

NEW BEGINNINGS

Philippine Photographic Art

**Nana Buxani, Xyza Cruz Bacani, Tommy Hafalla, Gina Osterloh,
Wawi Navarroza, Augustine Paredes, Veejay Villafranca, MM Yu**

Exhibition Duration: **27 September 2025 – 11 January 2026**
Opening: **Friday, 26 September 2025, 7.00 pm**
Venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**

The Philippines – a country made up of thousands of islands and over 130 languages – is an archipelago of many voices and identities. Change and resilience lie at the heart of Philippine life, shaped by faith and community, a complex history of colonisation and resistance, the richness of Indigenous cultures and the experiences of a global diaspora.

These conditions have given rise to a dynamic and diverse photographic practice that oscillates between the politics of the image and the poetry of new worlds beyond the seemingly predetermined. Consequently, Philippine photography is as multifaceted as the country itself: constantly changing in form and meaning. From a global perspective, it addresses the consequences of migration and globalisation, reflects on environmental awareness in the context of the archipelago and, at the same time, questions the potential and limitations of the medium itself.

New Beginnings: Philippine Photographic Art showcases the work of eight artists from different generations and backgrounds, whose work opens up new perspectives on social realities and cultural transformations.

*In her intimate black-and-white photographs, **Xyza Cruz Bacani** documents labour migration and human rights. The project 'We Are Like Air' tells the story of her mother and other migrant women in Hong Kong – as an empowering portrait of them as heroines. Since the 1980s, **Nana Buxani** has been one of the few women in Philippine photojournalism. Her long-term project on Philippine migrant workers reveals the dignity and sensitivity of these people. **Tommy Hafalla** has spent decades photographing the lives and rituals of Indigenous communities in the mountainous Cordillera region. He works with analogue photography and often uses alternative print processes, such as platinum, to emphasise the value of tradition and the local creativity. **MM Yu** creates site-specific installations from photographs that visualise the changing cityscape of Manila and its people. Her collage-like, mixed-media works condense observations into whimsical abstract constellations that open up new contexts. The documentary photographer **Veejay Villafranca** develops long-term projects on social issues such as climate change and spirituality in his home country. In the 'Signos' series, he reveals the complex reality of the disasters caused by Typhoon Yolanda in 2013. His 'Barrio*

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*Sagrado' series addresses the fusion and contradictions between Indigenous cultures and the Catholic faith. **Gina Osterloh**, a Philippine-American artist, creates staged spaces and uses self-portraiture to experimentally question norms and expectations as a person of mixed heritage. Her tableaux play with the contradictions between surface and depth, appearance and inwardness. **Wawi Navarroza** explores self-image and female experience. In the work 'La Bruja' (The Witch), she is pictured amongst household items – an ironic examination of the stereotype of Philippine domestic workers abroad, transformed into feminist self-portraits. In the deeply personal installation 'Good Night, Sweet Dreams', the multidisciplinary artist **Augustine Paredes** reflects on desire and longing within the Philippine diaspora. His work give a voice to unheard migration stories – and attempt to restore dreams and regeneration.*

*These photographic explorations reflect the theme of **the Philippines as guest of honour at the 2025 Frankfurt Book Fair** – 'The imagination peoples the air'. **New Beginnings** showcases the power of contemporary Philippine image makers, who reveal deeply rooted aspects of their culture while expressing an unshakeable hope: to fill the air with imagination.*

New Beginnings: Philippine Photographic Art is curated by Patrick Flores, Andrea Horvay, and Celina Lunsford.

Supporting Programme

SAT, 27 September, 12.00 pm **Gallery Talk** 'New Beginnings' with the artists curator **Nana Buxani, Augustine Paredes, MM Yu** and the curators **Patrick Flores, Andrea Horvay** und **Celina Lunsford**

TUE, 14 October, 18 November, 9 December, 3.00 pm **Curator Tours** with **Celina Lunsford** or **Andrea Horvay**

WED 19 November, 6.00 pm **Lecture** "RUBRICATION – PROJECT PHILIPPINES" with **Iwajla Klinke**

WED, 26 November, 6.00 pm **Artist Presentationalk** with **Augustine Paredes**

Find more events on www.fff Frankfurt.org/aktuell

Public Guided Tours Wednesdays, 5.00 pm

Opening Hours Tue–Sun 11.00 am – 6.00 pm, MON closed

Entry 7 Euros, reduced 4 Euros

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Press information and press photos for the exhibition **NEW BEGINNINGS** at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt are available for download at: www.fff Frankfurt.org/presse.

