

## Galleries: The immigration experience, at Ellipse Art Center 2

D2 SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1991

### Galleries

# The Aftershocks Of Immigration

By Mary McCoy  
Special to The Washington Post

Immigration is more than just physical relocation. "Eight Paths to a Journey, Cultural Identity and the Immigration Experience" at the Ellipse Art Center explores the ongoing balancing act between the loss of family and culture and the hope for a better life. Guest-curated by Mel Watkin, former curator of the Washington Project for the Arts, this diverse show of works by eight artists who are first-, second- or third-generation immigrants is especially timely as changing demographics, already extremely apparent in the Washington area, force the realization that America is far from a homogenous culture.

Pacita Abad, a native of the Philippines, traces the stages associated with immigration in six exuberantly detailed trapunto paintings. While these stages are shared by many immigrants, further concerns arise in the work of the other artists. In portraits of his Chinese American family, John Lee explores stereotyping, while Maria Karametou works in mixed media with lingering memories of her childhood in Greece. The paintings of Rossella Matamoros, from Costa Rica, look inward to the personal journey she has made, but Mansoorah Hassan, a native of Pakistan, uses mixed media to take a broader look at the relationship of world events to individual lives. Far more subtly, Kristine Yuki Aono's kimono sculptures reference the loss and constraints felt by her family both here and in Japan.

In a boxlike room papered with data, M.E. Fuentes, from Costa Rica, and his collaborator, anthropologist Mia Blumentritt, display statistical relationships between ethnic origins and preferences for loss of body parts based on surveys done for insurance rates. This macabre estimate of self-worth encapsulates bureaucratic sidestepping of the needs of individual immigrants.

With video monitors peering through piles of bricks, Christiane Graham expertly interweaves the details of women's lives here and in her native Germany during World War II. The sounds of postwar rebuilding heard continually in the background form an apt metaphor for acculturation. In their varied ways, each of these artists makes it clear that this process of adaptation is a permanent fixture in the lives of immigrant peoples.



Detail from Pacita Abad's "Thanlo's American Dream."