

# ICONS

ARTIST FOCUS : MANUEL OCAMPO

## A Filipino Provocateur Takes On New York



Tyler Rollins Fine Art

**MANUEL Ocampo's 'Pollockian Excess in Extremis: Permission to Appear' is at Tyler Rollins Fine Art.**

**WITH** his tattoos, penchant for profanity and overall challenge to convention, Manuel Ocampo lives up to his image as the bad boy of Philippine art. In New York this season, he's been keeping up that international reputation—and showcasing a contingent of contemporary Filipino artists—at five locations.

The best of Filipino art today is 'street-smart, politically incorrect, perverse,' says Mr. Ocampo.

Initiated by Topaz Arts, a Queens nonprofit, "Bastards of Representation: New York Edition" spreads across New York University's A/P/A Institute, Manhattan's Tyler Rollins Fine Art and, in Queens, the Topaz space, Crossing Art gallery and the Queens Museum of Art.

"Filipinos are bastards. We're mestizos, a hybrid culture," says the soft-spoken Mr. Ocampo, age 47. Contemporary art from the Philippines has become one of the hottest categories at auctions in Asia. In April 2011, "Grayground," a large oil painting by Ronald Ventura, who is not in the Bastards show, sold for \$ 1.1 million, setting a record for a new Southeast Asian work.

For the New York project, Mr. Ocampo selected 20 artists who don't regularly participate at Christie's and Sotheby's auctions. Some 80% of Southeast Asian contemporary works at such auctions are consigned directly by artists and their dealers. "I want people to see this as another way of doing things, with international shows," the artist says.

Chelsea's Tyler Rollins Fine Art has given Mr. Ocampo, best known as a painter, a solo show that runs through Saturday. He thinks the best of contemporary Filipino art "is visceral, dirty, rude, street-smart, politically incorrect, perverse." (Those words have also often been used to describe his own work.) The Tyler Rollins exhibit is called "Manuel Ocampo: The View Through the Bull of a Manual Laborer of Menagerie Gussied Over White Ground: 20 Years of Self-Loathing and Intestinal Mishaps."

Mr. Ocampo emerged out of the Los Angeles art scene and in 1992 was included in "Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s," an important exhibit at the city's Museum of Contemporary Art. The artist, who has four children, moved back to the Philippines in 2005 for family reasons. Among many other activities there, he paints and runs the Department of Avant-Garde Clichés (DAGC), an art gallery in his Manila studio.

Except for Tyler Rollins, the Ocampo shows continue until Dec. 30.

—Alexandra A. Seno

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