New Beginnings: Philippine Photographic Art is the contribution of Fotografie Forum Frankfurt on the occasion of the Philippines as the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025 “The imagination peoples the air” and is organised and supported by:



Fotografie Forum Frankfurt

The Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF) is one of the leading centres of photography in Europe. As an exhibition space, institution and event forum, the FFF deals with all aspects of photography. Since its founding in 1984 it has presented over 300 exhibitions with historic and contemporary photographers and artists. Additionally, the programme of the FFF ACADEMY comprises regular workshops, talks and discussions with internationally renowned photographers, artists and experts. Fotografie Forum Frankfurt is the organizing partner of the international RAY Triennial of Photography, which takes place in various exhibition venues in Frankfurt/Rhine-Main. Further information available at www.fff Frankfurt.org.

The Fotografie Forum Frankfurt is supported by the Förderkreis Fotografie Forum Frankfurt e.V., the City of Frankfurt am Main, FUJIFILM Electronic Imaging Europe, Henryk Sznep Stiftung and Hauck, Aufhäuser, Lampe.



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NANA BUXANI

(b. 1966, Mindanao, Philippines)

“This body of work documents the quiet resilience and profound dignity of everyday people, capturing their lives and labor in diverse urban and rural landscapes. My images aim to reveal the shared humanity that persists despite hardship.”

Born in the conflict-ridden region of Mindanao, Nana Buxani is one of the few women photojournalists who have been working in the Philippines since the 1980s. As a documentary photographer and filmmaker her interests evolve around children, the plight of homelessness and indigenous people, and women in war-torn regions. On a broader scale she has pursued an ongoing series on Philippine workers, displaying the endurance, the artisanship, the on-sight conditions, and the dignity and fragility of their lives.

Buxani has worked for OXFAM UK, the International Labor Organization (ILO-IPEC), the international program for the elimination of child labor, European Union Cooperation in the Philippines and many renowned NGO's. Buxani has had assignments with among others – TIME magazine, IL Venerdì (Italy), PCIJ Magazine (Philippines), The Bund Magazine (Shanghai), Bloomberg News and The Guardian UK. She assisted Philip Jones Griffiths and Sebastião Salgado on assignments in the Philippines and has taught for UNICEF. She is a grantee of the Asian Cultural Council in New York.

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XYZA CRUZ BACANI

(b. 1987, Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines)

“We Are Like Air — because migrants are like air: essential, life-giving, and often unseen. Let us recognize them not only for their struggles, but also as champions who bridge the divides of migration.”

Xyza Cruz Bacani pursues an in-depth documentation of labor migration and human rights. In her project “We Are Like Air” she tells the story of her mother, Georgia, and other migrant mothers working in Hong Kong through intimate black-and-white photography. Her perspective is deliberately empowering and inspiring, portraying migrants as heroines.

As a second-generation domestic worker in Hong Kong, she sheds light on less visible, erased, and underreported global issues. Xyza Cruz Bacani received her M.A. in Arts Politics from New York University in 2022. Bacani has been named as one of Asia Society’s Asia 21 Young Leaders, Artpil’s 30 Under 30 Women Photographers, Forbes’s 30 Under 30 Asians, and BBC’s 100 Women of the World. The Philippines House of Representatives officially acknowledged her under ‘House Resolution No. 1969’. She has received multiple grants including the Open Society Foundations’ Moving Walls program, and the Pulitzer Center, and was a fellow of the Magnum Foundation’s Photography and Social Justice program. In 2018 her first photobook “We Are Like Air” was published. Her work is in collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco and the Foreign Correspondents’ Club, Hong Kong.

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Philippine Photographic Art

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TOMMY HAFALLA

(b. 1961, Banguio, Philippines)

As a teenager Tommy Hafalla was drawn to the mountains by hiking around his hometown and the province of Benguet and Mount Pulag where he first began to photograph. Originally trained as an airplane mechanic, Hafalla volunteered on medical missions to isolated areas in the Northern Philippine Cordillera, where he was introduced to the people and their rituals. For over four decades, he has been photographing the way of life of indigenous communities. He made it his aim to keep a visual record of the changing landscape and the people's enduring traditions. He photographs on film and sometimes uses alternative processes.

Hafalla's book, "Ili", documents the diverse cultural traditions of the Cordillera region. Many of the rituals he has gleaned are private, opening a window to practices not typically seen.

His photographs have been seen in numerous exhibitions and acknowledged in prizes such as Humanity Photo Awards, (2006, 2009) and an artist grant of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, CCP (1992).

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GINA OSTERLOH

(b. 1973, San Antonio, Texas, USA)

“My photo tableaux depict strategies such as camouflage, pressing long poles into my eyes, and cut-out silhouettes staged in large-scale paper rooms as I push into the edges of legibility and illegibility, body and space contested yet symbiotic sites, the room akin to the camera – a physical and psychological portal. ‘Somewhere Tropical: Looking Back I Accepted Your Invitation’ (2005) is my first studio tableau in which I stand in a faux tropical set with my head turned away from the camera – a simple and powerful gesture that refuses the camera’s gaze and systems of classification.”

