

# The Spectre of Comparison

**57th Venice Biennale  
Philippine Pavilion  
at MCAD Manila**

Artists  
**Lani Maestro  
Manuel Ocampo**

Exhibition Run  
**23 May - 20 July 2019**

1  
Lani Maestro  
*these Hands*, 2017  
Installation with blue neon  
Length 700 cm

2  
Manuel Ocampo  
*Torta Imperiales*, 2019  
Oil, acrylic on canvas  
300 x 200 cm paintings  
Courtesy of Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt a.M.

3  
Lani Maestro  
*No Pain Like This Body*, 2010/2017  
Installation with ruby red neon  
140 x 61 cm each

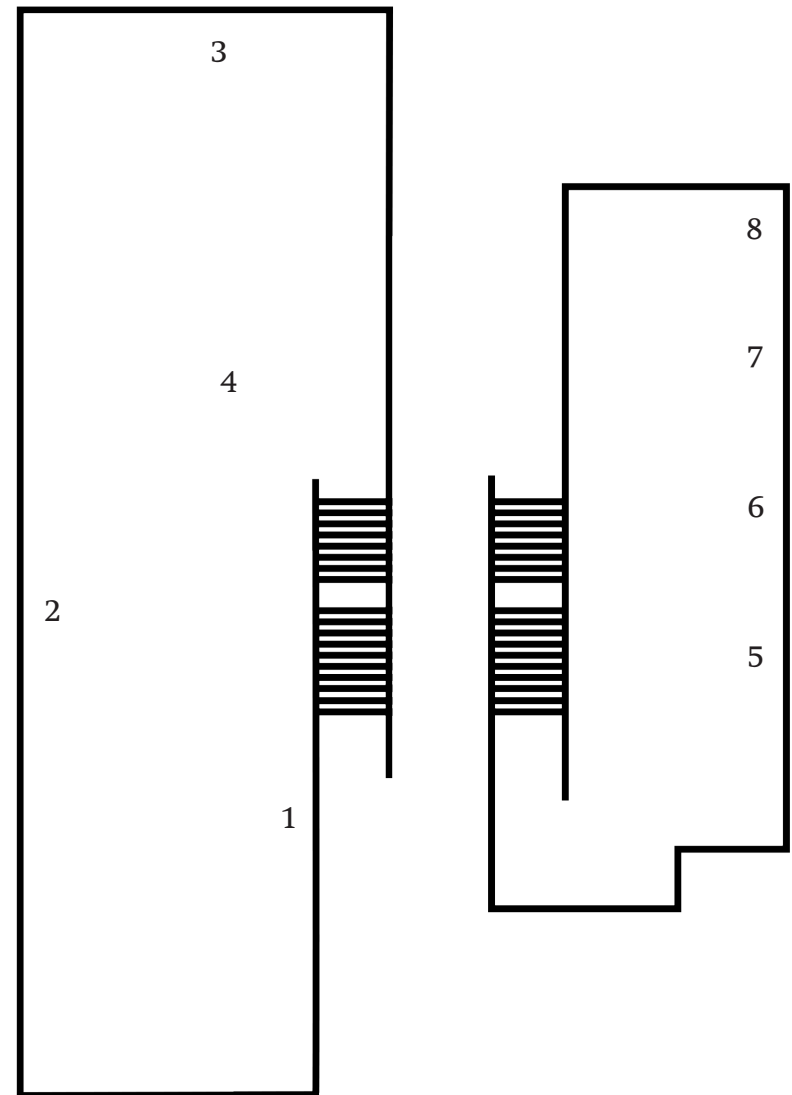
4  
Lani Maestro  
*meronmeron*, 2017-2019  
Installation, wood benches  
Dimensions variable

5  
Manuel Ocampo  
*Why I Hate Europeans*, 1992  
Oil paint and paper on canvas  
188.4 x 250 cm  
Archivo 1984 Collection

6  
Manuel Ocampo  
*Twelfth Station*, 1994  
Oil, acrylic, collage on canvas  
173 x 127 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

7  
Manuel Ocampo  
*Untitled*, 1989  
Acrylic on canvas  
100 x 180 cm  
Private Collection

8  
Lani Maestro  
*abót-tanáw*, 2019  
Audio recording, speakers, wood  
Dimensions variable



## Of Demons and Spectres

by Joselina Cruz

*For myself, I felt a kind of vertigo.  
For the first time in my young life  
I had been invited to see my Europe  
as through an inverted telescope.”<sup>1</sup>*

The production of an exhibition framed as such by the Venice Biennale is a perplexing position. This becomes more so if the position is within a country’s pavilion where the idea of representation – national representation – lies heavy. For what is “national” now in the mid-twenty-first century? In the art context, the Venice Biennale, which has been running since 1895, remains the stage for art where countries come to represent themselves.

