. Galang expressed, “It takes so much time, money, and effort to gather, send, and set up the show...these logistics can be used instead for developing art at home.”[[29]](#footnote-29) Though the CCP and Imelda’s concerted efforts to develop an arts infrastructure in the Philippines appeared to fulfill Galang’s desire of “develop art at home,” their attachment to an oppressive regime limited his excitement.[[30]](#footnote-30)

While abstraction in the 1950s and 60s had an air of internationalism that reflected the desires of the Marcoses’ political interests, Imelda also had a personal penchant for abstraction. In *Contemporary Philippine Art*, the first tome on contemporary Philippine art published in 1972, Manuel Duldulao writes, “Today, she [Imelda] has both the nineteenth and twentieth century masters, but she herself prefers the contemporary canvases of Luz, Zobel, Ocampo, Legaspi, Manansala, Joya, Zalameda, Hechanova, Sanso, Alcuaz, and Chabet.”[[31]](#footnote-31) According to Duldulao, Imelda expressed to Filipino writer Nick Joaquin, “I like modern. I like the abstract....I like them because they get me to thinking. You know, sometimes I do not understand them. I like things that I do not understand because they make me curious.”[[32]](#footnote-32) Though abstraction remains connected with Imelda Marcos, and, through affiliation, the CCP, exhibition documentation during the early 1970s suggests that abstraction lost its footing to conceptual art under Roberto Chabet and—following Chabet’s resignation as Museum Director—Raymundo Albano. [[33]](#footnote-33)

As a foil to abstraction and conceptual art exhibited at the CCP, Mashadi suggests that “realism was deployed in order to critique the state’s patronage of the arts through institutions such as the CCP.”[[34]](#footnote-34) In citing realism, he refers to Social Realism, an art movement in the Philippines during the 1970s and 80s that included artist collectives such as the Kaisahan, Lingkod Sining, and Buklod-Sining who “explore expressive and popular forms of artistic resistance.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Under the Marcos regime, Social Realist artists were mostly excluded from the CCP and viewed as the force of artistic protest against the oppressive regime. Alice Guillermo, art critic and historian who identified the trend in the Philippines, describes Social Realism as a “school of movement in art which exposes the true conditions of society...based on the artist’s keen observation of reality and proffers alternatives for human development.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Patrick Flores also poses in a brief 1998 essay on Philippine conceptualism and Shop 6 that “the shaping of a social realist and protest language in the Philippine visual arts” undermined “the hegemonic rise of Conceptual Art during Martial Law.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

In another rare essay on Shop 6—a loosely affiliated group of conceptual artists discussed in Chapter 3—Ringo Bunoan also suggests that Social Realists artists served as a foil to abstraction. She argues that social realists depicted “representations of protest and resistance, works and the masses” that “commanded a necessary break from modern art, particularly Abstraction” because it was “seen as part of the dominant Western culture…supported by the Marcoses through the Cultural Center of the Philippines.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Bunoan then suggests that Social Realist artists not only saw themselves as antagonists to abstraction, but also conceptual art because it was “derivative of Western art and judged it as apathetic to the prevailing political and social injustices in the country at the time.”[[39]](#footnote-39) Bunoan— herself a current active player in the Manila art scene as an artist, curator, writer, and researcher who spearheaded the Chabet Archive for Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong—further contends that tension between Chabet and Social Realists “led to a clear division between the two schools of thought, creating deep tensions that festered throughout the succeeding generation of artists.”[[40]](#footnote-40) While social realist artists were hailed as steadfast dissidents and exemplars of artistic resistance against the Marcos’ regime, conceptual artists remained uncomfortably associated to the Marcoses due to their dominance within Cultural Center of the Philippines under the dictatorship.

Instead of placing conceptual art within this political and artistic divide, this dissertation merges art historical methods with longstanding literature in anthropology and political science on the elasticity of resistance to suggest that through form, conceptual artists could perform minor acts of defiance in the CCP. According to James C. Scott in *Weapons of the Weak*, his seminal text on everyday peasant resistance, “The success of de facto resistance is often directly proportional to the symbolic conformity with which it is masked. Open insubordination in almost any context will provoke a more rapid and ferocious response than an insubordination that may be as pervasive, but never ventures to contest the formal definitions of hierarchy and power.”[[41]](#footnote-41) He delineates that “ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups [include] foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feign ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Though the artists in the dissertation—privileged with higher education and broad cultural knowledge—were not members of completely powerless groups or the peasantry, they (and their artwork) wielded some of Scott’s aforementioned “ordinary weapons” to maintain their position whilst exercising their own self-interest and freedom against the Marcoses’ desires.

