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Who Is Pacita Abad? Google Doodle Celebrates Filipino Artist and Activist

BY **SEREN MORRIS** ON 7/31/20 AT 7:29 AM EDT

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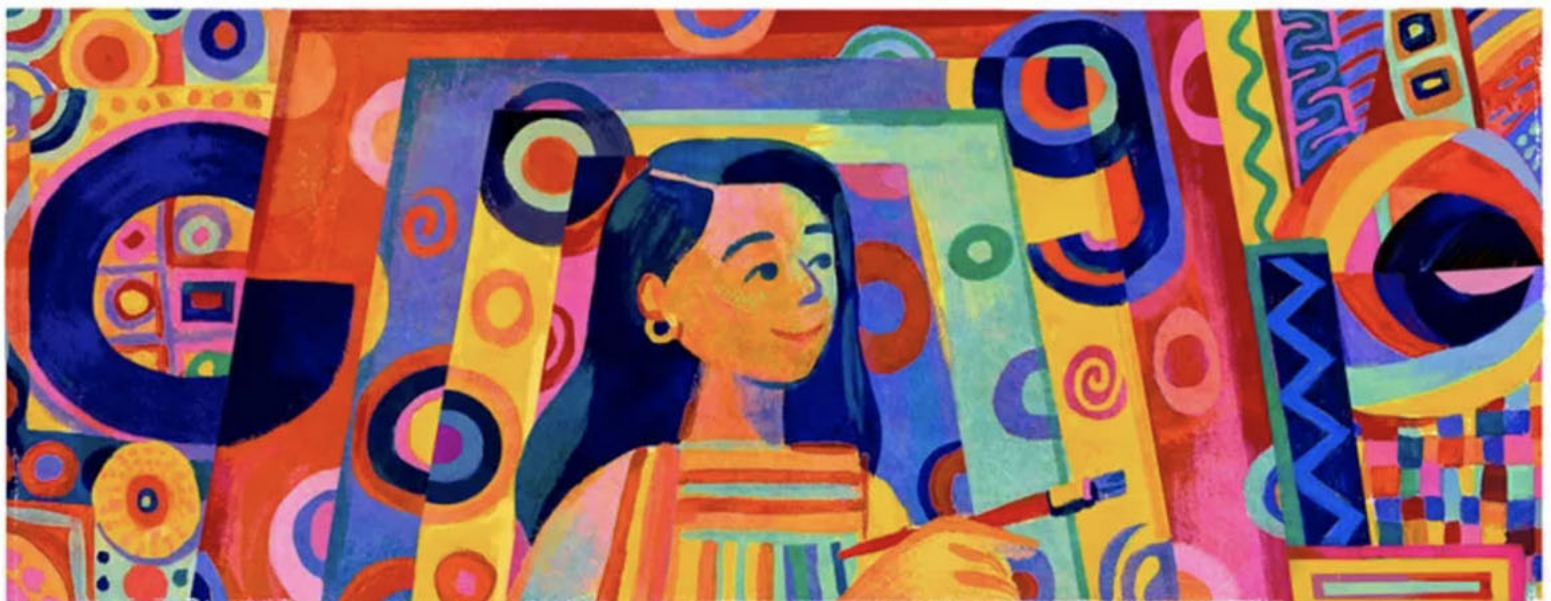
Pacita Abad, the Filipino artist, feminist and activist, is celebrated in today's Google Doodle. On this day in 1984, Abad made history as the first woman to receive the Philippines' prestigious Ten Outstanding Young Men award.

The Google Doodle depicts Abad at the center of a painting in her signature, colorful style, with the word "Google" hidden in the pattern and circles that Abad is known for.

Pacita Abad was born on October 5, 1946, in Basco, in the northern province of Batanes, The Philippines.

She received a BA degree in political science at the University of the Philippines but was forced to leave for the U.S. in 1970 because of her political activism against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

She pursued graduate studies in Asian history in San Francisco and supported herself as a seamstress and a typist. She later became involved in the city's artistic community.



Philippine artist and activist Pacita Abad is celebrated in today's Google Doodle on the anniversary of the day she became the first woman to receive the Philippines' prestigious Ten Outstanding Young Men award.

GOOGLE DOODLE

Abad was known for her bold use of color and mixed media, and for how she used her art to address global themes. Abad traveled the world, from Bangladesh to Sudan, with the cultures she encountered influencing her ever-evolving artistic style.

She was dedicated to improving the world through her art—for example, her 1979 series *Portraits of Cambodia* was intended to raise awareness of societal issues.

Later, Abad transitioned toward abstract work, pioneering a painting technique called "trapunto," which is Italian for quilting. Abad would stuff her canvases to create a sculptural effect and integrate culturally significant materials that she discovered during her travels, such as shells and fabrics.

Describing Abad's exhibition, Spike Island Exhibition Space said: "Characterised by their vibrant color and intricate construction, these works combine a broad range of styles, subjects and techniques, from social realist tableaus incorporating indigenous textiles to richly detailed abstractions inspired by Korean ink brush painting, Indonesian batik and Papua New Guinean macramé.

"This pluralist approach to image-making across cultures, histories and styles underpins Abad's work throughout the decades."

The artist channeled her passion for public art into her 2003 project *Painted Bridge*, in which she covered the 55-meter Alkaff Bridge in Singapore with 2,350 vibrantly colored circles. She died in Singapore in 2004.

In her lifetime, Abad created more than 5,000 pieces of art and today has collections in more than 70 countries. The Google Doodle says: "Thank you, Pacita Abad, for painting the picture of a brighter tomorrow!"

Abad once said: "Although I have tried to raise awareness of these issues through my paintings, I know that it is but a small effort to help address these problems and so much more needs to be done.

"As women, we all have an obligation to help improve the lives of other women, both in our own countries and around the globe."