Some exhibitions of the artist include “Gina Osterloh: Mirror Shadow Shape” at the Columbus Museum of Art (Columbus, Ohio); “Her Demilitarized Zone / Image Without Weapon” at MOCA Detroit; “ZONES” at Silverlens (Manila, Philippines), and “Gina Osterloh” at Higher Pictures Generation (New York). Her awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Fulbright Award (Philippines). Gina Osterloh is an Associate Professor of Art at Ohio State University

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WAWI NAVARROZA

(b. 1979, Manila, Philippines)

Informed by post-colonial dialogue, globalization and her transnational experiences as a female and Filipina, Navarroza creates kaleidoscopic in-studio bricolage, mise-en-scène, and camera techniques that echo the flatness and polychrome of oriental art. Navarroza's images emphasize the power of symbolic allegory, folk memory, and imaginations of the exoticized "East," creating a rich visual lexicon of crisscrossing references and riddles.

Navarroza's works are held in collections worldwide, including Stora Enso Photography Museum in Oulu (Finland), Metropolitan Museum of the Philippines, and the Central Bank of the Philippines. Awards and grants include the Asian Cultural Council Grant, New York; Lucas Artists Fellowship Award for Visual Arts, San Francisco, the Thirteen Artists Award from the Cultural Center of the Philippines as well as an Ateneo Art Award. She has been exhibited at Fotografiska Shanghai, the National Gallery of Singapore, the National Museum of Fine Arts (Taiwan), Fries Museum of Contemporary Art (Netherlands).

Navarroza has a Bachelor of Arts degree from De La Salle University, Manila, and studied at the International Center of Photography, New York. She holds a Master's degree from Istituto Europeo di Design, Madrid.

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AUGUSTINE PAREDES

(b. 1994, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines)

Augustine Paredes is a multi-disciplinary artist questioning what it means to desire within the light of migration, identity, and longing. His expanded photographic practice revolves and evolves in questioning the post-colonial identity of a Filipino in the diaspora through different artistic mediums, traditional materials, and historical narratives.

With “Good Night, Sweet Dreams” Paredes brings an intensely personal installation to the exhibition. The artist reflects on and inflects contemporary sensibility, desire, and longing within the Philippine diaspora. While working abroad he witnessed and experienced migrant oppression. This work presents a deeply intimate narrative foregrounds countless migration stories that remain unheard and unspoken and seek to restore the chance to repose and dream.

“Cooking Adobo at the Hea(r)t of Dubai’ is a series of self-portraits aimed to materialise how I was shaped by the span of time I have lived and worked in Dubai. This work aims to introspect questions like ‘where are you from,’ violences that come with it and my relationship to the city of Dubai while having been away from the Philippines for two years. While it is a project which questions relationships between a developing multi-cultural city and myself, it is all the more a journey inward into where one belongs and what it means to isolate oneself in shared spaces — preserving the sense of home, cooking for one and surviving the everyday.”

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Philippine Photographic Art

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VEEJAY VILLAFRANCA

(b. 1982, Manila, Philippines)

Veejay Villafranca explores vivid social issues such as climate change and spirituality in his long-term photography projects. On view is a selection from two of his series.

Villafranca began as a staff photographer for Philippines Graphic, a news magazine, and soon advanced to working as a correspondent for international agencies covering socio-political events and human-interest stories throughout Southeast Asia. In 2008, he was awarded the Ian Parry Scholarship and completed a residency at Visa Pour l'Image in Perpignan (France), for his work on former gang members. In 2013, he was selected for the Joop Swart Masterclass by the World Press Photo Foundation, and ten years later, in 2024, Villafranca served as the Southeast Asia jury chair for the World Press Photo competition. That same year, he was part of an exhibiting artist collective at both the Philippine Pavilion of the Gwangju Biennale and the Jeju Biennale.

He is an alumnus of the 2005 Angkor Photo Festival's Documentary Photographer Workshop and holds a diploma in Visual Journalism from the Asian Center for Journalism in Manila. Villafranca is deeply involved in visual storytelling, teaching at various colleges and in different programs.

"Signos" is a visual exploration of the deepening climate crisis in the Philippines, where increasingly violent typhoons have reshaped the landscape and the lives of those in vulnerable communities. Most of these photographs relate to the disruptions of typhoon Yolanda in 2013. The images bear witness to the physical and psychological aftermath of displacement. The project re-examines resilience and highlights the urgent need to confront environmental injustice. "Signos" was co-published with MAPA Books and won the 2018 Invisible Photographer Asia First Photobook Award.