How does one represent a nation then? Do we turn to the contemporary, the present? Search current art practice? Scour the global and seek from the past? Or are there generative ways by which to reconstitute the contemporary without being caught within the prison of the present, or in the past as the site for producing the present?

The exhibition comes at a time when political winds are blowing toward the shifting nationalisms emerging in Europe and Asia; where the ideas of nation, the national and nationalism are being played out in ever more frightening directions.<sup>2</sup> Authors who strive to produce a body of work to address the idea of nation, no matter how fraught, come up with discourse necessarily based on their contexts of contemporary politics, culture and society. They are also necessarily influenced by ever-continuing re-definitions of gender, literature, history, which have all emerged from the -isms of the post-modern, the post-colonial and the multi-cultural.<sup>3</sup> With the events<sup>4</sup> of the past year influencing the years to come, we should be prepared to find ourselves living in very interesting times.

To position the Philippines within the imagination of “nation” was, according to Benedict Anderson, first imagined by José Rizal. In 1887, while in Berlin, the 26-year old ilustrado wrote his first novel *Noli Me Tángere*. This novel was unique among anti-colonial fictions written under colonialism, because Rizal, having lived in Europe for years, found himself in a “position to ridicule the colonialists rather than merely to denounce them.”<sup>5</sup> This book became one of Rizal’s main contributions to the burgeoning Philippine revolution, and its incendiary contents would lead to his execution in 1896. By this point, the tiny uprisings around Manila had become a full-fledged revolution and the intelligentsia, the ilustrados, who led the Revolution began to refer to themselves as Filipino,<sup>6</sup> leaving behind the segregation inherent in categories of native, mestizo, insulares and peninsulares. A revolutionary nationalism had formed the idea of a nation. *El demonio de las comparaciones*, the experience of Rizal’s protagonist, is the 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. As Anderson points out in his essay: “Here indeed is the origin of nationalism, which lives by making comparisons”. In a productive reversal, the indio from the colony understood the Other, and this realisation drove away any agreeable recollections of Europe. And this white man, on the other hand, experienced his Europe via Sukarno in Jakarta in 1963:

*“Sukarno regarded himself as a man of the Left, and he was perfectly aware of the horrors of Hitler’s rule... he seemed to regard these horrors with the kind of calm... [that] a devout Christian contemplates... centuries of massacres and tortures committed in His Name – or perhaps the brisk distance... [with which] schoolteachers had spoken of Genghis Khan, the Inquisition... It was going to be difficult from now on to think of ‘my’ Hitler in the old way.”<sup>7</sup>*

One’s colonial *demonio* was the other one’s spectre. The experience is individually manifested and went both ways: in the nineteenth century, from an unimaginable position; in 1963, through an almost impossible (humbling) realisation.

Contemporary understandings of nationalism – and the development of nation during the nineteenth century – cast nationalisms across temporal moments and spatial contexts. The latter formed during the last part of the nineteenth century evinced the production of (a) nation, not of difference but of equality. The former comes from a far-right sentiment that subsists on the fear of difference, leading to the protection of sameness. Europe, especially, has been bristling at the edges since the 1980s, due to globalisation that effected the rise of neoliberalism: “*economic crises, inequality, demographic change, anxieties brought about by terrorism... perceived (government) corruption...*”<sup>8</sup> Nationalisms can run the spectrum of ethnocentricity, or they can be civic-focused; the more inclusive ones are based on political principles and respect for institutions that rest on subjective identification with a nation,<sup>9</sup> the latter being Anderson’s imagined communities. In Asia, political alliances are also being sharply drawn with smaller nations seeking to balance world powers (currently the United States and China) by playing them off each other.<sup>10</sup> The heads of state who decide to play this sort of politics, e.g. the Philippines and Vietnam, are able to cement their public image to their constituents back home as staunch nationalists not beholden to foreign powers.<sup>11</sup> With all the posturing and shifting definitions given to modern states, the nation exists best as imagined. The flexibility of this concept gives individuals the freedom to be part of several nations and to hold different nationalities; they can exist in temporal moments and occupy geographical spaces to fulfill their affiliation with each nation. There exists dual-citizenship, desired by many Filipinos – allowing the freedoms to pass across borders and live life in a first-world situation, but with concurrent Filipino citizenship that gives them the comforts of home and tradition, and (in some past time – and hopefully in some future – but definitely not in the current present) the pride of being Filipino.

Temporal dislocations allow for ideas, objects and even people to imagine themselves beyond the present, not necessarily catapulted to the future of the next moment, but easily sliding to a past to access it. Perhaps a haunting across the past, the present and future will allow the contemporary action of comparison.

