
WALKER

Calendar

Pacita Abad



This Walker-organized exhibition is the first-ever survey devoted to the work of Pacita Abad (US, b. Philippines, 1946–2004). Abad is best known for her *trapunto* paintings, a form of quilted painting the artist originated by stitching and stuffing her painted canvases as opposed to stretching them over a wood frame. Abad was prolific, making more than 5,000 artworks that traverse a diversity of subject matter, from tribal masks and social realist tableaus to intricately constructed underwater compositions and abstractions. With more than 80 major works—most of which have never been on view—the exhibition showcases her experiments in different mediums, including works on paper, ceramics, and costumes, alongside her paintings. Developed in close collaboration with the artist’s estate, the presentation celebrates the multifaceted work of an artist whose vibrant visual, material, and conceptual concerns are as urgent today as they were three decades ago.

Abad immigrated to the United States in 1970 to escape political persecution after leading a student demonstration against the authoritarian Marcos regime. Informed by this experience, she was determined to give visibility to political refugees and other oppressed peoples through her art. “I have always believed that an artist has a special obligation to remind society of its social responsibility,” she said. Works from her *Immigrant Experience* series (1983–1995) highlight the rising multiculturalism of the 1990s, yet also call attention to the era’s contradictions and elisions, centering the sufferings and triumphs of people on the periphery of power. The series touches on the Los Angeles race riots, the Haitian refugee crisis, and the detention of Mexican migrant workers at the US border, among other subjects, offering an intimate look at lives often obscured by the reductive, xenophobic headlines of the day.

Though she became a US citizen in 1994, Abad lived for a number of years in Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, Singapore, Sudan, and elsewhere. Largely self-taught, she interacted with the various artistic communities she encountered on her travels, incorporating a diversity of cultural traditions and indigenous forms—from Korean ink brush painting to Indonesian batik—into her expansive practice. Abad’s global, peripatetic existence is reflected in the portability of her works and in her use of textiles, a medium often associated with female, non-Western labor and historically marginalized as craft.

The exhibition will be accompanied by the first major publication on Abad’s work. The volume will include scholarly essays and the most comprehensive documentation of the artist’s work to date as well as oral histories conducted with artists, curators, family members, and others who knew Abad or were influenced by her practice.

Curator: Victoria Sung, associate curator, Visual Arts

VISITING GUIDELINES

WHEN
Apr 15–Sep 3, 2023

WHERE
Galleries 1, 2, 3, and D/Perlman
Gallery

RELATED MEDIA



Pacita Abad, *L.A. Liberty*, 1992. View of the exhibition *Life in the Margins*, Spike Island, Bristol, 2020. Courtesy the Pacita Abad Art Estate. Photo: Max McClure.