

SPEECH OF H.E. JORGE DOMEQCQ  
AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN

on the inauguration of the exhibition  
“FOTO A FOTO”  
October 24, 2011  
Metropolitan Museum of Manila

H.E. Benigno Simeon Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines  
Hon. Paquito N. Ochoa, Jr., Executive Secretary  
Hon. Felipe M. de Leon, Jr., Chairman, National Commission for Culture and  
the Arts  
Hon. Amando M. Tetangco, Jr., Governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas  
My fellow Ambassadors  
(Honourable Senators)  
(Honourable Congressmen)  
National Artists  
Dr. Corazon S. Alvina, Vice-Chairman, Metropolitan Museum  
Mr. Gerry Torres, Director, Metropolitan Museum  
Dear Friends,

“Ang pangunahing kasangkapan ng puso at diwa ay ang pluma. Mayroong mga pumipili ng pinsel, ang iba naman, ang pait. Pinili ko ang pluma” (“The principal instrument of the heart and mind is the pen. Some prefer the brush; others the chisel. I prefer the pen”). With this statement, José Rizal described his well-known passion for the written word as a means of expression. And it was with his pen that Rizal portrayed the cities he visited throughout his life as a tireless traveller.

*Foto a Foto* journeys through the cities that Rizal got to know very well through the eyes of fifteen Spanish photographers. Rizal chose the pen; these artists have chosen the camera. Their pictures scrutinize our cities like Rizal did with his pen more than a century ago. Many snapshots of Madrid, Barcelona and other Spanish cities have the critical and aesthetic sense that might have inspired Rizal had he been behind a camera.

I wish to thank President Aquino for honouring us today with his presence. I wish also to thank Acción Cultural Española for having brought to Manila this timely exhibition and to thank the Metropolitan Museum of Manila for having accommodated it. May I also thank the sponsors. It is undoubtedly an initiative worthy of this 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rizal’s birth.

Rizal, like no other, experienced all the cities he visited, particularly Madrid and Barcelona. On his first trip to Madrid, he described “pretty houses like those in Manila”. At first, Barcelona seemed to him gloomy and poor, but it did not take him long to discover its charms. Rizal made the most of the cultural, social and academic life that the Spanish cities offered him. He eagerly went around universities, museums, churches, clubs, libraries and *tertulias* in those cities. But what captivated him most was the freedom of thought and expression that prevailed there, and which he struggled all his life to also enjoy in his native Philippines.

In his trips to Spain, Rizal tirelessly advocated turning the eyes of Europe, particularly Spain, upon the Filipino people. From his first article “El amor patrio” (Love for one’s country), his contributions to *La Solidaridad*, his political activity in the community of Filipino *ilustrado* expatriates clearly showed his reformist and unyielding effort. But he also aspired to bring closer the beauty and richness of Philippine culture to his fellow countrymen.

I believe that, at the end of the XIX century, Spain committed a historical mistake by persecuting and executing José Rizal for his reformist ideas. Rizal’s execution didn’t bring peace to the Philippines. Politics and violence, be it by the State or non-state actors, do not work well together in the achievement of peace. That is why, in these days of unjustified violence in Mindanao, we commend you, Mr. President, for your stand and commitment towards the peace process.

Now, more than one hundred years after the death of Rizal, Spain has taken on the noble task of bringing the Philippines closer to our fellow countrymen, starting from the life and works of its national hero. In this spirit, at the end of November this year, an exhibit on José Rizal will be inaugurated at the *Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*. It will be followed by other activities in 2012, which we hope may contribute to an illustration of the vibrant Philippine cultural panorama.

In the same manner that Rizal was welcome in Madrid and Barcelona, these cities and many other Spanish cities receive gladly a growing number of Filipino citizens. They make up an exemplary community, easily integrating into the Spanish way of life and customs, and have gained the hearts and minds of our fellow countrymen because of their warmth, professionalism and great human quality.

May this exhibit pay homage to our cities, diverse landscapes where Filipinos and Spaniards blend together, building a richer and more prosperous society, that I believe would have made José Rizal extremely proud.

Maraming salamat po.  
Muchas gracias.