

Abad and the sunburst of colors

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at a time when hostilities in the Gulf are getting meaner and meaner, the Philippine art scene is undoubtedly flourishing and getting better. Perhaps this is the best part of our culture: when the times get worse, culture and the arts get more interesting.

Pacita Abad's simultaneous exhibits at the Luz Gallery and at the Ayala Museum (until February 21 at the Luz and February 28 at the Ayala Museum) attest to the Filipino's ability to indulge in the richness of culture even at the worst possible times.

THINKS BIG

Abad, a USA-based artist, comes home after five years to show to her *kababayans* a conglomeration of paintings which, according to her, possess intense energy. In all, there are 67 colorful, varied and multi-media paintings reminiscent of her earlier trapunto or textile works, but on a much smaller scale.

The artist said most of the paintings were studies for bigger works but as she was working on these "studies," she became so engrossed that she decided to have a show. Abad herself dubbed this series "Wild at Art," although officially, the shows were simply titled "Two Solo Exhibitions of new works by Pacita Abad."

The question now is: Who's wild, the artist or her art?

"I get wilder as I get older," said Abad. On the contrary, there's nothing wild or eccentric about her. Abad, in fact, is as computer-literate as any executive. She says that she documents her work and keeps track of her finances on the computer. Unlike other so-called artists, she's not afraid to market her work. This is part and parcel of being a professional artist, she says. If at all, Abad thinks big.

Born in the islands of Batanes, the morena Abad has joined art competitions and exhibits all over the world. She has been granted more awards and grants for her art in the state of Washington than, say, any of the Washington-born artists. For 1990 alone, she has been granted the National Endowment for the Arts (in the US) and another grant from the Washington, D.C. Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Her mural was also recently installed at the Metro Center, Washington's main subway system.

She also calls herself an interna-



ABAD: ethnic without trying to be



HOOKER'S GREEN: acrylic on canvas, buttons, rhinestones, trapuntoed and collage



KASPAROV AND KARPOV: oil pastel, acrylic on canvas, collage

tional artist. And undoubtedly so. Abad has exhibited at invitational group exhibitions in the USA, Korea, London, Paris, Cuba, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Japan, Bulgaria and other countries which were part of the itinerary of some travelling shows where she was represented.

Abad says for each country that she has gone to, she imbibes the influences and incorporates these in her art.

MORE ARTWORKS

For this, Abad has been invited to show in the more prestigious museums all over the world and she has no qualms about this. She says, "I'm so busy, I don't even have time to show here."

But show she did. Abad feels that it is an obligation to come and show what she's done for the past years. A teacher and art lecturer, Abad said that there is nothing like seeing an exhibit and feeling that surge of energy within oneself and for the student or the viewer to build from that energy.

The opening of the exhibits was highly charged with energy and speculation from the art crowd who went to the Luz and Ayala Museums last February 1. The crowd was not disappointed in what the girl from Batanes had to show.

Her art is unspeakably uncontrollable. One gets the feeling that the frames of her paintings cannot contain the swirls or dots of colors, or that the paint will spill out onto the walls. Buttons, beads and other materials were sewn, glued or painted over in her canvases. The colors swirl, dance and gyrate to the tune of the lambada. The overall feeling is jubilant. Abad's art is a celebration of a birth, a fiesta in one of the *barrios*, or a night at the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

Inside the gallery, the viewer is lost in this swarm of paintings, momentarily leaving the world of war and economies. Thanks to Abad, the Makati office worker can recharge his waning energy batteries at the galleries.

The underlying philosophy is simple. For Abad, art is of utmost priority.

"It's a pity that when the situation is tight, the first thing to go in the budget is art. I say, let's have more competitions, more grants. Art is important especially in these darn age and times. It's the only thing where you could get relief from—art. When I enter a building or a room, the first thing I say to the owner is 'Hey, you need more artworks here,'" she said.