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The Rainbow Connection

Filipina artist Pacita Abad turns Alkaff Bridge into a colourful work of art

*"To me, art should be incorporated into our everyday lives, not just hung on a wall of a museum."
— Pacita Abad*



Battleship grey no more, the Alkaff Bridge which spans the Singapore River is now a splendid colourful work of art, thanks to Filipina artist Pacita Abad

It is funny how a cup of coffee can stimulate the senses . At least, that is what happened to me early last year, when I was the artist-in-residence at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI), an institute that collaborates with international and Singaporean artists .

Working with STPI was intense and exhausting, but we were exhilarated by our artistic collaboration . We always took coffee breaks in the mornings and the afternoons at one of the many cafes in the Pacita Abad at work on her "Painted Bridge" area . It was during one of these relaxing moments that I began to really look at the Alkaff Bridge, which is located right next to STPI . At first, the pedestrian bridge across the famous Singapore River did not make much of an impression on me. I think it was because the bridge was painted like a naval warship-a battleship grey colour. Gradually, the more I looked at the

bridge, the more I began to appreciate its graceful lines and curvaceous steel pipes . Then it came to me that to accentuate the sculptural shape of the bridge, it should be painted in bright colors.

I knew that the bridge would look fantastic, if only it was painted in a way that would make people notice it, instead of simply just walking over it, or passing by it . I told my colleagues at STPI of my idea to paint the bridge, and they all laughingly agreed that it would be great, but reminded me that I would never get permission to do such a thing in Singapore . I responded that it won't hurt to try . Finally, last November, STPI's Matin Tran told me that with strong support from Edmund Cheng, a board member of STPI, everyone had approved of the project

I was so happy when we finally got the permission to paint the bridge since I love public art . To me, art should be incorporated into our everyday lives, not just hung on a wall of a museum . Nothing is more public than a bridge that thousands of people pass by everyday.

How wonderful, a unique "Painted Bridge ; as my gift to Singapore!

(Editor's note: Residents and visitors to Manila will be able to see Pacita Abad's works when STPI's "Circles in My Mind" exhibition opens at the Cultural Center of the Philippines on 9 September. The exhibition of Pacita's prints will run till 31 October.)

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