It is unfortunate that the Philippine pavilion doesn’t find itself amongst the large permanent, nation-owned buildings in the Giardini, the French garden left by the despotic Napoleon. It was a garden, several gardens in fact, which “triggered Rizal’s protagonist Crisostomo Ibarra’s *demonio de las comparaciones*”. Gardens, public gardens, were one of those “formalised structures” that had been brought over to the colonies. They were utopic formations perfected by gardeners and landscape-makers, and symbolic greens of Paradise. It was the English who were the dedicated gardeners to their colonies, designing their grand Victorian gardens across their territories from Australia to Sri Lanka to Singapore; the Spaniards however, were less keen on nurturing shrubs than they were at rescuing souls for the Church. It is no surprise that the Spaniards only established the *Jardín Botánico*, the first official public garden in Manila, in 1871. This *Jardín* was to become part of a network of botanical centres – one was in Havana – that meant to act like nurseries for the Botanical Gardens of Madrid. Europe had begun to cultivate horticulture from the East and the greenhouses they built, gave them the means to collect and study the flora and fauna of their far-flung, inaccessible colonies. In Manila, there was the private botanical garden of the Augustinian priest Fr Blanco,<sup>12</sup> but the grander public gardens were never taken seriously until the Americans came with the “City Beautiful” scheme of Daniel H. Burnham. Nevertheless, with this one-and-only garden (later re-named the Mehan Gardens) in Manila in 1896, the production of power via a public space was not lost on Rizal. In that single paragraph, he gives a nod not only to nature, but certainly acknowledges the garden as bound to the colonial act of forcing nature to follow shape under the

hand of the gardener/coloniser.

In narrating the garden, however, Rizal, produces a wormhole. Bypassing Spain's already thinning imperialism, he finds himself in the other parts of Europe. The garden that he compares Manila's *Jardín Botánico* to, is not the one in Spain but a generalised garden in Europe. The garden as a failed utopia, where the follies of nations are played out on its grounds. When *el demonio de las comparaciones* is articulated – in this giardino of his – Rizal steps out of the historicised moment of the colonised, and looks, observes, juxtaposes, these two states of existence without losing sight of his position, his self. Mojares discounts the fact that Rizal simplistically wanted to see the islands “through the eyes of Europe”; he suggests instead that Rizal sought to move the line-markers of coloniality so much, so that: “*Magellan did not discover the Philippines. History did not begin with colonialism*”.<sup>13</sup> But I would like to go further by suggesting that the experience of the *demonio de las comparaciones* that Rizal so aptly coined, is part of a contemporaneity that accesses a “multi-temporal re-mapping of history and artistic production outside of national and disciplinary frameworks”.<sup>14</sup> When considered alongside this statement we can venture to situate Rizal as a figure bearing out contemporaneity, his experience of the demon of comparisons being a product of a spatial and temporal turn.

Having jettisoned Rizal as a figure that can be considered as part of the historical present, we can invest in recouping the question of the contemporary. What makes the contemporary? Similar to nation, the definitions slide across a spectrum of definitions and tendencies. We are disposed to think of the idea of the contemporary as an unsettled present, with time being the constant that locates the objects and events that we refer to as contemporary. Time, however, is that which traps the contemporary to the present. For Lukacs the present was an unbridgeable “pernicious chasm”, difficult to climb out from. Agamben writes that it is a “singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time keeps a distance from it”.<sup>15</sup> Further, it is a relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism.<sup>16</sup> The difficulty with all of these is that the contemporary finds itself in this continuing state of becoming. The present becomes the past before it can even get to the future, an untenable and unproductive formulation. What is worse, in the case of contemporary art, is that the phrase “contemporary art” has no critically meaningful referent; that it designates no more than totality of artworks produced within the duration of a particular present (our present).<sup>17</sup> This “presentism”<sup>18</sup> empties out the complex existential, social and political meanings of contemporaneity by being treated as a simple label.<sup>12</sup> This idea of contemporaneity is new, so new, that Osborne hints that we tend to distill it as mere periodisation:

“... the conceptual grammar of con-temporaneity, a coming together not simply “in” time, but of times: we do not just live or exist together “in time” with our contemporaries – as if time itself is indifferent to this existing together – but rather the present is increasingly characterised by a coming together of different but equally “present” temporalities or “times”, a temporal unity in disjunction, or a disjunctive unity of present times”.<sup>20</sup>

These definitions by both Agamben and Osborne are important, as the exhibition *The Spectre of Comparison* is contingent upon the coming together of different, but equally present “temporalities”, of having a relationship to it and at the same time keeping a distance. The temporal elements that inhabit the show, move away from a linear telling of history as anachronistic. Further, I would like to consider the experience of the spectre of comparison as an historical object that can be mined, not just for meaning but as a politicised project. Using the following model of contemporaneity by Claire Bishop:

“the contemporary is understood as a dialectical method and a politicised project with a more radical understanding of temporality. Time and value turn out to be crucial categories at stake in formulating a notion of what I will call a ‘dialectical contemporaneity’, because it does not designate a style or period of works themselves, so much as an approach to them”.<sup>21</sup>

So much so, that reading the contemporary through the object “spectre of comparison” can be done not from the point of Rizal, but from the point of Anderson, and from there, produce a sightline that goes both ways, the past and the future: these being Rizal and the future/present being Ocampo and Maestro's. Grammatically explored by Bishop, as being several tenses simultaneously: the past perfect and the future anterior.<sup>22</sup> Anderson becomes the hinge for us to access Rizal's contemporaneity,<sup>23</sup> as well as the point of engagement for the exhibition's two artists, a triple temporality. This twenty-first-century exhibition links with the nineteenth century via an experience during the 1960s, the twentieth century. These are the sight lines from which the critical experience are individually manifested and accessed. These anachronisms bring to bear the spaces occupied in the past and being occupied at present.

