

Go on, make your week!

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ORIENTAL ABSTRACTIONS

By Pacita Abad

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(and Alisan Fine Arts)

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THERE is nothing tame about Pacita Abad's art. Her vision of the world bursts with vitality, liveliness, bold lines, strong colours and a raw energy that remains fixed in the imagination long after leaving the show. (For an interview with Abad, see opposite page.)

The 40 pieces in this exhibition range from embroidery (trapunto), oils on canvas and acrylics on paper to mixed media, collographs and silkscreens. All Abad's work strikes me as being not only a very personal view of the world but also a homage to art as a living force.

The very large works, 24 pieces in all, are all hand sewn and include a wide range of materials, from oils and acrylic paints, mirrors and buttons to shells, beads and rhinestones. The art of trapunto will remind many people of

padded quilts or robes, in high relief, embroidered with stitching, applied and using a wide variety of materials for surface decoration.

The effects that Abad has achieved in her trapunto work show an artist with a powerful range of emotions. She is by turns moody, zany, raw, extravagant, soft, expansive and humorous.

The Gold, the Glitter and the Colour You Used to Know (1984) shows Abad in one of her less whimsical moods. There is a coolness, almost a sadness, in her observation. The colours here are much less vibrant than in the lush *Assaulting the Eyes with Ecstasy* (1984) and *Helmut's Cosmic Shoes* (1984).

A number of the pieces suggest mosaics and jigsaw puzzles into which the viewer may wander and create myriad images for himself. This is especially true of *Bilog Bilog* (1985) and *Coloured Bamboo Screen* (1985). The feeling of the naive and the primitive in Abad's work helps us to enjoy the freshness of many of her images.

Abad's work offers us the chance to jog our imaginations into play. We can make of her work what we will. One

moment we are convinced, for example, that we are looking at a jungle or a garden. The next moment we can easily convince ourselves that the jungle or garden is in fact something quite different, a congregation of birds or insects. So much depends on the viewers mood and willingness to open the mind to the many suggestions.

Three of the most impressive works on show, and the three that show clearly the range of trapunto painting, are *Red Bug* (1985), *I Have Desires* (1985) and *Trapo*. These works have a sense of space and depth to them that some of her other pieces lack.

The smaller works, which include collograph, silkscreen and acrylics on paper, are to my mind, not as successful as the large trapunto paintings. Many of them suggest studies for very much larger works. *Mayon Erupting* (acrylic and black ink on handmade paper) has the same feel to it as *Trapo*. Both works have a depth and sense of the three dimensional that is missing in other pieces.

But in her small pieces, Abad carries over her feeling for the zany and the whimsical. *On a Night Like This* (acrylic and black ink on Korean newsprint), a dark, almost brooding work, is another successful smaller piece.

This show is a journey through the undergrowth of the artistic imagination. Make your week — go and see it.



Abad's *I Have Desires*: space and depth