

Filipina's Italian View of Wayang

Presenting dynamic values of traditional culture

An artist's fascination with Indonesian traditional puppet drama (*Wayang*) led the way to a distinct expression using a peculiar technique called *trapunto* — from the Italian word *trapungere*, meaning to sew and stuff.

Prolific Filipino painter Pacita Abad was enthralled by the elaborate costumes, intricate theater props, and interpretation of stories from the *Ramayana*, that she was inspired to paint the characters using *trapunto*.

Her latest collection entitled *Wayang, Irian and Sumba*, which used this particular technique graced the Museum Nasional on Jl. Merdeka Barat on a three-week exhibit, from October 24 to November 16. An array of 70 colorful and intricately done paintings of various sizes were featured at the museum's gallery.

Born in the Philippines, she holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of the Philippines and a Master of Arts degree from the University of San Francisco, California. At this point in her life, she was on her way to acquiring a law degree but made a complete turnaround towards the arts.

"I was beginning to reflect on my life and how one is able to live happily. The answer stared me right in the face: do something that you love/enjoy and at the same time earn money," she explained during an interview with IBW.

She studied painting at the Corcoran School of Art, Washington D.C. and The Art Students League in New York City. Then, she began collecting awards and endowments for the arts, participated in numerous group as well as solo exhibitions, and had her work displayed in both public and personal collections.

"Pacita, like a number of other Filipino artists, approaches tradition through the people's context, thus freeing herself from an artistic sensibility based on high art's frame of reference," commented Indonesian art critic Jim Supangkat.

This same critic explains how tra-

ditionalism in Pacita's art is not merely an artistic interest in embracing orientalism but "shows her effort to find the spirit and symbols of tradition, which are alive and continually changing."

The dynamic artist that she is, Pacita has an array of paintings collections featuring other themes including what she refers to as her "immigration" series and her "scuba diving" collection on display at the Bronx Museum of Arts in New York and Metro Headquarters in Washington D.C. ■

A different view of well-known wayang figures Rama, Arjuna and Gareng

