

At Home & Abroad:20 Contemporary Filipino Artists

Essays by

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Alice G. Guillermo

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Catalogue Entries by

Patrick Flores

Manuel Ocampo (b. 1965)

EDUCATION:

1984–85 Fine Arts, University of the Philippines, Quezon City

1988 California State University, Bakersfield

HOME: Seville, Spain

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

- 1997 *Hacer Pintura Es Hacer Patria*, Galeria OMR, Mexico City; Museu Extremeno e Iberoamericano de Arte, Badajoz, Spain
- 1996 Annina Nosci Gallery, New York
- 1995 Ciorca Rafaelli Arte Contemporanea, Mila; Galerie Natahlie Obadia, Paris; Musee d'Art Contemporain de Montreal, Canada
- 1994 *Paraíso Abierto a Todos*, The Mexican Museum, San Francisco
Stations of the Cross, Annina Nosci Gallery, New York
- 1993 *New Paintings*, Salander-O'Reilly Galleries/Fred Hoffman, Beverly Hills, California
Manuel Ocampo, Galeria OMR, Mexico City
- 1992 *Grupo de Gago*, Weingart Center Gallery, Occidental College, Los Angeles
Matrix—Berkeley 150, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley
M.I.O., Jay Chiat Residence, New York
Manuel Ocampo, Fred Hoffman Gallery, Santa Monica, California
- 1990 *Sustancias Irritantes*, Guggenheim Gallery, Chapman College, Orange, California

Beginning with his caricature of the revered image of the Madonna and Child, to which he added a moustache, Manuel Ocampo has bashed the devotional icon so thoroughly that the enterprise seems to be fraught with neurosis: the gesture is overinvested but quite underexplained. Such is the economy of Ocampo's psychic offensives against colonial culture which has engendered hybrid lives in the post-colonial world. The tenacious legacies of that culture continue to infect the body politic with the festering cancer of dislocation, and the artist, apprehending it with ambivalence, revives the diseased life of signs in Philippine society. He tampers with, revamps, mocks, cuts up, and tears asunder the pressure points at which coloniality begins, ends, and extends. The fragmentation of bodies, for instance, intimates traces of relationships among floating forms, details, motifs, and iconographies. Salient in this imagined scape of meaning is the media, through which culture is made popular in multiple ways, from state-sponsored propaganda to religious mass production to capitalist commodification.

In his works on the Philippines, Los Angeles, and the spaces created by travel, the viewer observes his concentration on the libidinal economy of excess—the eroticized body and sexualized everyday practice, ranging from lesbian sex to oriental fetish, from serial sex crimes to orgies and pornographic fantasies. In this spilling of seminal seed, there are profuse traces of fluids and feces, or a surplus of excrement as Ocampo depicts a negative

utopia of wreckage: “torture chambers of rats, severed limbs, swastikas, devils, daggers, ropes, eagles, syringes, and crosses.”¹ This apocalyptic urban rampage becomes ultimately an eschatology of colonial baroque faith—hysterical, hopeful, and horrifying. The artist lines up religious commodities and the religious merchandise of superstition, in order to blast the mystification of belief in apparitions, rites, martyrdoms, emblems, inquisitions—the insignias of Catholic and capitalist civilization.

Ocampo's two-dimensional works are usually soaked in film noir tones and the somber pigments of colonial icons. In *Abstract Painting (Deus Ex Machina; cat. no. 13a)*, an avaricious man vomits his table's vanities, a virtual still life which allegorizes both fertility and fleetingness. On the floor are two skeletal figures lapping up the man's waste and wealth. In a clash of signs from European art, punk culture, and gothic comics, the artist assails our senses with the bloody truth of our abundance.