“We notice that the three bodies mentioned share two qualities: 1 – each of these bodies are ‘storied’ into being before they actually appear in the narrative, and 2 – each of them was already marked and/or wounded when they appear in the narrative. They carry the scars, markings or tattoos of their own respective histories and cultures.”

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On this slippery concept of contemporaneity are Manuel Ocampo and Lani Maestro. We arrive at the heart of belonging to two states. Ocampo, Filipino and American; Maestro, Canadian and Filipino. National allegiances have never been so important until we speak of representation or of borders. For these two artists, their practices have been intertwined with their own thinking regarding origin and status, and the way they have responded to their shifting topographies, and their reflective calibration as they move across countries and geographical locations.

When Rizal entered the space of the garden, the act was done as a literary device – this echoes Merleau-Ponty's work when the body enters a space. In this case Crisostomo Ibarra, the novel's protagonist embodies Rizal's politics as he steps into this double-vision of a garden. The body and the place are congruent: “Each needs the other. Each suits the other [...] the place is where the body is”.<sup>25</sup> Without having characters in a novel or the production of a place, Ocampo's and Maestro's site is that of the body. The same object and subject that has been the focus of interest recently from Freud to Derrida, Foucault to Merleau-Ponty. Lani Maestro's sound work, installations and text-based work reference the body as one absent or distant, but ineluctably a presence. Manuel Ocampo's paintings are crowded with images, of bodies in utter disregard of their natural contours or their functions. Whereas Maestro's body is disinclined at presenting itself, Ocampo's are ruinous and ruined. Both lay their siege on the body as a means to negotiate areas of their critical positions.

Catherine Grout writes in a catalogue essay: “Much of Lani Maestro's work is inhabited by the human body”,<sup>26</sup> and with this sentence, condenses the artist's continuing engagement with the body: as a metaphor, political site, a social construct: how it occupies and is occupied, how in its absence produces a presence,<sup>27</sup> in any given space.<sup>28</sup> An advocate of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Maestro's engagement with the body is never about the physical imaginings, or even the form. Her work, so attached to the term minimalist, by virtue of her restrained aesthetic which employs text, sound and often rather rarefied installations, are usually limited to one or two elements. Whether ladders that reach out to “windows” inside a box, or a book of images of waves picturing a moving ocean, or a sound piece with a murmured phrase, or silent post cards containing a line or two, her work always acknowledges the return to the individual.

The artist largely employs texts which inhabit the emotional timbre of a body. Her two neon works in the exhibition: *No Pain Like This Body* and *these Hands*, perform in this register. While the installation *meronmeron* is similar to a constructed situation, it also references the architecture of how the body dwells and inhabits space and place.

The ruby-red neon, *No Pain Like This Body*, stands at the same height as a regular person. This aspect places the body directly in relation to the work, to the text and to the colour. The text however cuts through to the immigrant experience of Caribbean author Harold Sonny Ladoo (a Trinidadian who had migrated to Canada), whose book titled *No Pain Like This Body*<sup>29</sup> influenced Maestro's production of this neon work; but it was also upon seeing the poorest district of Canada, Downtown Eastside in Vancouver, with its poverty, homelessness, prostitution and drug abuse<sup>30</sup> that brought Ladoo's text to mind. Maestro does not merely appropriate the title, she reverses the habitation of pain and extrapolates the capacity or incapacity of our bodies to handle great discomfort: *no body like this pain*. Originally placed in a gallery with shop windows opening to the street, the neons glowed bright enough to draw people, who peered and experienced the work. Maestro's intention was to access people outside. Even with the gallery closed, the street was the work's home. It was through this window that audience and artwork met. Language is one of the main carriers of Maestro's practice, whether handwritten in script a hundred times over, or flashed in block letters on a screen, or a neon sign. Her relationship with language is as intense as her preoccupation with the body. We can say that for her, "Language bears the meaning of thought as a footprint signifies the movement and effort of a body."<sup>31</sup> In her work, the two are mingled together, each one signifying the other to existence.

