

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

compositions.

In the four panels which compose *Ifugao*, wrapped twigs and knotted fibers are shaped to describe geometric patterns in relief, reminiscent of tribal shields and totems. An aperture in one panel stares out like an unblinking, watchful eye. In another panel, a large window opens onto a second layer of burlap across which a web of wrapped fibers is spun. Rich stains of cinnabar red, ochre, and indigo evoke the heat of fire, the density of the jungle forest and the cool of a mountain stream.

In recent works, Abad Santos detours from her typical dark, introspective tendencies. Upward-sweeping registers composed of various organic materials are combined with brilliant shades of purple, green, gold, and white to create *Easter*, a work of celebration and joy.

With their wild and dizzying patterns, Pacita Abad's trapunto paintings practically jump off the wall dancing and singing. Dissatisfied with traditional media, Abad devised her trapunto technique which involves joining two layers of canvas, 'drawing' a design with running stitches and stuffing the resulting cavities. The canvas is then painted and decorated with shells, buttons, sequins, textile fragments, and even costume jewelry. With this technique, the artist gifts her paintings with texture and movement.

Works from the *Oriental Abstraction* series are visual essays on the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes and people of the countries the artist have lived in or visited.

In the *Immigrant Experience* series, Abad's skills as social commentator come to the fore as she tells the stories of Asiana, like herself, who has migrated to United States. The young boy almost "blends in" in the visually punning *You Have to Blend In Before You Stand Out*. The riotous background against which he poses is on close inspection composed of alternating registers of real and painted textiles. The boy is differentiated from this background, as well as from



Pacita Abad, *You Have to Blend In Before You Stand Out* (detail), 1995, oil, acrylic, batik, ikat, buttons on stitched and padded canvas, 294.64 x 297.18

his own culture, by the real basketball shirt he wears and the real baseball cap perched on his head and 'standing out' from the picture plane.

Paula Fodor

The Philippines

Manila

Pacita Abad and Paz Abad Santos at the Metropolitan Museum

Thinking Big presents the art of Pacita Abad and Paz Abad Santos, two artists who like to work, as the exhibition title suggests, big. However, with this shared affinity, shared nationality and similar names, all similarities end.

A primordial beauty inhabits the *fiber indigenous art* of Paz Abad Santos. Starting with stretched square panels of burlap, she employs weaving and applied techniques to incorporate a variety of natural materials, such as twigs, sea-shells, coconut shells and husks, fibers, and snakeskin, in large