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New Acquisitions of Philippine Art

Landmark exhibition at Asian Art Museum showcases centuries of creativity and cultural exchange



San Francisco April 25 — The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco is proud to unveil *Philippine Art: Collecting Art, Collecting Memories*, an unprecedented survey devoted to historic and modern artworks from the Philippines.

On view July 14, 2017–March 11, 2018 and presented in the Tateuchi Thematic Gallery, *Philippine Art: Collecting Art, Collecting Memories* is the result of more than a decade of study and collecting by the museum's curatorial team — a labor of love to expand the institution's holdings in this oft-overlooked area.

This is the first exhibition ever mounted in the United States of Philippine art spanning from the precolonial period to today. It explores the Philippines' diverse artistic practices through twenty-five rare and compelling works: traditional carving and weaving; Islamic metalwork; Christian art from the colonial period; and modern and contemporary painting and mixed-media. This rich variety comes together to tell the sometimes unfamiliar story of how the Philippines — an island nation positioned along ancient trade routes between China and India, and, later, Europe via the Americas — has for centuries been a center for artistic exchange and innovation.

“The artistic culture of the Philippines has been marked by a history of invasion, resistance, accommodation and adaptation,” explains Natasha Reichle, who as the museum's associate curator of Southeast Asian art spent years acquiring the artworks organized into this exhibition. “What has been fascinating is seeing how contemporary artists draw upon aspects of this complex legacy to create new works, works that are celebrated in the Philippines and valued in a global art market that is beginning to appreciate their beauty, originality and sophistication.”

Spread across numerous islands, the tropical Philippines was originally animist. With the influx of Muslim traders, many peoples, especially in the south, converted to Islam by the 1400s. Now largely Catholic — the result of hundreds of years of rule by Spain — the nation spent the early-20th century under American colonial government followed by Japanese occupation during World War II; the Philippines only gained independence in 1946. This long relationship with the United States precipitated successive waves of immigration, with Filipinos now the second largest ethnic Asian community in the country.

“Ironically, the Philippines’ colonial history and Christian artistic legacy placed much of its art outside familiar ‘Asian art’ storylines of Hinduism or Buddhism, which may have led to its exclusion from our museum’s original founding collection,” explains Reichle. “Luckily for our visitors, this is a story that wants to be told. We have pieces in this exhibition acquired by donation, given directly from artists and collectors, even from the families of former missionaries and on-the-ground field researchers. The backstory of how we acquired every artwork mirrors the fascinating history of the Philippines.”

Highlights Include Rare Traditional, Christian and Contemporary Masterworks

Philippine Art: Collecting Art, Collecting Memories is divided into three sections:

- The first section focuses on works with roots in precolonial culture, including textiles, jewelry, sculpture and vessels serving ceremonial or practical purposes. Highlights include handmade and embroidered garments from female master-weavers as well as belts and ornaments fashioned from a mix of trade goods and indigenous materials.
- The second section centers on the impact of Christianity on Philippine art. Highlights include two exceptionally expressive statues of Jesus and Mary (17th–18th centuries) only acquired this past year. Such fine older examples of Christian art are extremely difficult to find outside of the Philippines and it is rare to find them on view in the United States.
- The final section of the exhibition showcases well-known Philippine modern and contemporary artworks, from early masters like Fernando Amorsolo and Anita Magsaysay-Ho, to activist art during the rule of Ferdinand Marcos, to mixed-media works by Santiago Bose and Norberto Roldan.



Amorsolo’s vibrantly hued yet humbly nostalgic representations of folk life, like *Farmers working and resting* (1955), have made him a beloved figure in the Philippines, while Roldan’s sought-after “curiosity-cabinet” assemblages, like *Everything is Sacred #1* (2009), evoke the overlapping layers of history that inform cultural identity in the Philippines.

“The San Francisco Bay Area is home to one of the most important communities of Filipino ancestry outside of Asia, yet until now we have not been able to fully convey the real dimensions of this nation’s rich creative culture,” says Museum Director Jay Xu. “We are incredibly pleased to present these critical additions to our collection, which reflect not only the heritage of so many in our hometown, but which help visitors understand the inherent diversity of what it means to be Asian and underscore the Asian Art Museum’s role in making this diversity both relatable and relevant.”

Programs Connect Visitors to Filipino and Filipino-American Experience

In-gallery interactions, on-site programs, and community days with a festival-like atmosphere give visitors to *Philippine Art: Collecting Art, Collecting Memories* plenty of opportunities to engage with the Filipino and Asian immigrant experience, past and present.

- **Hear from the community and add your own voice**
On both artwork labels and in videos displayed online and in the exhibition gallery, members of the Filipino community relate their stories. Feedback cards invite visitors to share their own thoughts and memories stirred by the exhibition.
- **3 People Project: Stories of Immigration**
On Saturday, July 15, from 2–3:30 PM, the 3 People Project returns to the museum with a second season of all-new short films by students of Cameron House, the San Francisco Chinatown community empowerment center. In partnership with the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, the museum will host the students and community elders, whose moving stories of their immigration capture this universal facet of the American experience.
- **Tasting Menu: Filipino Feast**
On Thursday, August 17, from 7–9 PM, food enthusiasts gather for one of our most popular evening programs and a chance to discover new tastes and new friends, all in the company of local chefs who believe food, like art, is a wonderful way to share culture. This Tasting Menu offers a forum for discussing contemporary Filipino cuisine, seeking to understand “Where do you draw the line between tradition and innovation?” (\$15 + General admission)
- **Filipino American History Night: Considering SOMAxPilpinas**
On Thursday, September 28, from 7–8:30 PM, local Filipino creators and creatives come together to discuss San Francisco’s newest South of Market cultural district, which highlights the past contributions and future endeavors of the Bay Area’s Filipino community.

- **Filipino American History Month Celebration**

On Sunday, October 1, from 11 AM–2 PM, the museum opens its doors for a FREE festival celebrating the history and culture of Filipino-Americans. Activities and events include special tours, storytelling, live dance performances, music, food, and art-making fun for families of all ages looking to connect with their communities and one another.

Program information, times, and additional fees subject to change, please check online for further details.

Exhibition Organization

Philippine Art: Collecting Art, Collecting Memories is organized by the Asian Art Museum. Presentation is made possible with the generous support of Dinny Winsor Chase, The Charles D. and Frances K. Field Fund, Consuelo Hall McHugh, Crisanto and Evelyn Raimundo, Glenn Vinson and Claire Vinson, Calhoun Family Fund in memory of Cal and Mina Calhoun, and The Joseph & Mercedes McMicking Foundation.

About the Asian Art Museum

The Asian Art Museum–Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures from throughout Asia spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Exhibition Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM, extended hours on Thursdays and Fridays until 9 PM (extended hours end Sept. 28, 2017). Closed Mondays.

Museum Admission: FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youth (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). On Thursday evenings, Feb. 23 – Sep. 28, 2017, 5–9 PM, \$10 general admission.

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