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Pacita Abad: Textured Existence

BY NICOLE M. NEPOMUCENO



PACITA ABAD's Baongo (1983). Photo by Rik Sferra.
Courtesy the Pacita Abad Art Estate and Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis.

Trapunto, “to embroider” in Italian, is a way of quilting in which cloth and cotton sheets are layered to create a cushioned effect. The late Filipino artist Pacita Abad applied this method to her paintings, where cotton batting, cloth, shells, mirrors, beads, and buttons, among other found objects, are stitched and applied onto the canvas, enriching the painted image with additional meanings and textures. Baongo (1983), seen above, is a sketch for what would become a painting in the trapunto series of the same name. Referencing masks from Central Africa’s Bantu ethnic group, the series reflects the artist’s vibrant and layered practice, cultivated by her travels from Asia to the Americas and across Africa. In the upcoming issue of ArtAsiaPacific, assistant editor Nicole M. Nepomuceno will examine the layers that add texture to Abad’s work: woman, migrant, activist, Filipino.

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