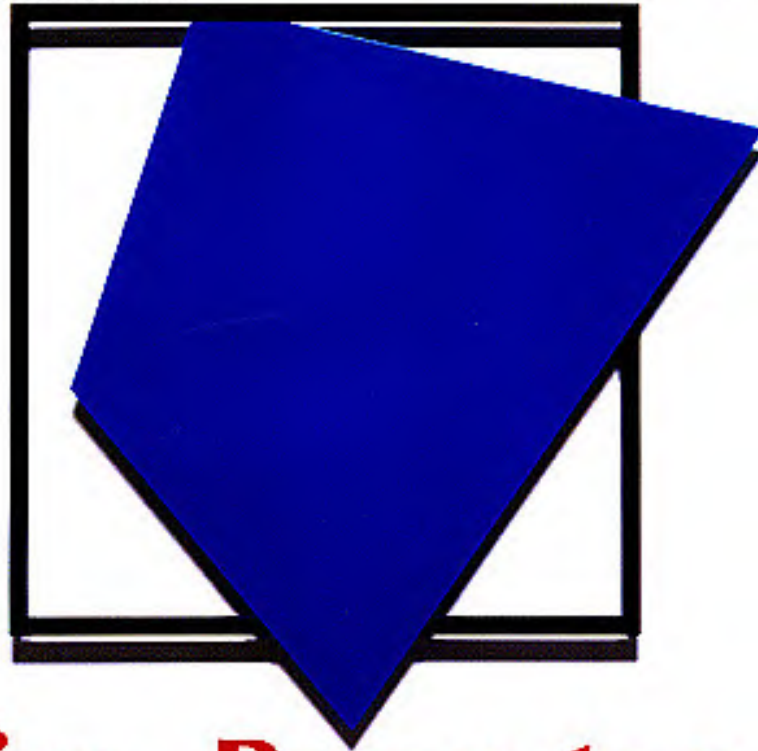


ASIAN ART NEWS - MARCH 2004

# ASIAN ART NEWS

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## Kim Bong-tae



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## SINGAPORE

Pacita Abad at  
Singapore Tyler  
Print Institute

The career of the Philippines-born, Singapore-based artist Pacita Abad has been one of myriad challenges met and overcome, one of personal and professional adversity vanquished. Her perception of the world's ills and joys has been hard won through years of travel and study. The results of her experiences are to be found in the painterly vitality and visual dynamism that are central to the power of her artistic narrative. All of her art is a deeply personal and exuberant response to life, a reaffirmation of the life's importance to beings. Abad has never turned away from an artistic venture that promised her the opportunity to explore fresh ideas. This is clear in her most recent show of prints, paper pulp works, and paper assemblages entitled *Circles In My Mind: Prints and Paper Pulp Works*, the result of an intensive three-month residency on the Visiting Artists Program at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute.

Viewers familiar with, and admiring of, Abad's dramatic *trapunto* works that include such things as glass, padded canvas, fabric, batik, pastel, glitter, paint, buttons, mirrors, shells, yarn, plastic beads, collage, and so on, will immediately recognize and appreciate the intensity of her works on paper. They will not be disappointed. For many people the mention of works on paper suggests something flat, something without body, almost lifeless. Under Abad's and her printers' care and expertise these notions are dramatically swept aside. Abad's works on paper retain much of the quirkiness, sense of humor, and three-dimensional quality of her paintings which all adds significantly to their visual strength and emotional impact.



Pacita Abad, *Talking heads*, 2003, 26-color, paper pulp, mixed-media collage on handmade STPI paper, 167.6 x 132.1 cm.

Among the techniques Abad employed in making her works on paper were lithography, silkscreen, woodcut, relief printing, linocut, collagraph, stencil-colored paper, and collage, as well as up to 44 colors: each added to the visual and textural complexity of the works. The 23-color print, *I'm up and down like a yo-yo* (2003), is an excellent example not only of Abad's blending of a variety of media, but also of her skill in maintaining her dynamic sense of the experimental in line, design, and color. The geometry of this work is reminiscent of some of her paintings for it dances with life, but the paper works possesses an open and fresh visual dynamic that is very different from her paintings. Indeed, for many viewers these works may well be more accessible emotionally than her paintings. Throughout her works on paper, Abad has utilized many of her staple geometric shapes such as the square, the rectangle, the tri-



Pacita Abad, *I'm up and down like a yo-yo*, 2003, 23-colors, colored paper pulp, lithograph, woodcut, embedded and collaged fabric on shaped handmade off-white STPI paper; Edition: 12, plus proofs, 101.6 x 127 cm.

angle, and the circle, as well as variations of these, to add depth to her range of prints, paper assemblages, and paper pulp works that were built layer by layer with colored paper. But it is the cosmic, life-affirming circle that dominates the eye in this work and in many others in her new series.

Abad's journey into the medium of pulp paper has resulted in a series that reverberates with intense energy. It is not only the colors that seem to pulsate before our eyes, but the line, too. While there are many works that seem to suggest the rhythm of music and dance, a work such as *Talking beads* (2003) draws us into it with subtlety of its muted colors and softer lines. The pulped paper give her works in this series a sense of volume and a sense of robustness that is different clearly from the prints and the paper assemblages. Again the pulp paper works hark back to the artist's trapunto art in line and color and, to a certain extent, texture.

The paper assemblages are truly three-dimensional component to Abad's works on paper. These works in their structure and color remind one of her many journeys of discovery into primitive and naive painted and sculptural forms.