As an authoritarian regime interested in international recognition and support from the United States, Marcos relied on the presence or illusion of resistant forces during the Cold War. Marcos was only able to justify the need for martial law after a series of attacks throughout Manila, which he blamed on communist insurrection. James Hamilton-Paterson notes that Communists in the Philippines suggest Marcos had secretly orchestrated these so-called terrorist bombings, such as the one at Plaza Miranda, to rationalize the need for martial law to international allies.[[43]](#footnote-43) By refusing to belong within a framework of resistance or compliance, artists discussed in the dissertation undermined the foundation of martial law and called on art’s potential to operate on its own terms, inefficiently and without instrumentalism, within the Marcoses’ unrelenting authoritarian structure of progress and development.

Their outer compliance to the Marcoses’ broader, diplomatic goals of international contemporaneity and the fulfillment of Imelda’s fancy for things she did not “understand” because they made her “curious” permitted artists such as Maceda, Chabet, Shop 6 and Junyee to exhibit works that encouraged, in strangely paradoxical ways, discomfort and freedom. Made from rusty galvanized metal, *Bubong*, as Bautista *insisted*, was not about slums—absolutely not. Bautista’s use of this everyday scene—one that looked like it came “straight from someone’s house”—invited enough potential for dissent that it made Imelda uncomfortable enough to warrant its removal.[[44]](#footnote-44) Upon further investigation, however, artworks like *Bubong*—ones that edge towards refusal—ran rampant in the CCP under the Marcoses.

**Defining the terms of Conceptualism**

Before introducing each of the chapters in the dissertation, I want to address one of the key questions I have been thinking about as I research Philippine contemporary art—what is conceptual art in the Philippines? How do we define it as a term, and how do we recognize it in practice? In an article about the CCP written the same year as *Five Contemporary Sculptors,* Benesa notes that conceptualism was ascribed to “any seemingly incomprehensible art” and works associated to “intellectual cognition and not aesthetic perception.”[[45]](#footnote-45) Benesa’s latter description of conceptual art conforms to Sol Lewitt’s elucidation of early conceptual art in America. In “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” Lewitt writes, “In conceptual art the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work.”[[46]](#footnote-46) He later explains, “What the work of art looks like isn’t too important,” verifying that “conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye or emotions.”[[47]](#footnote-47) In the Philippines, however, form and materiality also had immensely important roles in conceptual art’s early development. For the purpose of this dissertation, conceptualism remains a didactic term rather than prescriptive or descriptive modifier for art in the Philippines. I use it to refer to various experimental practices (environmental, situational, conceptual) that began in the 1970s but have now been absorbed into an established historical rivalry between “social realist” art and “conceptual” art that remains palpable in the present day.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Similar to those in other countries of the region, members of the Philippine art world—including artists and art critics—largely identified conceptual art as a broad category that strayed away from categorizations of painting or sculpture.[[49]](#footnote-49) Within the Philippines, conceptual art seemed entrenched in material concerns related to medium in the Philippines. Oil painting, as it had in many Southeast Asian countries during the late 19th and 20th century, carried the burden of association with Euro-American art and colonialism in the Philippines to many artists.[[50]](#footnote-50) While the prohibitive cost of oil paint and canvas encouraged artists to find alternatives in cheap found materials and discarded objects, artists were further emboldened to do so as protest against the colonial and commercial implications of oil painting.[[51]](#footnote-51) While abstraction—abstract painting in particular—tied to aspirations of international recognition dominated the Philippines through the 1960s, growing interest in sculpture in the late 1960s led to inclusion of alternative materials such as found objects, junk components, bamboo, and burlap in art-making practices.[[52]](#footnote-52)

In 1968, the Art Association of the Philippines and the Society of Philippine Sculptors, which had been active for just one year, organized the First National Sculpture Competition and Exhibition. Eric Torres, another leading art critic who had studied under Zobel, observed the positive recent development in sculpture, noting, “Sculpture, which enjoys no sizable patronage in this country is belatedly waking up and flexing its muscles.”[[53]](#footnote-53) In his year-end review of the arts in Manila that year, Alfredo R Roces also acknowledged, “there was...a rebirth of sculpture that brought to the fore young sculptors on whose talents we anticipate new life in this currently moribund medium.”[[54]](#footnote-54) While painting had dominated Philippine modern art through most of the first half of the twentieth century, the late 1960s saw increased interest in sculpture as a nationalist medium because it could be sourced from readily available materials.

