



PRESS RELEASE

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NUS Museum commemorates 70 years with Anniversary Lecture by Professor Patrick Flores

Singapore, 18 November 2025 – The National University of Singapore (NUS) Museum’s Anniversary Lecture series is returning after a three-year hiatus, with a fourth edition titled “The University Museum and the Making of the Collective Modern”. Taking place on 28 November 2025, 7pm, at NUS Museum, the Lecture will be delivered by Professor Patrick Flores, an eminent art historian whose work with Southeast Asian and global academic and cultural institutions has been significant.

Also delivering their remarks at the lecture will be NUS Museum Distinguished Fellow and influential historian of art in Southeast Asia from the Department of Architecture in the College of Design and Engineering at NUS, Adjunct Professor T.K. Sabapathy, convenor of the lecture series, as well as Professor Kwok Kian Woon, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Arts Singapore.

Organised as part of NUS Museum’s 70th anniversary celebrations in 2025, this Lecture – continuing the Museum’s Anniversary Lecture Series – will further examine the histories and evolving functions of university museums in the production of knowledge and pedagogy.

Revisiting the history of the UP Vargas Museum and the life and ideals of its founding donor, Jorge Vargas, Flores will reflect on the distinctive and enduring role of university museums in fostering engagement and learning. His lecture will consider how such institutions have transformed over time, particularly in relation to the broader legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and nation-building that have shaped both universities and museums in the region.

He had previously collaborated with NUS Museum on *Past Peripherals: Curation in Southeast Asia* (2008), a publication tracing the history of curation in Indonesia and Thailand.

Flores said, “I have long regarded NUS Museum to be a forerunner in transforming the ethos and methods of curating a university museum. It is an inspiration in the region and beyond. This lecture gives me the chance to sustain the discourse it has cultivated and propose lines of thought to be explored and pursued.”

Elaborating on the significance of Flores’ lecture, Sabapathy underlined the unique positioning of university museums as institutions whose contributions into scholarship is mandated by its role of advancing object-based inquiry. He added, “The University and Museum are unified in their dual commitments to education and knowledge; and to deliver

these through material means of engagement with objects and exhibitions in all of their complexities.”

He further explained, “Flores’ layered appraisal of the UP Vargas Museum, its beginnings and intimate connections with the University of the Philippines, and the emergence of the modern state of the Philippines, are important as entry points into thinking on comparative developments across Southeast Asia including Singapore and the Global South, where conceptions of self, nation and the modern are universally claimed and re-claimed.”

Mr Ahmad Mashadi, University Curator at NUS Museum, said, “At its core, a university museum seeks to create a space where curatorial practice, teaching, and research, intersect, advancing the ideals of critical inquiry, interdisciplinary dialogue, and deeper engagement with cultural and historical knowledge, and Flores’ practice and his many achievements as a scholar, academician, author, curator and a museum professional stands out in this regard.”

He added, “We are also proud to have T.K. Sabapathy convene this fourth lecture in the series. This milestone is not only a celebration of our past, but also a reaffirmation of our commitment to sustain connections between scholarship, museum institutions and education.”

In conjunction with its 70th anniversary, NUS Museum has produced a new annual magazine, [Review](#), which offers readers insights into the breadth of the Museum’s work and its continuing development as a university museum. Future issues of the magazine will be organised around editorial themes, offering critical perspectives relating to museum practices and the communities of teaching and learning they engage. While *Review* will be accessible online, a limited run of physical copies will be made available at the Anniversary Lecture.

Please see [Annexe A](#) for Prof Flores’ biography and [Annexe B](#) for more information about the Anniversary Lecture Series.

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About National University of Singapore (NUS)

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university, which offers a global approach to education, research and entrepreneurship, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise. We have 15 colleges, faculties and schools across three campuses in Singapore, with more than 40,000 students from 100 countries enriching our vibrant and diverse campus community. We have also established more than 20 NUS Overseas Colleges entrepreneurial hubs around the world.