The work *these Hands* is another neon piece, this time in blue. The complete text of the neon – "if you must take my life, spare these hands" – speaks to the body part most valued by artists. In the world of music, great pianists have had their hands cast: perhaps a way of making music, the most abstract of the arts, more tangible. Once again, Maestro takes inspiration from literature, lifting from the poem *Flowers of Glass* by Filipino poet Jose Beduya. A projection of the wounded body about to become. And the fear of the violence that comes with the promise of a limb about to be severed. It is not unusual, at least in the Philippines, to give appellations based on the disfigurement of another (e.g. *Putol* – which means cut off – is not unheard of), cruel as that may sound. What starts out as a cruel joke turns into an affectionate nickname; but no matter how affectionate, each time it is uttered it becomes a reminder of the individual's lack of limb or limbs.

Among Maestro's texts which link directly to Manuel Ocampo's eschatological references found in his canvasses, is *meronmeron*, a Tagalog word, doubled, that calls out to being. *Meron* is the shortened form of the word *mayroon*. *May* speaks to existence, usually questioning its veracity, while *roon* indicates a place. It is similar in meaning to the word *doon*, but *roon* with its softer consonant, is gentler, more polite. Thus *mayroon* speaks of existence in place, a space in this case. In *meronmeron*, found amongst the benches, its inspiration drawn from the Venetian designer Enzo Mari's iconic rough constructions, are the bodies that come and complete the structure. The benches are silent objects, almost like bodies, waiting to be occupied, to be peopled. In the way that Maestro constructs this installation, *meronmeron* doubles into itself. *Meron* is to have, to have being, but here the artwork has to await the audience to fulfill the latent obligation of its title, its naming that individuates the work. Once it does there is a sense of relief, of accomplishment; once occupied, the benches fulfill the work's commitment.

From this space of *meronmeron*'s quiet, we face the energy of Manuel Ocampo's paintings: colourful, violent, macabre, scatological. At turns, allegorical and mythic. Here, the image of the body is not absent but unabashedly present. Absences are intended and considered, while the images themselves are researched and parsed through. When Ocampo went to Seville in 1997 and visited the Hospital de Caridad, he saw the seventeenth-century paintings by Juan Valdes de Leal. Valdes de Leal, a painter of the Baroque period, had canvasses characterised by high drama and a macabre iconography, largely of skeletons and skulls as well as including text, which was commonplace during that period.

"I love the Juan Valdes de Leal paintings ... Those were the paintings I was trying to paint before I went to Seville. Now that I have seen them, I don't want to paint like that anymore. It's impossible! Seeing *Semana Santa* on TV is better than seeing it in person!"<sup>32</sup>

The mediation that Ocampo sought, this "disappointment" with the real, is symptomatic of his practice as a painter. Ocampo's work is treacherous as to definitions and its purpose, its becoming. Reading through a slew of articles and essays, few seem to capture the enormity of Manuel Ocampo nor his defense of painting. Because perhaps that is the key. He is a painter first and everything else runs a poor second. Kenneth Baker writes that "Ocampo's work reminds us that it is painting, not photography, that makes memory public."<sup>33</sup> The physicality of painting, its centrality as the medium, as labour and as practice become two-fold. Image upon image, colour upon colour, each of his canvasses are so layered that one has to dissect each painting, treating every element as part of Ocampo's growing iconography. Paintings with the most Catholic elements, an unmistakable reference to Catholic Philippines, have drawn the most attention. But Ocampo painted more than Catholicism: he offered swastikas and hooded figures, bodies cut up to reveal spilling organs, excrement. Part of the mix, slowly emerging were his caricatures of paradigms in Western art: abstract art with a native version, Magritte shown as a rat, etc. In the show, Ad Reinhardt cartoons pepper one canvas, ridiculing critics and/ or curators of paintings. On this tableau of images, the figure, the body, never disappears.

While Maestro produces her malleable presences, Ocampo summons the image and demands from it. The critical positions that both artists occupy question government and civil authorities, while engaging with and critiquing the discourse demanded by their practices. Neither are trapped within the singular and simplistic thinking of resistance alone. Both artists have also reflected and struggled being in the site where the spectre resides, where conflict brings about criticality. Maestro, in a correspondence with Grout, writes:

"...it was my introduction to philosophy, particularly phenomenology that made me rethink the oppositional relationship that I had with the so-called 'East' and the 'West'. It was a process of decolonisation and I began to understand that I embodied both, and that I did not have to opt for something pure. With phenomenology, I found a way to integrate my experiences in the Philippines more profoundly. Experiences that felt peripheral, perceived as 'foreign' by the dominant experience/thinking..."<sup>34</sup>

Ocampo for his part articulates in an interview with Kevin Power:

"I am quite envious of those who are tied to the culture of their birth and who are raised in distinctly strong cultures. As a person raised in a smegmatic culture like that of the Philippines, I sometimes have a desire to fit into a more homogenous culture. But in trying to fit in, I contaminate it; by contaminating it, I make it mine. In some ways I am creating a sense of imaginary idealised culture based on the images one appropriates and tries to fit onto one's identity. As a Filipino living in the US' carcinogenic culture – and as an immigrant, one's feelings and identity get Gore-Bushianly discombobulated".<sup>35</sup>

It is at these points that they wrestle with their personal devils, in this case, *el demonio de las comparaciones*.

