

people



By JOANNE RAE M. RAMIREZ

Going around in circles with Pacita Abad

"I like your skirt!" exclaimed artist Pacita Abad when I was introduced to her at the home of Singaporean Ambassador Lim Kheng Hua, shortly before her exhibit *Circles in My Mind* at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (the exhibit runs till Oct. 31).

It took me a while to realize that the greeting was far from perfunctory and that Pacita wasn't just exchanging pleasantries. Pacita, the first female "Ten Outstanding Young Man" (TOYM) awardee in the country, was expressing the very heart of her.

For splashed on my skirt was a profusion of butterfly prints in more colors than the rainbow could offer. And color is a trademark of Pacita's prized canvasses, the language by which she expresses her love for life. Why, even her nails were painted a bright aqua when she met us for lunch!

Quoting Cezanne ("When color is fullest, form is richest."), art critic Cid Reyes says color is one of Pacita's twin obsessions (the other, being the circle).

In her CCP exhibit, Pacita creates ripples that radiate from her twin obsessions: colors and circles. Come to think of it, the most vividly colorful objects on earth are circular, or semi-circular: apples, lollipops, sunflowers, beach balls, marbles, umbrellas, beads, bangles, even butterflies when their wings are fully spread out. Yes, just like the butterflies on my skirt.

Bearing her trademark palette of vibrant colors and rich textures, Pacita brings to the Philippines her latest collection of works epitomizing the boundless possibilities of printmaking, paper-making and printing. *Circles in My Mind* features over 70 different works, which were especially flown in to Manila by Singapore Airlines (SIA). Working in close collaboration with the Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI) as part of its ongoing Visiting Artists Programme (VAP), Pacita came

up with over 50 works during a period of three months, incorporating the techniques of lithography, relief printing, screen printing and hand-colored paper pulp. What has emerged is an explosion of monoprints, limited edition prints and mixed media pieces embedded with beads, mirrors, textiles and other exotic objects collected by Pacita during her frequent travels.

The Herculean and delicate task of transporting these priceless art pieces to Manila from Singapore (too bad they couldn't transport Singapore's Alkaff Bridge, which Pacita also painted!) fell on the wings of Singapore Airlines, which rose (pun intended) to the occasion. When you behold Pacita's pieces at the CCP Main Gallery in all their splendor and with nary a scratch, you will realize that the process of bringing the paintings here was in itself, a work of art!

When complimented, SIA Cargo general manager Eugene Chew simply said, "We are honored to be able to contribute to the greater cooperation in the arts between Singapore and the Philippines."

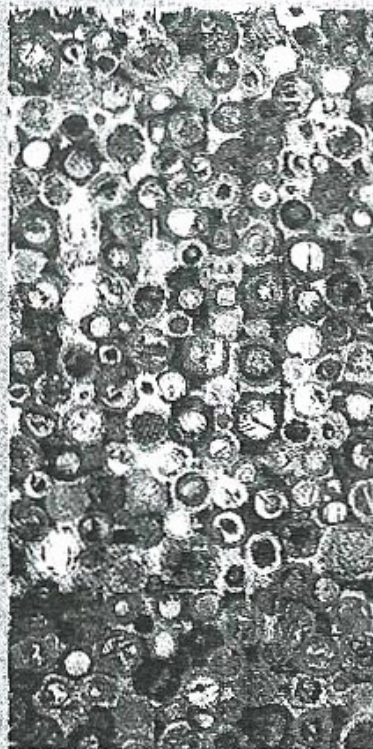
Born in rustic Batanes, Pacita loves Singapore because one could accomplish much in an hour — have coffee with a friend, shop, do a little sightseeing, work even — and still catch a flight. Both the idyllic and relaxed pace in Batanes, as well as the efficiency of Singapore were conducive to Pacita's creative moments.

In Batanes, Pacita has built for herself a studio that allows her to "be alone and paint."

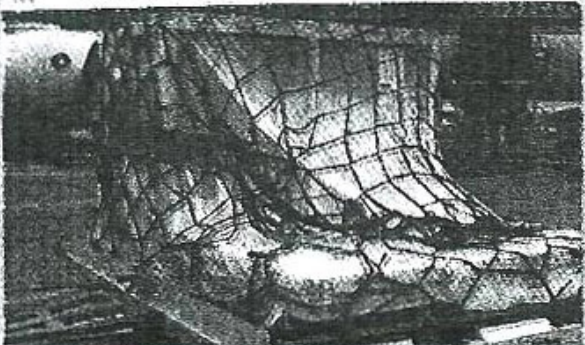
"The studio, high on the top of the hill, surrounded by pasture land and overlooking the pacific ocean, is built of stone, with walls one-meter thick to withstand the typhoons. The inside is covered with tiles, narra and mahogany wood, and high white walls for me to work. It is so wonderful to paint there, inspired and comforted by the sea and the



ALL SMILES: Artist Pacita Abad with Singaporean Ambassador Lim Kheng Hua (standing, second from left) and Singapore Airlines' Eugene Chew (left) and Rita Dy and Counselor Paul Koh of the Singapore Embassy.



Rolling Stone.



Pacita Abad's artworks are unloaded from a Singapore Airlines jet for her exhibit at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.



Big Snail.

people of the island where I was raised."

On the other hand, Singapore, where she was the artist-in-residence of the STPI, allowed her to make art a part of the people's everyday lives.

"I told my colleagues at STPI of my idea to paint the pedestrian bridge (across the famous Singapore River). 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."

And whaddayaknow, Pacita was granted

permission to paint the bridge!

"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 the museum. Nothing is more public than a bridge that thousands of people pass by everyday!" Pacita said.

Creativity from solitude, creativity from public places. Art goes full circle with Pacita Abad. In full color, too.

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