

In Focus

Filipina painter's 'People of Wau'

CONNOISSEURS of art in town have had much exposure to the works by local and foreign painters, most of them men. Now the time has come for them to appreciate some masterpieces by Filipina **Pacita Abad**, who is an outstanding artist in her field.

Her one-woman show painting exhibition entitled "The People of Wau", will be shown at the Authors' Lounge of the Oriental Hotel, from November 19 to 24. Philippines **Ambassador** and **Madame T. Yan** will preside at the opening of her painting exhibition on November 18 at 6.30 pm, followed by a cocktail reception in her honour.

Consisting of 24 oil paintings, this exhibition will be Pacita's fifth show. Her other exhibitions were held in Washington D.C., Dacca, Bangladesh, Manila, and Khartoum.

Born and brought up on Batanes, a small Philippines island in the North China Sea, Pacita graduated from the University of San Francisco. She completed her formal art training at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. and at the Art Students League of New York City.

In her works, Pacita documents her journey to Africa, Asia, North and South America and Europe depicting her feelings vividly in the paintings.



Pacita Abad at work.

Pacita—An artist with an adventurous spirit



AT WORK in her studio of her house located at Yen Arkat, Tungmahamaek.

PACITA ABAD is an internationally acclaimed Filipina artist with an adventurous spirit.

Like Joseph Conrad and James Michener, two celebrated writers, Pacita is a romantic traveller whose trips have taken her across five continents.

Unlike these writers, however, Pacita documents her journeys with brush and paint: the results have been vivid, colourful canvases expressing her feelings of Africa, Asia, North and South America and Europe.

The people of Wau

This adventurous spirit of Conrad will return to the Oriental Hotel's Authors' Lounge when Filipino Ambassador and Madame Manuel T. Yan open Pacita's art exhibition entitled "The People of Wau" on Saturday, Nov 24.

"The People of Wau" consists of 20 oil paintings recently done by the artist in Southern Sudan, one of the most remote areas in Africa, not far from the Congo Watershed which inspired Conrad's "Heart of Darkness."

The exhibition at the

Oriental -- the first time ever in Thailand -- is Pacita's fifth one-woman show. Her previous solo exhibitions have been held in Washington DC; Dacca, Bangladesh; Manila, Philippines; and, Khartoum, Sudan. In addition, she has participated in group shows in Mexico City, San Francisco, New York, Washington, Manila and Sofia, Bulgaria.

This is not Pacita's first trip to Thailand: "I came here five years ago and visited Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Udon and the Northeast. It was a beautiful trip."

This time around, she has been here for the past six months together with her husband who is working as a consultant with the Communications Ministry.

Works

"You know, I used to stay behind your office five months ago," she said.

A very friendly person with dreamy eyes that search far away, in a plain light orange dress, she sat and talked to us in the office.

Yes, we remembered her in bikinis, having a

swim in the pool belonging to the apartments behind our office.

"We stayed at the back for a month, before moving out to 71, Yen Arkat in Tungmahamaek."

Born and brought up on Batanes, a small island in the North China Sea, Pacita received her undergraduate education at the University of San Francisco, where she also worked as art coordinator.

After a brief stint in Paris, she completed her formal art training at Corcoran School of Art in Washington DC, and at the Art Students League of New York City.

Does she travel alone? "No, I follow my husband wherever his job takes him and in a way, it works out fine for me."

Despite the fact that most of her formal art training has been in western countries, Pacita's works are not of Paris or New York but of Guatemalan jungles, villages in Bangladesh, fishermen on her island of Batanes and most recently the tribal people of Southern Sudan.

She stayed one year in Bangladesh and then moved to Sudan where she completed her works on

the people of Wau in Southern Sudan in three months before coming here.

Professional artist

"My last exhibition was in June in Khartoum sponsored by the Sudanese Ministry of Culture."

Unlike her photos which show her with pleated hair, Pacita's hair was combed straight down when she came to the office on Wednesday. She had washed her hair last week.

"It usually takes me three hours to plait my hair."

Why did she straighten it? She laughed: "I had to wash it some day. Anyway, I think I'll plait them again."

Painting for more than ten years, Pacita acknowledged that she became a professional artist when "I held my first-ever one-woman show in 1977 at the 15th Street Gallery in Washington DC."

"It was very nice to get some cash in return for my hard work," she beamed.

Pacita's paintings which she normally does on canvases of 35" x 50" exude her sensitivity to the sub-

tleties of third world cultures, and her exuberant optimism about life have allowed her to capture underlying feeling that transforms everyday activities into poignant vignettes of colour.

Upcoming exhibition

This will be readily observed in her upcoming exhibition in such paintings as "Father and Son," "Waiting for the Dura Truck" and "The People of Wau."

"The paintings will not be for sale. I am presently working on some paintings depicting life in Thailand and I have finished over 10 already."

"Perhaps, I will hold another exhibition here to show my Thai paintings. Then, next year, I will open my one-woman exhibition comprising over 100 paintings I had done in my recent travels, in the Philippines Centre on 5th Avenue in New York and the IMF Building in Washington DC."

Pacita, go on painting and keep that adventurous spirit burning. Combined, it is indeed a gift to the world.



"ABUK and Tong," one of Pacita's oil paintings which will be on exhibition at the Oriental Hotel's Authors' Lounge.

BELOW: Pacita relaxing in her living room. Her paintings, "The People of Wau" adorn the wall behind her.

