

ARTS

THE ARTIST ABROAD

# Pacita Abad: Dreams in color

By: [Luis H. Francia](#) - @inquirerdotnet INQUIRER.NET U.S. Bureau / 11:22 AM May 22, 2023

Listen
 33



Pacita Abad is the subject of a long-deserved retrospective “Pacita Abad” at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis that opened in late April and is on until September 3rd. (Photo: Tina Kim Gallery)

NEW YORK— I don’t remember exactly where I first met the artist Pacita Abad, whether in New York, Washington, or in Manila, nor the occasion, but the first thing that leaps to mind is her dazzling smile—not that of the skillful politician, though she came from an influential political family, intent on charming his or her listeners, but of an individual glad to be alive, to be in and of this world. She was someone who embraced life wholeheartedly, and not in a Pollyannish way: too well-travelled and smart for that. It might have been, as some have suggested, that somehow she knew she wasn’t long for this world, for in 2004, at the age of 58, she took her last breath in Singapore, felled by cancer.

An Ivatan from Batanes, the Philippines’ northernmost province, she is interred in

## LATEST

**UK sees surge in interest from non-EU job hunters**

**San Francisco Archdiocese, facing sex abuse lawsuits, files for bankruptcy**

**Nasdaq rallies with Nvidia, tech shares; investors look toward Jackson Hole**

**British nurse Lucy Letby imprisoned for life in murders of 7 babies, attempted murders of 6**

**China state banks seen mopping up offshore yuan to stem currency weakness**

Basco, the provincial capital and her hometown. Not far from her burial site is Fundación Pacita Nature Lodge, her former studio cum residence. Atop a commanding height, the lodge has breathtaking vistas of sea, towering cliffs, and windswept rolling hills. You could be forgiven if you had the impression you were in Heathcliff territory.

ADVERTISEMENT

She was a magical spirit, a woman of color enamored of colors, of which she once said, “I always see the world through color, although my vision, perspective and paintings are constantly influenced by new ideas and changing environments. I feel like I am an ambassador of colors, always projecting a positive mood that helps make the world smile.”

Abad is the subject of a long-deserved retrospective “Pacita Abad” at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis that opened in late April and is on until September 3rd—the first retrospective of her works in the world, created over the span of 32 years.

Serendipitously for New Yorkers unable to travel to Minneapolis, a smaller show of her works has just opened at the Tina Kim Gallery in Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood, titled “Colors of My Dream.” As indicated by the title, the works exhibited at the gallery are for the most part exuberant exclamations of colors, in varying shades and shapes, suggestive of hallucinatory dreamscapes.

You may also like:

[Google honors global Filipino artist Pacita Abad with vibrant doodle](#)

[Pacita Abad retrospective to open at Minneapolis’ Walker Art Center](#)

**You May Like**

**Filipina, 38, missing in Carson, California**

**KC Concepcion ibinandera na ang mukha ng dyowang Fil-Swiss, nag-date sa France**

by Taboola

Pacita came into her own as an artist in the ‘80s and ‘90s, in a male-dominated art world that favored, as suggested by Victoria Sung, Walker’s associate curator of visual arts, the conceptual and sleek minimalist styles in art centers like New York and Los Angeles. Sung pointed out that Abad’s aesthetics were diametrically opposed to what “would have been defined as good taste.” In short, she was often considered a craft artist operating on the fringes of the art scene. This distinction has always irritated me—there is craft in art, there is art in craft—for its underlying hierarchical assumption of class and often of race and gender as well.

Interestingly, Abad’s first award as an artist came in 1984, when she received the

[Subscribe to our daily newsletter](#)

Email Address

SIGN ME UP

By providing an email address, I agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and acknowledge that I have read the [Privacy Policy](#).

**MOST READ**

**Two PH-born TV and film pros among jurors at SOHO Int’l Film Festival in NY**

**Many of Lahaina’s Filipinos still missing as the search for bodies drags on**

**5 quintessential Filipino recipes from Erwan Heussaff to get to know our cuisine better**

**Adobo 101: Everything we need to know about the popular Filipino dish**

**Storm Hilary soaks Southern California, heading to Nevada**

**Fil-Am girl, 10, nabs chess master title**

**Ninoy Aquino’s legacy: Democracy is worth fighting for**

Search for

  
  
  
  
  

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**How to clean your Birkenstock sandals**

**Unlock the secrets to the perfect crispy cheeseburger – Fil-Am**

TOYM Award for Art in the Philippines, TOYM standing for Ten Outstanding Young Men—an award that had heretofore always been given to men. Abad became the first woman to be so honored. Not surprisingly, there ensued a public uproar, mainly from male artists discomfited by this gender bender. In her acceptance speech, the artist declared that “it was long overdue that Filipina women were recognized, as the Philippines was full of outstanding women,” including her own mother.

Abad is particularly known for her trapunto paintings, a technique based on quilting that she developed, wherein through stitching and stuffing the painting metamorphoses into a three-dimensional artwork. She incorporated in the literal sense various objects, including beads, buttons, mirrors from India, cowrie shells, and traditional cloth, a playful spirit very much in evidence.

---

ADVERTISEMENT

---

It’s very much that sense of play that to me always comes across so clearly in her work, even in the seemingly darker ones—that of a child’s delight in creating these fluid bursts of being and seeing as though for the first time a universe of colors. Her way may often seem helter-skelter but is more accurately quite disciplined, going not just with the flow but embodying it—an achievement enough to make one smile gloriously each time.

*Copyright L.H. Francia 2023*

### Subscribe to our daily newsletter

SIGN ME UP

By providing an email address, I agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and acknowledge that I have read the [Privacy Policy](#).

### MORE STORIES

---

Don't miss out on the latest news and information.



Like us



Follow us

---

**TAGS:** [Filipino artists](#)

For feedback, complaints, or inquiries, [contact us](#).

---

[Cheeseburger - The Art](#)  
Chef Alvin Cailan's way

[The Coaching Habit: How to Empower Your Team Through Informal Conversations](#)

[Best Applicators for Deck Staining: An Ultimate DIY Guide](#)

[Best Red Light Therapy Devices of 2023: Top 5 Picks for Optimal Skincare](#)