Maestro's last exhibition in Manila, *her rain*, was a response to the killings occurring in Manila without due process; from her we receive the feminist laugh, her laughter, the *halakhak*: an affront. This is not the simple oppositionality of the male, but the act of female laughter, owned, thus female[']s laughter], creating "slaughter". Laughter as a tool, perhaps laughter on the verge of convulsion, on the point of violence.

In a similar vein, Ocampo's images also release laughter. Laughter at the clever juxtapositions and layering of images and motifs. Ocampo's work *Torta Imperiales*, for the Biennale, is itself a parody, a take on the Spanish word *tortazo*, *torta* being its shortened



form, which connotes a slap on the cheek. Ocampo however adds the word *Imperiales*. *Tortas Imperiales*<sup>36</sup> is a typical sweet from Spain. The Torta Imperial then is the (imperial) slap by the artist to everything he has ever critiqued, likely to include the Biennale itself as well the governing arm that supports the exhibition.

Ocampo's and Maestro's practices are both invested in the Philippines as initial inspiration, but are hardly beholden to it. The loci where their local and their global meet are not as strictly positioned or necessarily essential to their practices. As citizens of an art world that move across nations and spaces – as artists and as curators – we work across fields of the local to global and global to local, while we weave discourse around discourses. Consequently, there are several, if not numerous registers of experiencing the spectre, as it moves fluidly from the sad melancholy of Rizal to Anderson's moment of understanding; Maestro's re-thinking of the "East" and "West" and Ocampo's contamination across cultures. While Rizal had the luxury, and indeed privilege, of time to ruminate on his experience and growing awareness of Europe – and slowly recognise the connections as he continually flipped back and forth between the contexts of home and the colonising Other – he also crystallised the double-consciousness of the colonial émigré of the nineteenth century. The twenty-first century however gives us another kind of privilege – but not I think luxury – of moving across geographies and space and being able to quickly flip back and forth and across, flitting from space to space. Each one of us determining, whether to remain a tourist or engage beyond mere surfaces.

To return to our perplexity at the start of this essay. I find this evocation of Venice as "the exhibition" should be contested, indeed, unless this participation is seen as a national desire to "officially" be part of the contemporary and global art discourse. Which means that the official routes to its existence have knowledge of the responsibilities and consequences on entering this stage. Unless there is a particular brand of naivety which can leave us unscathed and innocent. The artists however in this exhibition are anything but. The gaze of the spectre has been accorded to them, not only as artists knowledgeable of several worlds – having lived in and inhabited them – but as artists whose art-making produces a global discourse, interrupted by discursive and complex imaginings that allow for the consciousness of worlds constructed across geographies, temporalities and the haunting of spectres. A fragmented global, one resistant to homogeneity.

It is fitting to return to Rizal, quoting the section where the title and the heart of the exhibition lies and realise that almost everyone forgets the line following this paragraph, where Rizal gazes beyond the garden and catches sight of the sea, unlocks another metaphor: the vastness of the ocean seen from the Manila, from where we look out to the sight of the sea losing itself in the distance.

*"The sight of the Botanical Garden drove away these agreeable recollections; the demon of comparisons brought before his mind the Botanical Gardens of Europe, in countries where great labour and much money are needed to make a single leaf grow or one flower to open its calyx; he recalled those of the colonies, where they are well supplied and tended and all open to the public. Ibarra turned away his gaze toward the old Manila surrounded still by its walls and moats like a sickly girl wrapped in the garments of her grandmother's better day. Then the sight of the sea losing itself in the distance!"*<sup>37</sup>

This essay is a shortened, edited version of the text that accompanied the 2017 exhibition in the 57th Venice Biennale.

<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 2011) 2. To realise the extent of this double vision of Anderson's please refer to an extended text on pages 1-2 of his Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the meaning of Nationalism", *The Journal of History and Ideas*, Vol. 3, 58.

(1997), 526: "The meanings of nationalism and national identity typically depend on various dichotomies that define the nation in terms of its differences from other places or people – the dynamic process of identity formation that has received wide attention in contemporary cultural studies. My own view of the 'oppositional' structures in nationalist thinking coincides with the concise description by Peter Sahlin: 'National Identity is a socially constructed and continuous process of defining "friend" and "enemy"... National identities... do not depend on the existence of any objective linguistic or cultural differentiation but on the subjective experience of difference'.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 525.