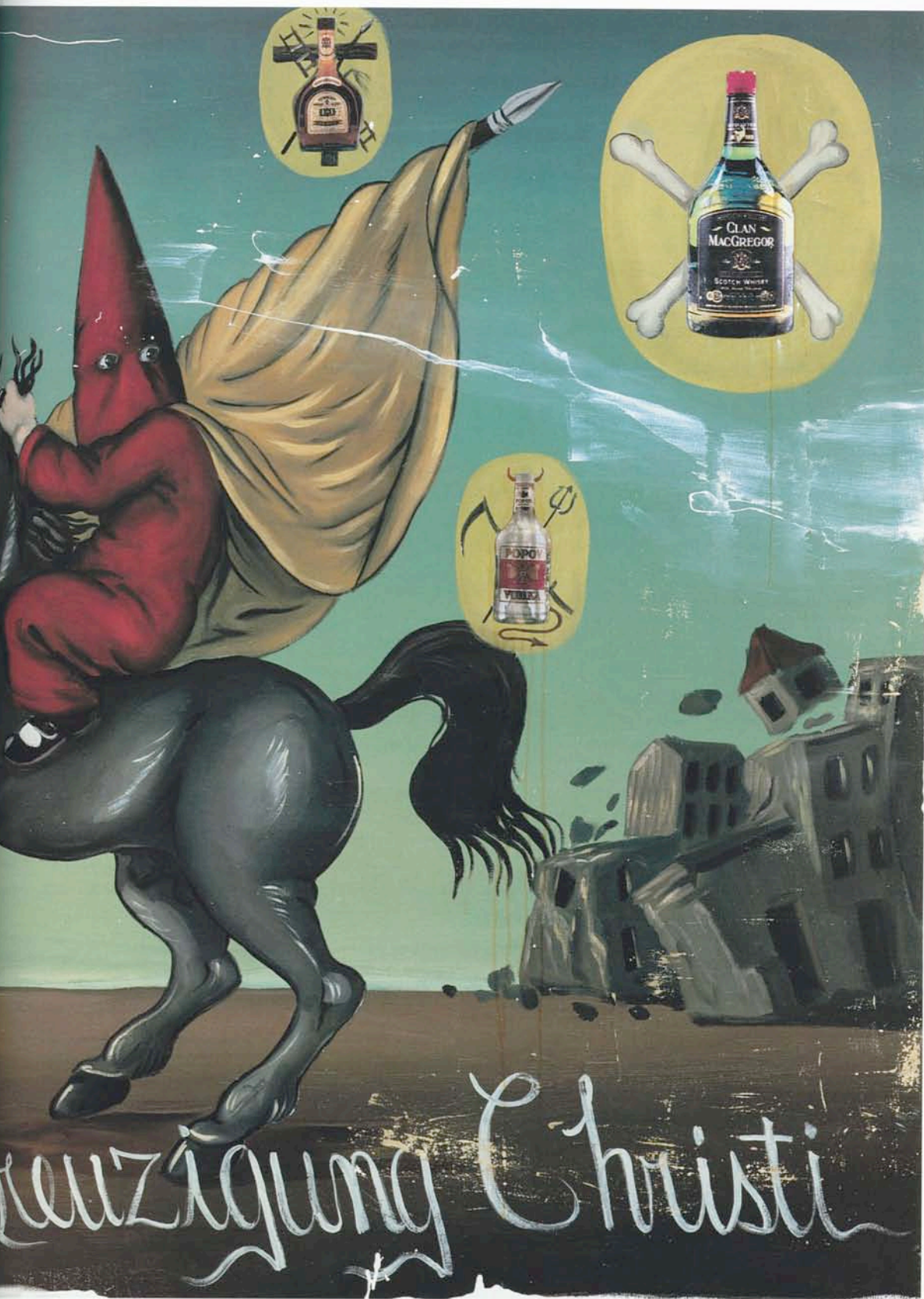
In *Die Kreuzigung Christi (cat. no. 13b)*, a figure in a red hooded robe with a banner in hand—possibly a clansman or a horseman of the apocalypse—gallops into a wasteland of liquor and toppled buildings. Portents like a Holy Bible, a cherub, a devil's pitchfork, a crucifix, and a poison sign disfigure the crusader's charge into territories which need conversion.

¹ Kevin Power, “Manuel Ocampo: Rough Gatherings at the Edge of the Mind.”



13a
MANUEL OCAMPO
Abstract Painting (Deus Ex Machina), 1996
Oil on linen
H: 96 in. x W: 96 in.
H: 243.8 cm x W: 243.8 cm
Private Collection





13b

MANUEL OCAMPO

Die Kreuzigung Christi, 1993

Acrylic paint and collaged color photocopy on canvas

H: 70 in. x W: 107 1/2 in.

H: 177.8 cm x W: 273 cm

Courtesy of Tom Patchett, Los Angeles