

ARTNEWS

2017 VENICE BIENNALE

MANUEL OCAMPO AND LANI MAESTRO WILL REPRESENT THE PHILIPPINES AT THE 2017 VENICE BIENNALE

BY *Maximiliano Durón* POSTED 10/13/16 2:29 PM

Image: Manuel Ocampo.
MM YU/COURTESY THE ARTIST

The Philippines' National Commission for Culture and the Arts and its Department of Foreign Affairs announced that Manuel Ocampo and Lani Maestro will represent the country at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Joselina Cruz, the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila, will organize the pavilion, titled "The Spectre of Comparison."

In her proposal for the pavilion, Cruz wrote, "The exhibition looks at both artists as emblematic of the experience of Rizal's devil of comparisons. The exhibition proposes a reading of both the Philippines and the West through their works." Cruz is referring to José Rizal, the Filipino nationalist known for his novel *Noli me Tángere*. A 2016 article in the *Manila Times* explains that the protagonist returns to Manila after an absence abroad, and it is not as he remembers: "Manila, in his view, is a far cry from the mighty European cities he has experienced. He is afflicted by what Rizal called '*el demonio de las comparaciones*'—the devil of comparisons."

This analogy makes sense when looking at the two artist's backgrounds. Ocampo lives and works in Manila but lived in California for about ten years in the 1980s and '90s. He has also been included in numerous international biennials, most notably the 1993 Venice Biennale and Documenta IX in 1992. For his contribution to the pavilion, Ocampo will present works from the '90s in dialogue with recent works. Maestro splits her time between France, Canada, and the Philippines. Her work is "concerned with questions of how we occupy space, how space occupies us, as well as how our space is occupied with and by others," according to her Artist Pension Trust biography. She too has been in a number of major shows, including the 2008 Sharjah Biennial, the 1997 Istanbul Biennial, and the 1994 Havana Biennial.