<sup>4</sup> In 2016 the Philippine President Duterte, after just his first one hundred days in office, had already buried in the Libingan ng mga Bayani (Heroes' Cemetery), the body of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who for 27 years had been refused the honour by previous governments; and since has had thousands killed by police in a war on drugs and has been working for the return of the death penalty. Not that the rest of the world is any better: Donald Trump has been voted into office as the American President; Euro-British relations have started to fray when the UK's bid to leave the EU was crystallised with the vote for Brexit; and we have North Korea which continues its missile and nuclear testing.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-colonial Imagination* (Anvil Publishing: Manila, 2006), 65.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, *Under Three Flags*, 62–65: "In the Philippines, the Filipino referred to creoles alone. In Spain, however, Rizal and his fellow students quickly discovered that these distinctions were unknown, or seen as irrelevant. No matter what their status was back home, here they were all Filipinos, just as the Latin Americans in Madrid in the late eighteenth century were *americanos*..."

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, *Spectre of Comparisons*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Christina Pazzanese, "In Europe, Nationalism Rising", *Harvard Gazette*, accessed 21 March 2017, [news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/02/in-europenationalisms-rising/](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/02/in-europenationalisms-rising/); "All of these things have generated some level of anxiety among particularly white, native-born populations and a perceived status-loss at the group level among these folks, which then makes both nationalist and populist claims – and, especially, nationalist-populist claims – more resonant and more salient than they had been in the past".

<sup>9</sup> See Pazzanese, "In Europe, Nationalism Rising".

<sup>10</sup> This is a Cold War tactic of playing off one superpower against another, used by the Yugoslavian communist leader Josip Broz Tito, who broke with Moscow in the Cold War's first years by declaring himself "non-aligned". The United States rewarded him with economic aid; the Soviet Union, desperate to keep Tito from joining NATO, rewarded him with autonomy and shows of respect. [nytimes.com/2016/11/04/world/asia/philippines-duterte-uschina-cold-war.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/world/asia/philippines-duterte-uschina-cold-war.html)

<sup>11</sup> Max Fisher, "Rodrigo Duterte Plays U.S. and China Off Each Other, in Echo of Cold War", *The New York Times*, 03 Nov 2016, accessed 25 March 2017.

[nytimes.com/2016/11/04/world/asia/philippines-duterte-uschina-cold-war.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/world/asia/philippines-duterte-uschina-cold-war.html). This shift in foreign policy so alarmed the US that it has pulled back from leaning on Duterte and his government's unabashed violation of human rights.

<sup>12</sup> Fr Blanco published *Flora de Filipinas* in 1837.

<sup>13</sup> Resil Mojares, *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 2006), 60.

<sup>14</sup> Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology or What's Contemporary?* In *Museums of Contemporary Art*, Koenig Books, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "What is the Contemporary?", *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 2009), 41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (Verso: London and New York), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Bishop, *Radical Museology*, 6: "The first concerns presentism: the condition of taking our current moment as the horizon and destination of our thinking... underpinned by this inability to grasp our moment in its global entirety, and an acceptance of this incomprehension as a constitutive condition of the present historical era".

<sup>19</sup> Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 19. and New York), 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Bishop, *Radical Museology*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>23</sup> Agamben, "What is the Contemporary?", 41: refer to Agamben's *dys-chrony*.

<sup>24</sup> David Patrick Slattery, *The Wounded Body: Remembering the Markings of Flesh* (State University of New York Press: New York, 2000), 135.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Grout, *Reciprocity* in *je sui tois*, 2006, 2007. Exhibition catalogue (NB which has no page numbers).

<sup>27</sup> See Nick Peim, "Spectral Bodies: Derrida and the Philosophy of the Photograph as Historical Document", *Journal of Philosophy of Education* (April)

<sup>28</sup> Grout, *Reciprocity*. Grout makes a point about differentiating space and spatiality based on Erwin Strauss' formulation.

<sup>29</sup> Harold Sonny Ladoo, *No Pain Like this Body*, 1972. This was Ladoo's first and last novel before he was murdered in the streets of Trinidad. The book, considered a classic in Caribbean literature, tells the brutal story of the violence that comes from growing up poor in Trinidad. It is said that the experiences of the protagonist Balraj was a reflection of Ladoo's own.

<sup>30</sup> Alison Mayes, "Artist's Works Speak Louder Than Words", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 02 Nov 2011, accessed 05 April 2017, [winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/arts/artists-work-speaks-louder-than-words-133058068.html](http://winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/arts/artists-work-speaks-louder-than-words-133058068.html).

<sup>31</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans Richard C. McCleary, (Northwestern University Press: Illinois, 1964), 44.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin Power, *Living on the Edges*, in Manuel Ocampo: *Bastards of Misrepresentation*, (Casa Asia: Barcelona, 2005), 292. Exhibition catalogue.

<sup>33</sup> Power, *Living on the Edges*, 321: "Kenneth Baker writes in his text *Perverse Beauty*: Photography replaces memory, which is why tourists everywhere carry cameras, to make remembering unnecessary. Painting objectifies memory not by rendering it impersonal... but by giving it a body, an anatomy separated from that of the one who remembers. [...] So the idea that painting may be the truest of historical witness – despite its lack of documentary texture – seems newly believable. Even if the painter cannot be trusted, his medium always leaves trails of evidence as to what he has done or redone.

