

The art of blankets, quilted paintings at MoMA PS1

by [Michael Gannon](#), senior news editor

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A visitor views the quilted paintings of the late Pacita Abad.

PHOTO BY KRIS GRAVES

Melissa Cody is a fourth-generation Navajo weaver who combines traditional spinning and weaving techniques with new technology to create textile works with colorful geometric patterns and overlays.

Pacita Abad (1946-2004), a native of the Philippines, fled to the United States in 1970 after her family was targeted for their opposition to dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Traveling the world, she took up art.

Largely self-taught, Abad was famous for her trapuntos, quilted paintings in which canvasses are sewn together and stuffed rather than stretched over wooden frames.

Exhibitions of both of their works opened April 4 at MoMA PS 1 at 22-25 Jackson Ave. in Long Island City. Abad's pieces will be on display through Sept. 2. Cody's exhibition closes Sept. 9.

A native of No Water Mesa, Ariz., Cody is a member of the Navajo Diné nation. Her exhibition, titled "Webbed Skies," has more than 30 works, according to MoMA, including a major new piece.

It is her first major solo museum presentation. Her works, according to a museum press release, carry on traditional methods of "Navajo Germantown" weaving, which sprung from wool and blankets produced by the U.S. government in Pennsylvania and given to Navajo people after the forced expulsion from their land in the mid-1800s.

The blankets often were taken apart and the yarn used to make new textiles, incorporating traditional patterns, and establishing a new art form.

While Cody works on a traditional Navajo loom using many of the techniques of her ancestors, she also uses experimental colors, patterns and fibers, and does take advantage of digital technology in an effort to keep tradition while allowing the process and the art to evolve.

Abad, according to the museum, attempted to give visibility to political refugees and oppressed peoples through her work, quoting her as saying, "I have always believed that an artist has a special obligation to remind society of its social responsibility."

Her exhibition contains more than 50 works, many of which have never been on public view in the United States.

"Pacita Abad" is organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and curated by Victoria Sung, Phyllis C. Wattis, senior curator at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive with Matthew Villar Miranda, a curatorial fellow in Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center. The presentation at MoMA PS1 is organized by Ruba Katrib, curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, with Sheldon Gooch, a curatorial assistant.

"Melissa Cody: Webbed Skies" is organized by Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand. The exhibition is curated by Isabella Rjeille, curator at MASP, and Katrib. Exhibition research, and support is provided by Andrea Sánchez, coordinator of curatorial affairs at MoMA PS1.

MoMA PS1 is open noon to 6 p.m. Thursday through Monday, and noon to 8 p.m. on Saturday. Tickets are available in person or online at momaps1.org. The suggested donation is \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors 65 and over and students, both with IDs. There is a "pay what you wish" option. Children 16 and under are free, as are members and city residents with proof of ZIP code.