



Pacita Abad
Art Estate

Artwork on the cover:
L.A. Liberty, 1992, acrylic, cotton yarn, plastic buttons, mirrors, gold thread, painted cloth on stitched and padded canvas, 94h x 58w in

SILVERLENS

www.silverlensgalleries.com

info@silverlensgalleries.com

T +63 2 816 0044

M +63 917 587 4011

2263 Don Chino Rocas Avenue Extension
Makati City 1231 **PHILIPPINES**

FRIEZE
LONDON

Regent's Park
4-6 October 2019

PACITA
ABAD

SILVERLENS

BOOTH W2

I Thought The Streets Were Paved with Gold

Pacita Abad's 'Immigrant Experience'

The Filipino-American artist Pacita Abad embodied a transnational sensibility long before this discourse was felt in the art world. Asian-American, she said, was a designation that fitted her well — aptly describing a life spent living between Boston and Bangkok, Manila and New York City, Washington D.C. and Jakarta. Born to a political family in the Philippines in 1946, Abad was initially set to follow in her parents' footsteps until, in the late 1960's, her activities as a student leader saw her caught in the crosshairs of the Marcos dictatorship. Forced to leave for Madrid to continue her law studies, she arrived in San Francisco in 1969 on what was intended to be a brief stopover. Here, the countercultural movement that centred on Haight Ashbury and the influx of new arrivals resulting from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 proved irresistible. She never made the journey to Spain and it was in this city under transformation that Abad would begin her life as an artist.

In 1973, Abad embarked on a year-long journey that would have an enormous impact on her, travelling through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Shortly after returning to the United States, Abad enrolled at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. and married Jack Garrity, an American development economist, whose work would take them to even more far flung locations — from Papua New Guinea to Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic and South Sudan. Throughout these travels, Abad would paint, gather indigenous materials and learn traditional techniques. In the late 1970's she began developing a method she called trapunto painting, which brought these techniques, materials and influences together onto a single painted surface.

In her own words:

'Trapunto painting is what I call my work — the term comes from the Italian trapungere, meaning "to embroider." I paint, using either oil or acrylic, on canvas and then collage. To this I add a backing cloth and stuff polyester filling in between. The two layers are then joined with running stitches. I was interested in the concept because I saw how it could add dimension to my paintings. Later, I began adding materials that I had picked up and techniques that I had learned in my travels. I have been inspired by looking at such traditional forms as the *mola* from Panama, *huipil* from Guatemala and Mexico, *kalaga* from Burma, embroidery from Afghanistan, tie-dye from Africa, and by the use of mirrors in India and shells in the Philippines and throughout the South Pacific. The technique that I have developed has very few constraints — it allows me to be spontaneous and innovative. I can incorporate many media and processes, including painting, stitching, collage, silkscreen, tie-dye, and embroidery into a single work.'

Pacita Abad's 'Immigrant Experience' is a series of sixteen large scale trapunto paintings begun in the late 1980's while the artist was living in Washington D.C. These works combined social realist imagery with the technique that she was developing — creating kaleidoscopic and complex tableaux of migrant life in the United States. While Abad drew from her own experiences in creating these images, her works emphasised fostering a sense of empathy and solidarity with other immigrants of colour. Each painting depicted the multiple lived narratives that she encountered: fellow émigré artists, Korean grocers, Dominican house painters, Filipino cannery workers and Cambodian refugees. The works were first shown at a solo exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. in 1994, at a time when the United States was emerging from the culture wars of the Reagan era and confronting difficult questions regarding sexuality, race, nation, and empire.

'L.A. Liberty' (1992), the first work she completed in this series, is emblematic of that historical moment, when the challenge for the contemporary artist was, according to Homi K. Bhabha, 'to perform a poetics of the open border.' In Abad's rendition, Lady Liberty is displaced to the West Coast and recast as a woman of colour, her brown skin clad in bejewelled patchwork robes — a monument reimagined to welcome and represent a new wave of immigrants to an America less cohesive and more exuberant. Viewed through the lens of present cultural upheavals, 'L.A. Liberty' serves as a disavowal of the current moment — an invocation to insist on inclusion and complexity amidst our ongoing state of emergency.

– Pio Abad

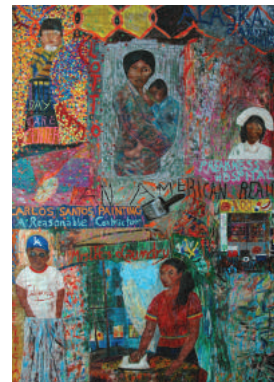
'I think global, not racial. I go out, learn the wider horizon, develop and evolve...'



image courtesy of Wig Tysmans

About the Artist

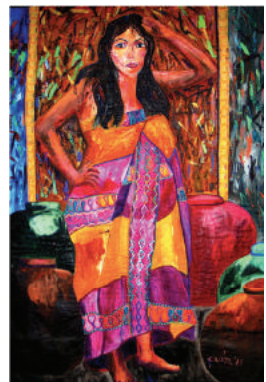
Born in the Philippines in 1946, Pacita Abad studied painting at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. and the Arts Student League in New York. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila; National Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia; Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, The Museum of Philippine Art, Manila; Bhirasri Museum of Modern Art, Bangkok, Thailand; Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore; The National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; and the National Center of Afro-American Artists, Boston, among others. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including: *Beyond the Border: Art by Recent Immigrant*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art*, a traveling exhibition organised by the Asia Society, New York; *Olympiad of Art*, National Museum of Modern Art, Seoul, Korea; *2nd Asian Art Show*, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan and *La Bienal de Habana*, Havana, Cuba. Abad's works are in the permanent collections of the Tate, UK; M+ Museum, Hong Kong, and the National Gallery of Singapore. She died in Singapore in 2004.



I thought the streets were paved with gold, 1991, acrylic, oil, wood bristle, painted canvas, painted cloth on stitched and padded canvas, 94h x 68w in



From Doro Wat to sushi and chicken wings and things, 1991, acrylic, oil, painted canvas, plastic buttons, beads on stitched and padded canvas, 94h x 68w in



Tarahata sa Cortada, 1983, acrylic, painted cloth on stitched and padded muslin, 84.65h x 59.06w in