

Artists & Community: Pacita Abad

Artists & Community: Pacita Abad is a new and fascinating exhibition at The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Ave., N.W. This display features ten works of Pacita Abad which she calls "The American Dream." These works are colorful and meaningful. They are done in trapunto which is a technique which allows the artist to incorporate a wide variety of media and processes such as painting, stitching, collage, silkscreen, tie-dye and embroidery into an individual piece. The works on display are quite large, have gorgeous designs and are ablaze with a juxtaposition of interesting fabrics and bold, bright colors.

Much of the focus of her work is on people and cultural diversity. "Cross Cultural Dressing" is one of her finest works. It focuses on four individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds; it depicts their pride in their ethnic cultures. Her works are concerned with the immigration experience and this particular reflects the diversity of cultures within our society.

One of her most powerful and radiant works is called "L. A. Liberty" was done in 1993. This intricate piece is made with acrylic, fabric, glass, plastic buttons, gold thread, and cotton yarn on stitched and padded canvas.

In an interview with Angela Adams, NMWA adjunct curator of this exhibition, Pacita Abad said that in her first visit to Ellis Island in 1991, she was "surprised to see that, in spite of efforts to include all nationali-

ties, there was very little about the immigration story of Asians, Latin Americans and Africans." "This is because most of them came to America via a route that didn't go by the Statue of Liberty. Moreover, most Asians and Latinos came at a later period than European immigrants. Nevertheless, their experience was just as important and needs to be understood., This is how my painting called 'L. A. Liberty' came about," she said.

Discussing her American Dream series, the artist said that "migration is an issue all over the world. What is most noticeable is that when you go to the American Embassy in any country, there is always a long line to get a visa — everyone wants to go to the United States! It made me think, what is it about this country that attracts so many different people? From my own experience, there is nothing like freedom. You might have everything else, but you cannot buy freedom. Everyone I talk to says the same thing,"

Abad was born in the Philippines and she came to America in 1970 with the intention of pursuing her vocation as an immigration lawyer but subsequently switched to painting. She began painting portraits of her friends many of whom were also immigrants in America. Fifteen years alter, she combined these portraits with a narrative recounting the stories of recent immigrants to create a definitive statement about the immigration experience in this country.

Sherry Sundick
fine arts reviews

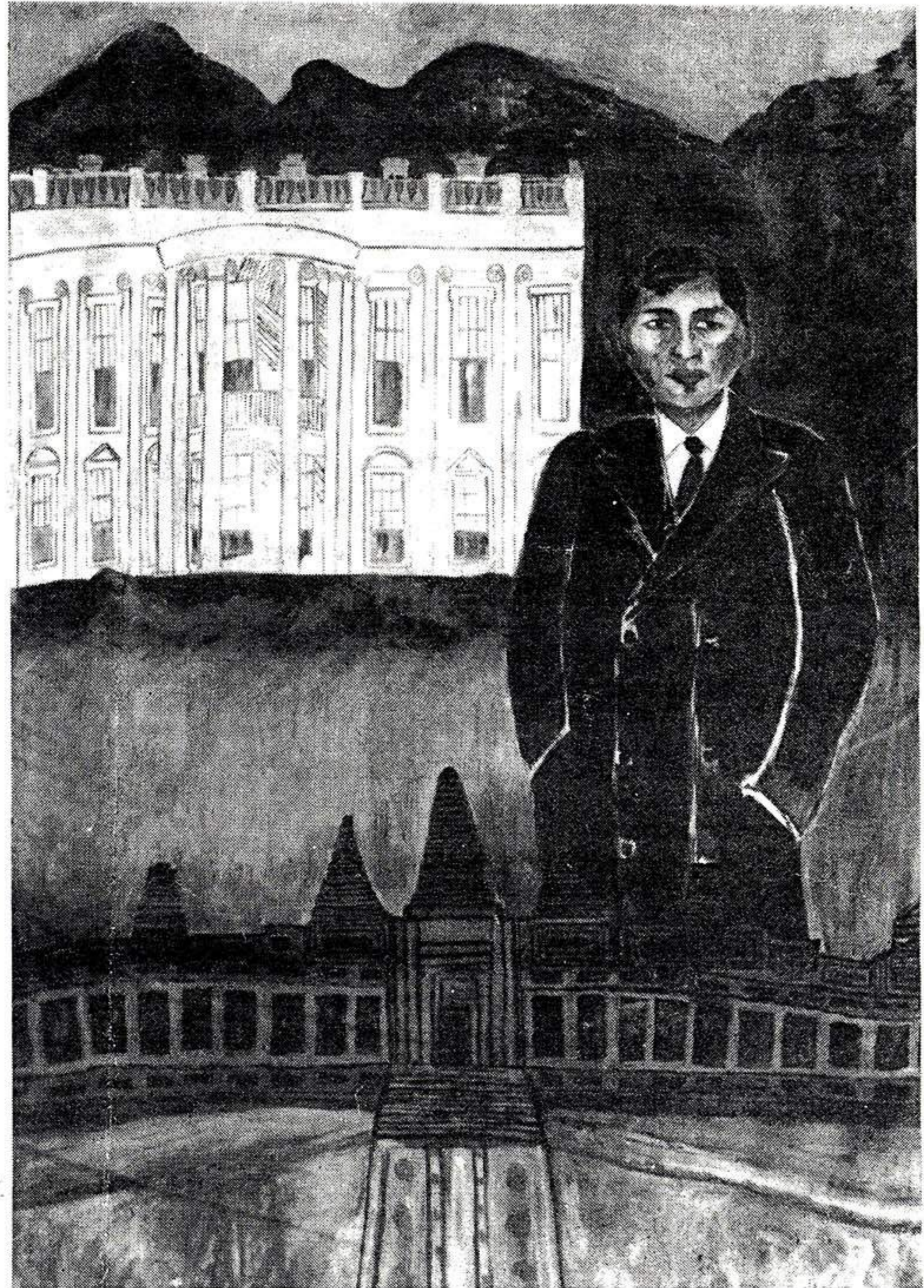


photo credit: Paul Tanedo

"Sichan Between Two Worlds: From Angkor Wat to the White House", Pacita Abad, 1994; Mixed media on stitched and padded canvas, 98 x 58 inches.