

EIGHT PATHS TO A JOURNEY

CULTURAL IDENTITY

AND THE
IMMIGRATION
EXPERIENCE

September 4 - October
26

The Ellipse Arts Center
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There seem to be two competing solutions to ethnic differences: multiculturalism, which tends to preserve differences, and world music, which tends to fuse pieces together to form a universal communication. Most of the artists in this show, curated by Mel Watkin, are trying for

the universal. They want to show the underlying emotions that accompany entering a new society.

Pacita Abad made a series of large child like illustrations of various aspects of the immigrant's experiences which acculturation. **IF MY FRIENDS COULD SEE ME NOW** has the central figure, an Asian woman, surrounded by a nice house, a full grocery cart, etc..

Stressing her differentness and otherness after two generations in America, is Kristine Yuki Aono, who has made a series of kimonos that stand in space like headless mannequins. She has bound some of them in ropes to symbolize the constraints of the Japanese woman.

M. E. Fuentes and Dr. Mia Blumentritt have covered the walls with illustrations of the body with the question of how much a part is worth if it is listed by different Asian ethnic groups. Their anger at the mistreatment of immigrants could just as well been expressed in writing.

The challenge of having to restart your life is the theme of Christiane Graham's installation and video **BRIEF**. The video is a letter to her mother in comparing her life to her memory of her mother's life. Graham's mother was rebuilding from the devastation of WWII in Germany while the daughter is establishing new roots in America. The video sensitively combines pictures from the daughter's childhood with her those of current life. The partially built brick shelter represents one of the fundamental tasks of beginning again, making a home.

Against a background of flowing, tumultuous, and passionate gestures, reminiscent of arabic writing, Mansoor Hassan's new work incorporates not only Arabic and Pakistani images but includes pictures of the victims of the Gulf War. These elegant paintings on wood speak to the universal nature of suffering from displacement weather by choice or chance.

Maria Karametou brings together ancient Greek images and icon like presentation in her books. Her colors are murky leaving one with the impression that Karametou is perpetually depressed as she clings for dear life to her memories of Greece.

The stereotype of the impassive oriental comes to mind in John Lee's pastel drawings of friends. They all seem to wear a bland mask, and their clothing feels like armor. I thought he was trying to show us how the immigrant has to protect himself but Lee's statement says he was trying to show the "full range of emotions". To do that he will have to bring the eyes to life and introduce more variety of facial expressions.

The only artist whose work does not seem to be concerned with the topic of the show is Rossella Matamoros whose brightly colored expressionist paintings are about general topics like transcendence.