"Against the Dying of the Light" is an inquiry into the convergence of indigenous spirituality and Catholicism in the Philippines. Through faith-based rituals, the project documents acts of physical endurance that serve as powerful expressions of healing, devotion, and cultural survival. Villafranca's images reflect how spiritual practices rooted in pain and sacrifice have become tools for navigating illness, social struggle, and the complexities of identity in a postcolonial landscape.

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MM YU

(b. 1978 Manila, Philippines)

MM Yu has worked with photography and painting for over twenty years. Her on-site installations trigger the nuances achieved between composition and color as they occupy the frame. Primarily drawn to street photography and documenting the everyday, her photographs evoke the ever-changing cultural texture and topology of urban cities. Her artwork archives not only the economy but also the ecology of life in the myriad forms it takes in the city.

The hybrid density of MM Yu's images remind us how objects and signs are not necessarily self-contained but take part in larger systems of interaction. The artist's interest in deciphering the enigma of the unseen landscape of ordinary things, compels us to rethink what our minds already know and rediscover what our eyes have already seen.

Yu is a recipient of the Cultural Center of the Philippines 13 Artist grant (2009) and the Ateneo Art Awards (2007); she was a Sovereign Asian Art Prize finalist (2010) and was given a Goethe-Institute Climate Change workshop grant (2014). She received her BFA in Painting from the University of the Philippines and has completed residencies with big sky mind, Manila (2003), Common Room Bandung Residency Grant (2007), Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, France (2013), and the Deck Artist in Residency, Singapore (2023).

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Xyza Cruz Bacani, Angels, 2015;

Aus der Serie/from the series **"We Are Like Air"**.

© Xyza Cruz Bacani, 2025



Xyza Cruz Bacani, Cycle of Goodbye, 2017;

Aus der Serie/from the series **"We Are Like Air"**.

© Xyza Cruz Bacani, 2025

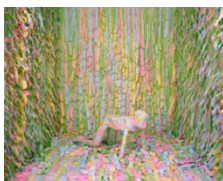


**Gina Osterloh, Looking Back I Accepted Your
Invitation, 2005**

Aus der Serie/from the series **"Somewhere Tropical"**.

Courtesy of the artist, Silverlens, Manila/New York, and
Higher Pictures New York.

© Gina Osterloh, 2025

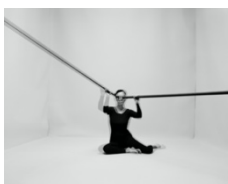


Gina Osterloh, Dots Front Misfire, 2008;

Aus der Serie/from the series **"Cut Room"**.

Courtesy of the artist, Silverlens, Manila/New York, and
Higher Pictures New York.

© Gina Osterloh, 2025



**Gina Osterloh, Pressing Against Looking,
Movement, 2019**

Aus der Serie/from the series **"Pressing Against
Looking"**.

Courtesy of the artist, Silverlens, Manila and New York,
and Higher Pictures New York.

© Gina Osterloh, 2025

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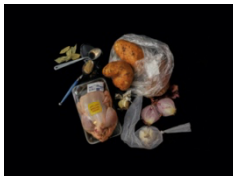
Nana Buxani, Romblon Marble, 2010.

© Nana Buxani, 2025



Nana Buxani, Women Fish and Farm Workers, 2010.

© Nana Buxani, 2025



Augustine Paredes, 2019;

from the series "**Cooking Adobo at the Hea(r)t of
25.2048° N, 55.2708° E**".

© Augustine Paredes, 2025



**Tommy Hafalla, Aratey Bridge, Tocucan, Bontoc,
Mountain Province, 1984.**

from the series "**Ili**".

© Tommy Hafalla, 2025



**Tommy Hafalla, Uma Maligcong, Bontoc, Mountain
Province, 1986;**

from the series "**Ili**".

@ Tommy Hafalla, 2025



Wawi Navarroza, New Pleasures, 2022.

Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens, Manila/New York
and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery (London/Berlin/West
Palm Beach)

© Wawi Navarroza, 2025

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Wawi Navarroza, La Bruja (All the Places She's Gone, Self-Portrait), 2019.

Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens, Manila/New York.

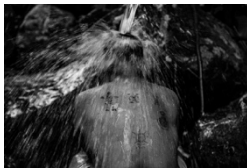
© Wawi Navarroza, 2025



Veejay Villafranca, Evacuation, 2013;

from the series "Signos".

© Veejay Villafranca, 2025



Veejay Villafranca, Rinse, 2013;

from the series "Against the Dying of the Light".

© Veejay Villafranca, 2025

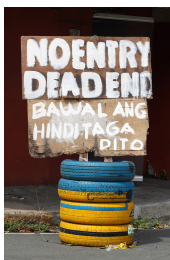


MM Yu

from the photo and video installation

"No End", 2000-2025, images of Manila,

© MM Yu, 2025



MM Yu

from the photo and video installation

"No End", 2000-2025, images of Manila

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