As sculpture began to increase in popularity, artists used found or local materials to develop a local idiom to counter their poor performance in foreign biennales. They also began to expand the footprint of their sculptures to include the space beyond the object’s presence—an installation. Bautista’s *Bubong,* for example, was declared a “situational sculpture.” Benesa expressed in his review of the exhibition, “The operative term for shows like this used to be ‘environmental’ instead of ‘situational.’” [[55]](#footnote-55) He also places quotations around the terms “concept” and “experience” in describing the works displayed in *Five Contemporary Sculptors*.[[56]](#footnote-56) By the 1970s, art critics and artists began to group works that defied the conventional categories of painting and sculpture as experimental, conceptual, conceptualist, situational, and environmental art without much distinction. For example, in one of his columns in the *Manila Times* in 1972*,* Alfredo R. Roces observes:

There are various movements introduced by “artists” that question so many fundamental premises about art that, in effect, it seems what results can only be called an entirely new definition of art, or simply not art at all. Yet there are very marked world trends under such labels as ‘environmental,’ ‘conceptual’ and ‘performance and situational work’ that apparently view art (and the role of the artists) in entirely revolutionary fashion.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Roces appears to question the validity of these new movements in the early 1970s as he lumps together environmental, conceptual, performance and situational work as part of “various movements” by “artists.” In a brief discussion of *Shop 6*, another local critic also groups these terms together and affirms that conceptual art is “largely linked to experimentalism and environmental art.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Environmental, experimental, conceptual, and situational were used almost interchangeably within the periodicals from the 1970s and generally referred to three-dimensional work that came from but also went beyond conventional sculpture. Conceptual art and conceptualism have now become catchall terms to refer to works that went beyond conventional media and drew from the materialist concerns of sculpture and installation.

In determining what to include in a dissertation about Philippine conceptual art during Ferdinand and Imelda Marcoses’ authoritarian regime, I have taken some liberty to extend the terms of conceptualism beyond Roberto Chabet and his gang of collaborators to include works by composer Jose Maceda and, most surprisingly of all, indigenous installation artist Junyee. While my initial decision to include artists outside the usual “canon” of Philippine conceptual art occurred due to my desire to write about my favorite works—the ones I found the most compelling or interesting or weird—the longer I included these artists, the more their practices seemed to fit comfortably within the paradigm of Philippine conceptualism.[[59]](#footnote-59) Although the experimental practices beginning in the 1970s have largely been subsumed under the umbrella of conceptual art or conceptualism, art critics and artists such as Benesa and Bautista described these artworks in a number of variable terms, including situational, environmental, and experimental in writing from the period. Those terms have largely disappeared from art vernacular from the Philippines and are usually understood as conceptual. As a term and as a practice, conceptual art appears to be one in constant flux in the Philippines.

**Chapter Organization**

*Material Conceptualisms* is not intended to be a synthetic or encyclopedic account of Philippine conceptualism from 1968 to 1986. It instead examines the practices of four exemplary case studies of conceptualism or conceptual art practices in rough chronological order. The dissertation begins with the inauguration of the CCP in 1969 (and Chabet’s travels to Europe and the United States as its first Museum Director under a Rockefeller Grant in 1968) and concludes with the Junyee’s second Grand Award victory at the Art Association of the Philippines Annual Art Exhibition in 1986—shortly after the end of the fall of Marcoses. Though the dissertation establishes that these artworks were not beholden to the ideology of the state, the end of the Marcoses’ control of the Philippines serves as an appropriate concluding date for the dissertation as many changes took place in the arts after Aquino replaced Marcos. These changes include a shift of programming at the CCP to be more inclusive of social realist artist and a large decrease of funding for the arts, which caused debate and uproar among many artists.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The first chapter focuses on esteemed composer and ethnomusicologist Jose Maceda, particularly his orchestration of *Cassettes 100* (1971), one of the earliest purposeful citations of a Happening in the Philippines. The chapter also provides greater detail about the social and political context of the CCP, along with the building’s technical and acoustical aspects. I suggest that the Marcoses established the CCP as a visual and acoustical symbol of Philippine contemporaneity and international modernity. Instead of taking advantage of the world-class acoustics available in the CCP auditorium, Maceda orchestrated a “sound happening” in its lobby. The music came from cassettes carried by one hundred volunteers largely drawn from the University of the Philippines-Diliman (UP), a popular site of student resistance and protest. I argue that *Cassettes 100* inculcated the potential of participation and the power of the crowd as it ended with the tearing down of *Cassettes 100*’s flimsy backdrop, leaving the lobby littered with toilet paper detritus.