Paclta Abad,  
**Cellophane man**, 2003.  
19-color, paper pulp,  
mixed-media and  
handmade STPI paper  
assemblage, 146.1 x 50.8 x  
7.6 cm.

The 19-color *Cellophane man* (2003) is an exuberant work in its blend of paper work, painting, and sculpture. One can well imagine an invisible hand making this piece dance before our eyes, and we would not be surprised. Others in her paper assemblage series speak to us of the cultural and visual diversity of the world. Here Abad uses positive and negative space, soft forms and undulating lines to entice the viewer's eyes and imagination.

There is much in Abad's works on paper that flows directly from her paintings but these things do not dominate her new venture. Perhaps her collaborators helped to restrain her more effusive ideas, and if they did, then it has helped her art enormously. The use of dramatic colors to create fecund forms and the desire to bring her work into the realm of the three-dimensional through her concern with disparate shapes are perhaps the most important. At the heart of these new works, in a medium with which Abad seems to have become completely at ease, is her great sense of humor, and it is this and her clear joy of making art that continually lifts the viewer's spirits.

**Ian Findlay**

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# NEWS

## BRIEF

brought me a small vase that I still have today, that was the start of my glass collection."

Making exhibition glass is not for the faint-hearted artist as it takes many years to perfect and master the skills required to make exhibition glass. It is also financially demanding as the craft requires running kilns, travel, and constant experimentation. The results of such dedication can be seen at Gaffer Studio Glass. The range of work on show is impressive indeed, with the artists coming from a wide range of backgrounds and countries. "The range of work the gallery will show will be divided into 40% functional, limited edition pieces and 60% exhibition (one of a kind) glass sculptures, functional vessel, and wall panels," says Lambe. "Overall the pieces found in the gallery will be by innovative artists and are well respected in their field. The gallery will also show the work of exciting emerging artists."

Among the prominent glass artists with whom Gaffer Studio Glass works are Maureen Williams, Lisa Cahill, Mark Thiele, Brian Hirst, Scott Chaseling Gerry King, Noel Hart, and Kristie Rae from Australia; David Traub from the United States, Erika Mayer from Germany but now living in Australia, Shizuko Samadori from Japan, and Simon Butler from the United Kingdom.

For more information please contact Ms. Julie Lambe at Gaffer Studio Glass, Unit 5A, 15/F, The Centrium, 60 Wyndham Street, Central. Tel: (852) 2521 1770; fax: (852) 2526 1161. E-mail: e.jules@gafferstudioglass.com. www.gafferstudioglass.com.

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### SINGAPORE

#### Art Bridge

For the dynamic Filipina artist Pacita Abad a bridge is not just a bridge but a "canvas" upon which to



Pacita Abad's "Art Bridge".

paint. One of her most recent projects was the painting of Singapore's first "Art Bridge," the Alkaff Bridge, located next to the Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI), is a modern pedestrian bridge that crosses the Singapore River at Robertson Quay. The transformation of the bridge into a vibrantly colorful public artwork.

"Painting the Alkaff Bridge is my gift to Singapore," she Abad. "I passionately believe in public art and hope that this project inspires many more like it and brings art into the everyday lives of Singaporeans."

The project was conceived by Abad during her three-month, artist-in-residence at STPI, which also resulted in dramatic exhibition of a large body of paper works entitled *Circles In My Mind*. Well known for her use of rich colors, textures and shapes, Abad's colorful bridge design is

an outdoor extension of her art work done at STPI. The "Art Bridge" represents the successful collaboration of the artist, STPI, private companies, government agencies and committed individuals, all of whom donated their services to work together to bring greater public awareness and appreciation of public art in Singapore.

In addition to Pacita and STPI, the "Art Bridge" is supported by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), with permission to paint the bridge granted by the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and CPG Consultants Pte Ltd. City Developments Limited (CDL), who is developing The Pier, a luxurious commercial-residential complex at Robertson Quay, is also one of the key sponsors.

"Sponsoring this exciting arts project is in line with CDL's mission to make our community

a better place to live in. Pacita Abad's stimulating public art project will certainly add more life to the Robertson Quay and Mohammed Sultan area, which is developing into an arts hub and a favorite haunt for Singapore's young professionals," says Mr. Kwek Leng Joo, managing director of City Developments Limited.

The paint for the "Art Bridge" has been provided by Nippon Paint (S) Pte Ltd., who offered their palette of over 11,000 colors for Pacita Abad to choose from. The physical painting of the bridge under the supervision of the artist, was done by Professional Industrial Rope Access Services Pte Ltd. (PIRAS), the highly skilled rope specialists, who have undertaken a number of exciting projects in Singapore.

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### THE UNITED STATES

#### New Gallery

East-West Gallery, recently opened in Texas, specializes in original Southeast Asian paintings, including the works of internationally renowned Masters as well as emerging young artists; several artists currently on display in the Gallery are represented at major international auction houses and regularly exhibit their works in cities such as Los Angeles, New York, London, and Paris.

The gallery owner Steve Nale furthered his pursuit of original paintings by artists living in Southeast Asia while working and living in the region.

"Southeast Asia has a dynamic and active art movement. Until this decade many of the artists suffered political and economical repression but now that the governments are becoming more liberalized and the economic situation is stabilizing, the art movement is flourishing. Many of the artists are now recognized internationally as some of the most important and influ-