

Daily Mirror

VOL. 24. NO. 99. Colombo, Sri Lanka

MONDAY, MA

Pacita, enjoys expressing herself through colour

DRESSED in hot pink jeans matching T-shirt Pacita Abad portrayed herself as a very warm, and friendly natured Filipino who was looking forward for a long conversation about herself and the nature of the work that she has been at for the past nine years.

Pacita who is very well known for her tapestry and paintings throughout Thailand, Bangladesh, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Bulgaria, Santa Domingo, Connecticut, Washington DC, Sudan and of course her native Philippines has had individual

1969, when she was involved in her father's political campaign in Batanes. When he was finally elected she left for the United States for what she thought would be a short holiday.

Away from the security of her family friends Pacita felt thoroughly alone for the first time in her life. She began working as secretary and also took tailoring jobs after office hours. She learnt sewing skills from her mother. At around the same time she began to work on her masters degree in Asian history at the

gradar, and exhilarating because she enjoyed expressing herself through colour. Gradually, her figures became recognizable by the time they had moved to New York, and she continued schooling for a further one year. Pacita became aware at this time that she was being a very determined and a disciplined painter. She was glad. Pacita was greatly influenced by colourful paintings of the Fauves and the German expressionists.

At this juncture Pacita was beginning to think that academic training for painters although critical, can be also very limiting. She wanted to couple her individual experiences and emotions together with her academic training and express these on canvas. So she was overjoyed when her husband began working as a development economist, as she believed that this would lead her through many exotic countries especially in the East. She wasn't far wrong. Within a period of eight years

By SHANTHI PERERA

they had visited 65 countries. They made their home in France, Bangladesh, Sudan and the Dominican Republic with shorter stays in many places between.

Pacita was painting everything that she had set her eyes on, and that was bringing a whole lot of new experiences for her. She was painting all the wondrous things that she had seen throughout the day. She travelled extensively in all rural areas and this left her with a vast array of paintings and tapestries in which she excels. She now has almost a 1,000 of these paintings.

In Pacita's own words she would just paint, paint and paint, trying her best to capture the various moods of village markets in Guatemala, orchards and temples in Thailand, cheetahs, peacocks and elephants in Kenya, shoe-shine boys and street vendors in the Dominican Republic, shadow puppets in Indonesia and denomic masks of the tribes in Papua New Guinea. Pacita added that out of all these she loved to paint street scenes.

She uses a load of vivid colour in most of her work. Her most significant overseas stay was in Thailand where she visited the refugees from Cambodia. Seeing the faces of the displaced Cambodians she was determined to paint them. Out of this idea Pacita painted 30 oil paintings which she promptly captioned "Portraits of Cambodia". She said that she always believed that an artist has a special obligation towards mankind and that is to show the world through paintings what the other half is like. These portraits provide a deeper understanding of the Cambodian tragedy and give the viewer an idea of what



and selected exhibitions since 1977, where her paintings and tapestries were brought by private collectors from Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, Africa, and the USA.

Pacita is just no ordinary painter. Her works are all big, bold designs woven into tapestries. She has taken as long as eight years to complete one of the tapestries.

Her interest in art came by accident, she says. She was born into a family of 13 children in the northern part of the Philippines on a small island called Batanes. Her father was several times a Congressman and also a Minister for Public Work and Communications, and her mother was an early feminist who served as a Congresswoman. Pacita soon found her parents' influence rubbing off on her, and it is at this time that she followed a traditional academic course and studied political science at the University of the Philippines and then went on to law school. Her studies were interrupted in

University of San Francisco and soon after was offered a job as the university's co-ordinator for cultural affairs. This introduced Pacita to the world of art and although she completed her masters degree, she found herself becoming more and more involved in the art world.

These experiences having re-oriented her original goals of being a politician, vanished, and she turned down a scholarship to enter law school at Berkeley. She now concentrated wholly on the techniques of painting. She couldn't concentrate very long however, as at this time she met her husband Jack Garrity at a World Affairs Conference and within a year, they were travelling by land back to the Philippines. After her return to the USA they settled down in Washington DC where she enrolled herself at the Corcoran school of art for two years. Pacita said that this experience left her both frustrating and exhilarating. Frustrating because her figures looked like the drawing of a first

refugee camp is like. The bitterness, boredom and the story of adversity are all portrayed in these 30 paintings. What she has depicted is a suffering human face and not the usual emaciated children and swarming horries. There are scenes where children are depicted staring out of barbed wire fences, a man holding his sick baby, a woman giving her baby water, and mothers with their children waiting in line at the government cli-

to her native Philippines after a 12 year break.

Pacita hopes to have an exhibition of her paintings towards the last week of her stay in Sri Lanka which will end on the second week of June.

For the short period that she is here she has been walking the streets of Colombo gathering material for her paintings of the city. She simply adores the island as she says that the people are



nic There is so much vivid colour which is fused with moral convictions and human emotions to present a very powerful commentary on the plight of these lost souls.

Pacita is a very strict worker. She maintains a log book in her studio. She signs in and out and is very particular that she sticks to this routine. According to her log book she has painted over 40 hours a week since she has returned

warm, friendly and hospitable just like her folk.

Pacita loves the taste of Sri Lankan food which she describes to be superb. This is not her first time to Sri Lanka said Pacita. The first time was with her husband when they were on a hitch-hiking trip throughout Asia. Pacita adores the sand and the sea atmosphere and will be sad to leave our shores when the time finally arrives