The second chapter centers on Roberto Chabet, a prominent conceptual artist who served as the CCP’s first museum director until 1971 and a professor of visual art at UP for nearly thirty years. The chapter begins with his performance of *Tearing to Pieces* in which he ripped apart Manual Duldulao’s recently published book, *Contemporary Philippine Art*, in the atrium of the CCP to protest the state of Philippine art production. Like *Cassettes 100*, Chabet’s performance left waste inside of the institution. The chapter continues to discuss some of Chabet’s artwork through the 1970s as propositions of how he imagined art—particularly a messy kind of abstraction—could operate in Manila as acts of visual reciprocity between the viewer and the artist. While Imelda Marcos’s personal fondness of abstraction associated it with cultural diplomacy and contemporaneity, Chabet’s unstable surfaces in works like *Bakawan* seemed to contradict the stability of authoritarian control.

The third chapter continues discussion of Philippine art in the 1970s with Shop 6, a group of loosely affiliated conceptual artists led by Chabet. Through exhibition documents from the 1970s, I examine how debates between abstraction and representation—the latter a more “honest” form—arose during the early years of the CCP through the annual Summer Exhibitions. Many artists who exhibited at the Summer Exhibitions established an “alternative” space called Shop 6 after Imelda Marcos deemed their work inappropriate for the National Artists Award ceremony and the Van Cliburn concerts at the CCP in 1973. At Shop 6, artists could gather—a defiant act under martial law—and freely exhibit their “representational” artworks. The chapter examines how Shop 6’s use of trash materials and their intended estrangement countered the Marcoses’ cultural agenda of *katotohanan, kagandahan at kabutihan*(truth, beauty and goodness).

The fourth chapter explores the early works of Luis “Junyee” Yee, Jr., widely known as an indigenous installation artist in the Philippines. I analyze primary source documents, news articles, and exhibition catalogues to reveal how Junyee not only emerged at the same time as conceptual artists, but how many of his material and environmental interests also reflected conceptual concerns of the period. Along with the embrace of abstraction, Imelda’s glamour diplomacy extended towards a recuperation of indigeneity with projects like the Coconut Palace. I trace indigenous installation art as a variable practice that eventually expanded out in the 1990s to align along regional interests. In a moment contingent on indigenism as a form of cultural power, Junyee manipulated indigenous materials to create prickly bugs that infested the smooth white walls of the air-conditioned CCP.

Following the People’s Power Revolution and the subsequent fall of the Marcoses' regime in 1986, artists who exhibited at the state-sponsored CCP were censured due to their affiliation with the conjugal dictatorship.[[61]](#footnote-61) What emerges, however, is a more complicated story where no one should be a villain.

**Images**



Fig. 1. Joe Bautista, *Bubong* (galvanized iron and wood, 35” x 240” x 135”), 1979.

1. Notes for *Five Contemporary Sculptors*, Museum Documentation, Main Gallery, Vol. I, 1979, Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Press Announcement for *Five Contemporary Sculptors*, Museum Documentation, Main Gallery, Vol. I, 1979, Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Leonidas V. Benesa, “Situational Sculpture at CCP,” *Philippines Daily Express*, April 27, 1979, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Benesa, “Situational Sculpture,” 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Joe Bautista Interview with Francesca Enriquez, circa 1990s, Shop 6 File, Chabet Archive, Asia Art Archive Hong Kong. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Joe Bautista Interview with Francesca Enriquez, circa 1990s. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Joe Bautista Interview with Francesca Enriquez, circa 1990s. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. The First Manila International Film Festival (MIFF) did not take place until 1982, the same year that the Manila Film Center was completed, so the international event could not have been MIFF in 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. James Hamilton-Paterson, *America’s Boy: A Century of Colonialism in the Philippines* (New York: Henry Holt & Company LLC, 1998), 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Vincent Boudreau, “Chapter 6: The Philippine new society and state repression.” *Resisting*

