

SILVERLENS

Masks & Spirits

Pacita Abad

17 October – 21 November 2020
Silverlens Galleries



Pacita Abad, *On Reaching 37*, 1983, acrylic, painted cloth, rick rack ribbons, handwoven yarn on stitched and padded canvas, 90.55h x 55.12w in, 230h x 140w cm. Image courtesy of Silverlens.

Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SILVERLENS is thrilled to present *Masks & Spirits*, a solo exhibition by the late Filipino-American artist Pacita Abad. This show, which lifts its title from Abad's celebrated series, will feature five vibrant large-scale trapunto paintings from 1982 through 1994. While the gallery has shown Abad's *Masks & Spirits* works outside the Philippines these last two years – in Art Basel Hong Kong and Frieze London – this exhibition marks the first time her pieces will be gathered and displayed in Silverlens' space. We graciously extend an invitation to the public, on the anniversary of Abad's birth month, for this special homecoming exhibition.

Pacita Abad was the living embodiment of a global spirit. In her fifty-eight years, she resided in five different continents and worked in over eighty countries. Consequently, her artistic practice was greatly informed by her extensive travels. Countless diverse experiences furnished Abad with a plethora of ideas, techniques, and materials – all of which she shrewdly incorporated into her art. It was during her time in Africa in the mid-1980s that prompted her to begin painting *Masks & Spirits*, a monumental series in her artistic career. It was here where she began to experiment with the medium that came to identify her practice, trapunto paintings. Inspired by tribal masks from the world's most remote areas, Abad created over fifty of these large, hand-stitched, colourfully embellished trapunto works in her lifetime. This series was a turning point in Abad's artistic approach: not only did the scale of her works change, her aesthetic style likewise shifted from figurative realism to mystical abstract figuration.

Representative of her cross-cultural practice, *Masks & Spirits* embodies the values Abad held as an artist; they reflect socio-political commentaries while vividly celebrating tribal customs. An internationally prominent series, seven of these trapunto works currently hang in the eleventh edition of the Berlin Biennale; three are in the collection of the Tate London, and are scheduled to exhibit at the Tate Liverpool next month. After decades of travel, we feel very privileged to share in the tremendous honour of hosting these *Masks & Spirits* paintings in our gallery.

Masks & Spirits will be on view onsite alongside *Ziggurat* by Norberto Roldan and *Apothecary: Prelude* by Yvonne Quisumbing until 21 November 2020. While our physical space is open, gallery visits are strictly by appointment only. Schedule your visit here, <https://bit.ly/Visit-Silverlens>. For more information, please contact info@silverlensgalleries.com or +63 917 587 4011.

Words by Madeleine Par.

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About the artist

Pacita Abad (b. 1946, Batanes, Philippines; d. 2004, Singapore) was the daughter of a congressman, who had hoped that she would traverse a similar political path. But the course of Abad's life changed when she decided to take up painting, after a year of travelling in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in 1973. Abad later married a developmental economist, Jack Garrity, whose work predisposed them to travel to developing countries. Her experiences in these remote regions informed her subject matter and aesthetic practice: she learned traditional art techniques from in each of the places she visited and incorporated these methods into her art. In the late seventies and early eighties Abad introduced a quilting method onto her canvasses, which she called trapunto. Here, she layered various objects — stones, sequins, glass, buttons, shells, mirrors, printed textile — atop the surfaces of these paintings, before stuffing and stitching them.

Characterised by vibrant colour and accumulated material, these large scale trapunto paintings traverse a diversity of subject matter: from tribal masks and social realist tableaux, to lush and intricately constructed underwater compositions and abstractions. She lived and travelled in numerous countries — from Bangladesh to Sudan, Sudan to Jakarta, Jakarta to Boston, Washington D.C. to Manila — and it was this itinerancy that defined and shaped Abad's cross-cultural practice. Abad's work brought together images and experiences across cultures, economies and histories. Her pieces offered global reflections long before the discourses of globalisation and transnationalism were felt in the art world.

Abad's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the National Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia; Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, The Museum of Philippine Art, Manila; Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila; Bhira Sri 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 organized 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 died in Singapore in 2004.



About SILVERLENS

Through its artist representation, institutional collaborations, art consultancy and exhibition programming, including art fairs and gallery partnerships, SILVERLENS aims to place its artists within the broader framework of the contemporary art dialogue. Its continuing efforts to transcend borders across art communities in Asia have earned it recognition from both artists and collectors as one of the leading contemporary art galleries in Southeast Asia. SILVERLENS was founded by Isa Lorenzo and Rachel Rillo in 2004.

Enhanced Safety Measures

The health and safety of our staff, guests, and larger community remain our utmost concern. To ensure this, the gallery is taking strict measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In line with the city's guidelines for social distancing, we will not be accepting any walk-ins. Gallery visits are limited and by appointment only, from Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Upon entering the compound, security guards will take your temperature and ask you to fill out a health inspection form. Hand sanitizer will be provided, and high-touch surfaces will be cleaned following each visit. All visitors are required to wear masks. We kindly ask for your cooperation at this time.

To schedule your visit, visit <https://bit.ly/Visit-Silverlens>

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