Our multidisciplinary and real-world approach to education, research and entrepreneurship enables us to work closely with industry, governments and academia to address crucial and complex issues relevant to Asia and the world. Researchers in our faculties, research centres of excellence, corporate labs and more than 30 university-level research institutes focus on themes that include energy; environmental and urban sustainability; treatment and prevention of diseases; active ageing; advanced materials; risk management and resilience of financial systems; Asian studies; and Smart Nation capabilities such as artificial intelligence, data science, operations research and cybersecurity.

For more information on NUS, please visit nus.edu.sg.

About NUS Museum

NUS Museum is a university museum that functions to advance critical inquiry, interdisciplinary learning, and experimental curatorial practice. Positioned within the National University of Singapore and focused on Southeast Asian and Asian visual cultures, the Museum serves as a platform for teaching, research, and dialogue across disciplines. Through collections-based inquiry, collaborative partnerships, and reflective exhibition-making, it fosters new ways of engaging histories, shaping knowledge, and contributing to regional museological discourse.

For more information about NUS Museum, visit museum.nus.edu.sg

Annexe A: About the Speaker



Prof Patrick Flores at the *Radio Malaya: abridged conversations about art* exhibition at NUS Museum.

Professor Patrick Flores is Chief Curator of National Gallery Singapore. He is concurrently Professor of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines and Director of the Philippine Contemporary Art Network. He has written significantly on Southeast Asian art, specifically its colonial and modernist formations, and has curated contemporary exhibitions on and through Southeast Asia.

He was a Visiting Fellow at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1999 and a Guest Scholar of the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 2014. Among his publications are *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (1999); *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (2008); *Raymundo Albano: Texts* (2017); and *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art: A Reader* (2023), which he co-edited with T. K. Sabapathy.

He was a Curator (Position Papers) at the Gwangju Biennale in 2008, the Artistic Director of Singapore Biennale in 2019 and Curator of the Philippine Pavilion in 2015 and the Taiwan Pavilion in 2022 at the Venice Biennale. He had also previously curated at the Vargas Museum, the National Museum of the Philippines collection in a series titled *Remarkable Collections* in the early 2000s, as well as the art collection of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines (CCP) titled *Suddenly Turning Visible* (2009).

Annexe B: About the Anniversary Lecture Series

Inaugurated in 2015, the Anniversary Lecture Series is a flagship programme of NUS Museum that brings together scholars, curators, museologists, and creative practitioners. Each Lecture invites its speaker to appraise and speculate on the Museum's mission as a university museum—an institution for acquiring, housing, and displaying artefacts and artworks, and as an on-campus site for research and knowledge production around cultural and creative practices. Continuing from the previous three Lectures, the Series is expanding towards comparatively and contextually situating the Museum in Southeast Asia and related regions, both historically and in the present.

Across its previous editions, the Series has reflected on the historical moments that shaped the founding of the Museum and the University, as well as the composition of its collections and pedagogical programmes that were initiated in the colonial era and continue to evolve within the postcolonial condition.

Previous lectures have featured Adjunct Prof Sabapathy, who reflected on the legacy of founding curator Michael Sullivan; Adjunct Associate Professor Kwa Chong Guan, who discussed William Willetts' influence on the study and curation of Southeast Asian art; and Dr Priya Maholay-Jaradi, who revisited the 1959 Government of India donation to the then-University of Malaya Art Museum, situating it within histories of decolonisation and cultural exchange.

Publications from Past Anniversary Lectures:

1. [*About Michael Sullivan \(2015\)* by T.K. Sabapathy](#)
2. [*William Willetts & The Practice of Asian Art History \(2018\)* by Kwa Chong Guan](#)
3. [*Transcultural Imaginations: Revisiting the 1959 Donation from the Government of India to Malaya \(2021\)* by Priya Maholay-Jaradi](#)