    *Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia.* Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004: 134-151; Richard J. Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989); Mark Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Robert L. Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) and James Hamilton-Paterson, *America’s Boy* for in-depth discussion of repression under Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos during martial law. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Pearlie Rose Salaveria Baluyut, *Institutions and Icons of Patronage: Arts and Culture in the*

    *Philippines during the Marcos Years, 1965-1986* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012), 34-5; Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1974), 124-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Cherubim Quizon, “Changing Orientations of Government Policy in the Arts,” unpublished paper, 11-12, from Pearlie Rose Salaveria Baluyut, *Institutions and Icons of Patronage: Arts and Culture in the Philippines during the Marcos Years, 1965-1986* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012), 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Vicente Rafael, “Patronage, Pornography and Youth: Ideology and Spectatorship during the Early Marcos Years,” in *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rafael, “Patronage, Pornography and Youth,” 134, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Gerard Lico, *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003), 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Youngblood, Marcos Against the Church, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Pedro R. Nervasa, “The Cultural Center of the Philippines – Asia’s Mecca of the Arts,” *Business Chronicle*, May 31, 1970, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Pedro R. Nervasa, “Asia’s Mecca of the Arts,”14-16. In the article, Nervasa notes that in 1957, the U.S. and the Philippine government had commissioned architect Leandro V. Locsin to design a theater for performing arts at a site in Quezon City. The “whole thing was scrapped” due to “a disagreement with the U.S. embassy on how to continue the project” and the Philippine-American Cultural, represented by Dr. Vidal Tan, reallocated funds for Imelda’s new Cultural Center plans. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 1966 by the Executive Order No. 30 http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1966/06/25/executive-order-no-30-s-1966/ (Accessed 4 Jan 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 1966 by the Executive Order No. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ahmad Mashadi, “Framing the 1970s,” *Third Text*, Vol. 25, Issue 4, July, 2011, 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For much of the 1950s in the Philippines, abstraction was considered distinct from non-objectivism. Abstraction referred to representations of objects from the world made to look abstract while non-objective referred to works that showed no object at all—pure abstraction. The most succinct discussion of this during the period is Purita Kalaw-Ledesma’s dissertation. Purita Kalaw-Ledesma, “A Critical Analysis of Modern Painting in the Philippines Today,” (master’s thesis, University of the Philippines, 1955) 73-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Mashadi, “Framing the 1970s,” 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Mashadi, “Framing the 1970s,” 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Mashadi, “Framing the 1970s,” 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Struggle for Philippine Art*, 67. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero’s reference to a painted “international style” refers to abstraction. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Struggle for Philippine Art*, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Struggle for Philippine Art*, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Marciano Galang’s statement in Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Struggle for Philippine Art*, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Galang and David Medalla protested the opening of the CCP. See Patrick D. Flores, “Temerities,” *Pananaw: Philippine Journal of Visual Arts* vol. 7 (Paranaque: Pananaw ng Sining Bayan, Inc., 2010) 21. Both artists, however, still had artworks exhibited in the CCP during the 1970s. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Duldulao, *Contemporary Philippine Art*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Duldulao, *Contemporary Philippine Art*, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. This will further be discussed in Chapter 3 of the dissertation. Patricia Tumang, “New Trajectories of Contemporary Visual and Performing Arts in the Philippines,” in *Asia Art Archive 01* (Manila: The Japan Foundation, Manila, 2017), 9. “The major art movements that emerged from the 1970s were Social Realism and Conceptual Art. Roberto Chabet, the CCP Museum’s first director (1967-1970), and other conceptual artists and practitioners rejected fixed notions of art and art-making in favor of a temporal, conceptual, and process-based approach to art, while artists like Benedicto “Bencab” Cebrera and Jose Tence Ruiz believed that art should reflect the real conditions of everyday life. These new expressions found favor over abstraction, which was heavily promoted by Imelda Marcos in a move away from figuration post-World War II, and is associated with Filipino artists Arturo Luz and Fernando Zobel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Mashadi, “Framing the 1970s,” 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Lisa Ito-Tapang, “Visual Arts and Activism in the Philippines: Notes on a New Season of Discontent,” *Asia Art Archive 01* (Manila: The Japan Foundation, Manila, 2017), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Alice Guillermo, *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines, 1970-1990* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001), 4. Also see Alice Guillermo, *Social Realism in the Philippines* (Manila: ASPHODEL, 1987) for more information on social realism in the Philippines. