

Thank you everyone for being here, for supporting our artists and poets, and for your interest in the art and poetry here today.

*Scattering & Gathering* assembles a group of Filipino artists and poets who moved from the Philippines and chose Canada as their new home. The exhibition presents a collection of themes as told through poetry and art that speak about experiences related to immigration: the turmoil of displacement, struggles with identity, negotiating with new realities, and the triumph that comes with finally rebuilding a new life in a new country.

The artists in *Scattering & Gathering* share a connection with the overarching narrative that is Filipino mass migration. As far back as the 1500s Filipinos have been migrating to other countries, primarily for employment and education. The Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade route that linked the Philippines and Mexico under Spanish rule allowed ships to carry luxury goods, porcelain and spices from Asia in exchange for silver from Mexico and Spain. Filipino men who worked on board the Galleons as seafarers created a settlement in Louisiana, and others became fruit pickers in California. By the 19th century immigration expanded into Europe when the children of wealthy Filipino landowners were sent to study and work in the fields of medicine, government, literature, and the visual arts. As the years passed the changes in political direction in the Philippines also influenced both the expansion and contraction of immigration from the country. However, one thing remained unchanged: The Filipino's desire and resolve to work hard to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

Our story is long and one fraught with separation from families, loved ones and the culture that emboldened us. There are many stories of shock from one's first winter or first Christmas spent alone. There have been works of art that speak about isolation, the struggle between keeping one's culture close to the heart, while at the same time learning to create new traditions in a new country. And both art and literature have been borne out of the curiosity and the effort to understand a new place.

Today, among the roughly 660,000 Filipinos contributing to Canada's cultural and economic landscape, are some of the Philippines' most prolific artists and writers. Some of them are with us here today.

Printmaker Lenore RS Lim, who divides her time between the Philippines, New York and Vancouver, continues to explore the techniques and relish in the rewards of her chosen medium - printmaking. The distance from Lim's native country allowed her work to depart from the persistent need to brand one's oeuvre with a singular aesthetic. Lim's art is a testament to her constant exploration of the technical possibilities of printmaking, her continued collaboration with her printmaster, and most importantly, her ongoing relationship with her culture. We see evidence of this in the ease by which she uses plant life from the Philippines. She references Filipino mythology in the forms that she creates in her prints, and uses heritage pieces like the lace from her mother's wedding dress, and other heirlooms to evoke memories of home, family and identity.

It's no wonder then that when Lakshmi Gill was considering a visual partner to her own poetry, Lenore's extensive body of work proved to be a comfortable fit.

Lakshmi Gill, a long-time friend of Lenore's, began her career in Canada as an educator. She is also a published novelist and poet, and her works have cast a frank light on her journey as an immigrant.

Lakshmi's life has been interspersed with international travel and her body of work reflects this — to use her own word — “unsettled” way of life. Her writing often brings forth a spectrum of observations from her own foreignness, to her experience with loss, and the enlightenment brought about by embracing diversity. Her multi-ethnic heritage further enriches her work's complexity and colour, using mythology and imagery from various cultural perspectives.

Joining Gill and Lim are Filipino artists who also currently live in British Columbia: Chito Maravilla, Danvic Briones, Esmie McLaren, photographers Stuart Naval Dee and Art Calapatia, and poets Maria Castillo and Wilbur Victoria. These artists, photographers and poets were all born in the Philippines and moved to Canada between 1970 and 2011.

While some commonality of experiences unite this group, each of the stories that make up their sojourn is unique. In the succeeding works of contemporary art and poetry, we see distinct responses to matters of temporary economic instability, the search for home and belonging, and individual hopes and aspirations.

Again, I'd like to thank you for coming today. I hope this exhibition provides you with some answers, but better yet, more questions. Our curiosity about cultures that may not necessarily be like ours is what starts the "understanding" and hopefully leads to a more collaborative community.