

## PRESS RELEASE

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*I have given it color* showcases the vibrancy and nuance of several integral bodies of work by the late Asian American artist Pacita Abad (1946-2004). Bringing together rare examples of her critically acclaimed “Masks and Spirits” work with her late culturally-influenced abstractions and material assemblages, the presentation centers Abad’s ability to reflect on a world in transition. Abad proclaims, “I have given it color,” both a nod to her bright palette of hues as well as her use of regional aesthetic traditions and practices to represent life’s vitality. Keenly attentive to material histories, Abad collected elements from her extensive travels to collage into her works.

Integral to Abad’s work are the multimedia techniques that she developed throughout her practice. Her technical innovations open onto the artist’s underlying belief in the vital spirit of the cultural worlds she immersed herself in, across locations throughout Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the United States. As a global artist, she exhibited in 22 countries during her lifetime, at venues including the 2nd Havana Biennial (1986); the Asia Society, New York (1994); the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (1998); the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul (1998); and the Singapore Art Museum (1999).

*I have given it color* highlights several of Abad’s trapunto paintings, a celebrated textile-painting form that borrows from the Italian phrase “to quilt.” An invention of Abad’s, trapunto paintings were produced by stitching and stuffing painted canvases instead of stretching them over a frame, creating a dimensional object that could be hung and rolled up for transport or storage. Trapuntos often evolved over time as Abad continually worked on them amid her travels from continent to continent. Highly conscious of dominant Western contemporary practices, Abad was deliberate in her use of non-traditional materials and hybrid mediums, providing a salient demonstration of regionally-nuanced global contemporary art.

Across figuration and abstraction, Abad’s practice offers an eyewitness account of the world in transition throughout the late 20th century, uniquely positioned as an allied perspective from the Global South. Even-handed across the localities it addresses, her work at times bears witness to violence against marginalized communities, providing a strident amplification of cultures, causes, and events often ignored by dominant media. Abad’s visionary practice foreshadows contemporary discourses around representation, global migration, the contemporaneity of traditional practices, and South-South solidarity.

She is the subject of a major traveling retrospective, opening at the Walker Arts Center in Spring 2023, and at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in Fall 2023.