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Patrick Flores, “Missing Links, Burned Bridges: The Art of the ‘70s,” *Pananaw: Philippine Journal of Visual Arts II*, 1998, 60 – 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ringo Bunoan, “Excavating Spaces & Histories: The Case of Shop 6,” in *Asia Art Archive 01* (Manila: The Japan Foundation, Manila, 2017), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Bunoan is also a former student of Roberto Chabet. Ringo Bunoan, “The Case of Shop 6,” 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ringo Bunoan, “The Case of Shop 6,” 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Hamilton-Paterson, *America’s Boy*, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Press Announcement for *Five Contemporary Sculptors*, Museum Documentation, Main Gallery, Vol. I, 1979, Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Leonidas V. Benesa, “The CCP Museum and Gallery: Its Program Seek to indigenize Philippine art and wean it away from its west orientation,” *Weekend Magazine,* May 5, 1979, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Sol Lewitt “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 12. Essay first published in *Artforum*, 5:10 (Summer 1967), 79-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Lewitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” 13, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Aside from informal conversations that have led me to believe this (one scholar jokingly remarked that we could not let social realists dominate the art historical narrative of the Philippines under Marcos), please see recent publications by Ringo Bunoan, “Excavating Spaces & Histories: The Case of Shop 6” and Lisa Ito-Tapang, “Visual Arts and Activism in the Philippines: Notes on a New Season of Discontent.” Another older article that delineates the tension between social realist and conceptual artists is Patrick Flores, “Missing Links, Burned Bridges: The Art of the ‘70s.” [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Apinan Poshyananda, “‘Con Art’ Seen from the Edge,” 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See Nora Taylor, *Painters In Hanoi* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004); Patrick Flores, *Painting History: Revisions In Philippine Colonial Art* (Manila: UP Office of Research Coordination, 1998), Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Redza Piyadasa and T.K. Sabapathy, *Modern Artists of Malaysia*, 1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. In his “Light and Shadow”column for the *Manila Times* on May 18, 1969, painter Alfredo R. Roces notes that “artist’s and student’s colors now fall under NEC 533-0301 Central Bank Commodity Classification so that the time deposit required is 150 percent. We believe that these items should be regarded as raw materials which artists transform into works of art, and merit tax exemption.” He further suggests that the new Cultural Center could import paint for local artists at cost price. He argues, “Providing artists with the diversity of modern art materials is one such essential step. Art materials should be made available to local artists as cheaply as possible.” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. For more information, please see Manuel D. Duldulao, *The Philippine Art Scene* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1977), 129 and Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Eric Torres, “Confused, Poor Relation,” Eric Torres (*Way of Seeing* Column), *Times Journal*, April 24, 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Alfredo R. Roces, *Cultural Scene ’68* (*Light and Shadow* Column), *Times Journal*, December 31, 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Benesa, “Situational Sculpture,” 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Benesa, “Situational Sculpture,” 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Alfredo R. Roces “Is Art Dead?” *Manila Times*, March 5, 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Jose Marte Abueg, “Notes on Thirteen Artists and Other Events,” *Business Day*, Dec. 20, 1974, 20.  [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. I am using the term canon quite loosely as there has yet to be an extended, book-length study or survey of Philippine conceptual art. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. A sample of these discussion can be seen in Eduardo Castrillo, “Orpheus in Limbo: Culture under the Shadow of National Priorities and the Homelessness of the Visual Arts,” *Sunday Times Magazine*, August 10, 1986, 18-19; Alan Rivera, “If Orpheus is in Limbo, Then it Must Serve Him Right (A Reaction to E. Castrillo’s Article),” *Sunday Times Magazine*, August 31, 1986, 4, 6; “Who Will Help the Artists,” *Philippine Panorama*, August 10, 1986, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “Conjugal dictatorship” is a popularly used unfavorable moniker for Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, taken from Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and Imelda Marcos* (Manila: Union Square Publishing, 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)