<sup>34</sup> Grout, *Reciprocity*. Footnote to exhibition catalogue.

<sup>35</sup> Power, *Living on the Edges*, 291.

<sup>36</sup> This refers to a confection, typically made of honey, sugar and egg-white, with toasted almonds or other nuts, shaped into a round cake. It is frequently consumed as a traditional Christmas dessert in Spain, as well as countries formerly under the Spanish Empire.

<sup>37</sup> José Rizal, *The Social Cancer*, translation by Charles Derbyshire of Noli Me Tángere, (Manila: Philippine Education Co., New York: World Book Co., 1912), 63. In José Rizal, *Noli Me Tángere*, 1887, 43, the original Spanish reads: "El jardín botánico ahuyentó sus risueños recuerdos: el demonio de las comparaciones le puso delante los jardines botánicos de Europa, en los países donde se necesitan mucha voluntad y mucho oro para que brote una hoja y abra su cáliz una flor, aún más, hasta los de las colonias, ricos y bien cuidados y abiertos todos al público. Ibarra apartó la vista, miró á su derecha y allí vió á la antigua Manila, rodeada aún de sus murallas y fosos, como una joven anémica envuelta en un vestido de los buenos tiempos de su abuela".



NO  
PAIN  
LIKE  
THIS  
BODY

NO  
BODY  
LIKE  
THIS  
PAIN

Install of Lani Maestro's *No Pain Like This Body* and *meronmeron*.



If you must take my life, Spare these hands



Manuel Ocampo  
*Torta Imperiales*, 2019 (detail)  
Oil, acrylic on canvas  
300 x 200 cm paintings

Opposite:  
Lani Maestro  
*these Hands*, 2017  
Installation with blue neon  
Length 700 cm  
*Photo the from 57th Venice Biennale Philippine Pavilion*



NO  
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LIKE  
THIS  
BODY

NO  
BODY  
LIKE  
THIS  
PAIN

Lani Maestro  
*No Pain Like This Body*, 2010/2017  
Installation with ruby red neon  
140 x 61 cm each





Lani Maestro  
*meromeron*, 2017-2019  
Installation, wood benches  
Dimensions variable



Manuel Ocampo  
*Why I Hate Europeans*, 1992  
Oil paint and paper on canvas  
188.4 x 250 cm





Manuel Ocampo  
*Twelfth Station*, 1994  
 Oil, acrylic, collage on canvas  
 173 x 127 cm



Manuel Ocampo  
*Untitled*, 1989  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 100 x 180 cm  
 Private Collection

## Public Programs

### Poetry in Neon

15 June, 3pm

MCAD Multimedia Room

This hands-on workshop engages kids in visualizing poetry through neon painting as a means to develop their sense of identity in celebration of 121 years of Philippine Independence. For ages 8 - 10.

### Storytelling Playshop on Filipino Heroes in History with Museo Pambata

29 June, 10am

MCAD Multimedia Room

Museo Pambata staff will lead this craft-making and storytelling playshop that teaches kids the history of revolutionary Filipino heroes. For ages 7 - 9.

### FSL Guided Tour

18 June and 19 July, 2:30pm

MCAD Manila

In collaboration with Benilde's School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies (SDEAS), museum tours with Filipino Sign Language interpretation are available to the Deaf Community per request.

Tours may be booked via [mcad@benilde.edu.ph](mailto:mcad@benilde.edu.ph).

### "Manuel Ocampo, God is My Co-Pilot"

21 June, 3pm

MCAD Multimedia Room

Produced by award-winning documentary filmmaker Phillip Rodriguez, this hour-long film chronicles Manuel Ocampo's entrance into the world of contemporary art amidst an era of multiculturalism. Following his journey, the film provides the audience with a rare insight into the identity politics observed among the art world's elite.

### Re-visiting "Rizal Reading Pigafetta"

with National Artist for Literature, Dr. Resil Mojares

4 July, 3pm

12/F Cinema, Benilde SDA Campus

Led by Philippine National Artist for Literature, Dr. Resil Mojares, the lecture will examine Jose Rizal's counter-history in "Rizal Reading Pigafetta," one of his essays from "Waiting for Mariang Makiling."

### Global View of Art Practice through Biennales

with curators Edson Cabalfin, Leandro Locsin Jr, Joselina Cruz, and Patrick Flores

17 July, 3pm

MCAD Multimedia Room

Join us for a panel discussion with curators, Edson Cabalfin, Leandro Locsin Jr, Joselina Cruz, and Patrick Flores, who curated the Philippine Pavilions for the 2018 and 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale, and the 2017 and 2015 Venice Art Biennale, respectively. The discussion looks into the local impact of the Philippine participation on this international art stage in light of critiques of biennales and the widening conversation on art and curatorial practice.



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### Museum Hours

Tuesday to Saturday

10.00am - 6.00pm

Sunday

10.00am - 2.00pm



