

The title of this exhibition *The Spectre of Comparison* is drawn from the novel *Noli Me Tángere*, written by the Filipino patriot José Rizal. Originally written in Spanish as *el demonio de las comparaciones*, this enigmatic phrase is a framework for the practices of Lani Maestro and Manuel Ocampo, artists representing the Philippine Pavilion.

The phrase encapsulates the experience of Rizal's protagonist, Crisostomo Ibarra, when he gazes out to look at the Botanical Garden of Manila while simultaneously remembering the gardens of Europe. This double-vision of experiencing events up close and from afar, no longer able to see the Philippines without seeing Europe nor gaze at Europe without seeing the Philippines, was pointed out by historian Benedict Anderson in his essay *The First Filipino* (1997): "Here indeed is the origin of nationalism, which lives by making comparisons". Rizal, the nineteenth-century *indio* from the colony, with some melancholy, comprehended the colonising European *other*.

With this as pivot, Lani Maestro's and Manuel Ocampo's practices, aesthetically worlds apart and produced through a multiplicity of contexts, have at their core this "spectre of comparison". Both artists were politicised by the specific moments of their departure from the Philippines: Maestro leaving at the height of the Marcos dictatorship, Ocampo during the 1980s, after the Marcos regime was ousted in a revolution mounted by a society deeply dissatisfied with the ensuing corruption that followed Martial Law. Although their prac-

tices developed at different moments, they were forged within the "collective" experience of the émigré's spectre.

Maestro's practice moves fluidly through various artistic engagements incorporating sound, film, text and photographs. While Ocampo paints canvasses that criticise systems through forceful figurative images. The exhibition looks at their practices as emblematic of the experience of Rizal's "spectre of comparison", with the juxtaposition of their works as a manifestation of sociopolitical commentary on the Philippines and of the many localities where the artists have been based since, as seen "through an inverted telescope".

Rizal's understanding of Europe and the connections he made as he flipped back and forth between the contexts of home and the foreign crystallised the double-consciousness experienced by a colonial émigré of the nineteenth century. This exhibition likewise accords this gaze to Ocampo and Maestro as artists of the fragmented global – a discursive imagining, constructed through a consciousness built across temporal and geographical zones.

Within the twinning of their practices is the experience that haunts contemporary imaginations, as well as the "nationalisms" fraught with colonial and imperialist pasts.

*Joselina Cruz, Curator*

The Philippine participation at the 57<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale is a collaborative undertaking of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Office of Senator Loren Legarda.

## Philippine Pavilion

Artists  
**Lani Maestro**  
**Manuel Ocampo**

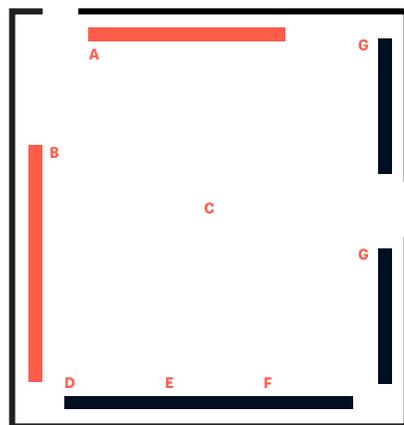
Curator  
**Joselina Cruz**

# The Spectre of Comparison



## Philippine Pavilion

13 May – 26 Nov 2017



■ **Artworks  
by Lani Maestro**

■ **Artworks  
by Manuel Ocampo**

**A**  
**these Hands**  
2017  
Lani Maestro

**B**  
**No Pain Like This Body**  
2010/2017  
Lani Maestro

**C**  
**meronmeron**  
Lani Maestro  
2017  
Installation, wood benches

**D**  
**Twelfth Station**  
Manuel Ocampo  
1994  
*Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie  
Obadia, Paris/Bruxelles*

**E**  
**Cooks in the Kitchen**  
1993/1997  
Manuel Ocampo  
*Courtesy of ARCHIVO, 1984*

**F**  
**Crème de la crème**  
1995  
Manuel Ocampo  
*Collection Gilles et Marie-Françoise  
Fuchs, Paris, Courtesy of Galerie  
Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Bruxelles*

**G**  
**Torta Imperiales**  
2017  
Manuel Ocampo

INSPIRATION IN

### Lani Maestro

Lani Maestro's practice has been concerned with questions of our occupation of space, how space occupies us, as well as how our space is occupied with and by others. This direction is inevitably affiliated with our conceptions of home.

### Manuel Ocampo

Manuel Ocampo's paintings depict Filipino history and culture during the Spanish era, juxtaposed with religious symbols and Western iconography. In 2005, his work was the subject of a large-scale survey at Casa Asia in Barcelona, and Lieu d'Art Contemporain, Sigean, France.

### Joselina Cruz

Writer and curator Joselina Cruz is Director/Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, Manila. She co-curated the second edition of the Singapore Biennale, 2008, among other exhibitions.