

Pacita Abad Retrospective Headed to Toronto

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~3 minutes

The late Filipina-American artist made over 4,500 works in her lifetime. Her first major survey will soon end its run at MoMA PS1 and reopen at the Art Gallery of Ontario.



Pacita Abad at work in her Manila studio, 1984. Courtesy Pacita Abad Art Estate.

The eclectic artist [Pacita Abad](#) received her first retrospective last year, organised by the [Walker Art Center](#) in Minneapolis, where it was first shown.

The exhibition travelled to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and [MoMA PS1](#) in [New York](#), where the artist's work is on view until 2 September. The survey will conclude at the [Art Gallery of Ontario \(AGO\)](#) in Toronto this October.

While Abad has been celebrated in recent exhibitions, including Adriano Pedrosa's 60th Venice Biennale, which welcomes 'foreigners', Abad's work was not always acknowledged.

When she settled in San Francisco in 1970, urged by her parents to leave the Philippines after leading student protests against the Marcos regime, she did not intend to become an artist.



Pacita Abad, *Hundred Islands* (1989). Oil, acrylic, glitter, gold thread, buttons, lace, sequins on stitched and padded canvas. © Pacita

Abad Art Estate LLC. Courtesy Pacita Abad Art Estate.

Her mediums, notably quilting and needlework, rustic materials, and vital palettes, derive from a lifetime of travel to over 60 countries, including longer stays in Indonesia, Singapore, and Mexico, and exchanges with artists and artisans in each region. At the time, critics dismissed this difference as 'naïve, childlike, and ethnic', according to [SFMOMA](#).

'I always see the world through colour, although my vision, perspective, and paintings are constantly influenced by new ideas and changing environments,' Abad [explained](#).



Pacita Abad, *European Mask* (1990). Acrylic, silkscreen, thread on canvas. Tate: Purchased with funds provided by the Asia Pacific Acquisitions Committee 2019. Courtesy Pacita Abad Art Estate and Tate. Photo: At Maculangan/Pioneer Studios.

These influences were later incorporated into her work—notably, large hanging tapestries illustrated with Indigenous masks with embroidered surfaces, underwater scenes ornamented with glitter, lace, and sequins, and portraits of migrant life in the United States.

Opening on 9 October, the exhibition at AGO will showcase the artist's experiments in different mediums—textiles, works on paper, paintings, and print—across more than 100 works. —[O]