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# *Design* and ARCHITECTURE

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DRAMATIC TABLES FROM  
FICTIONAL SETTINGS

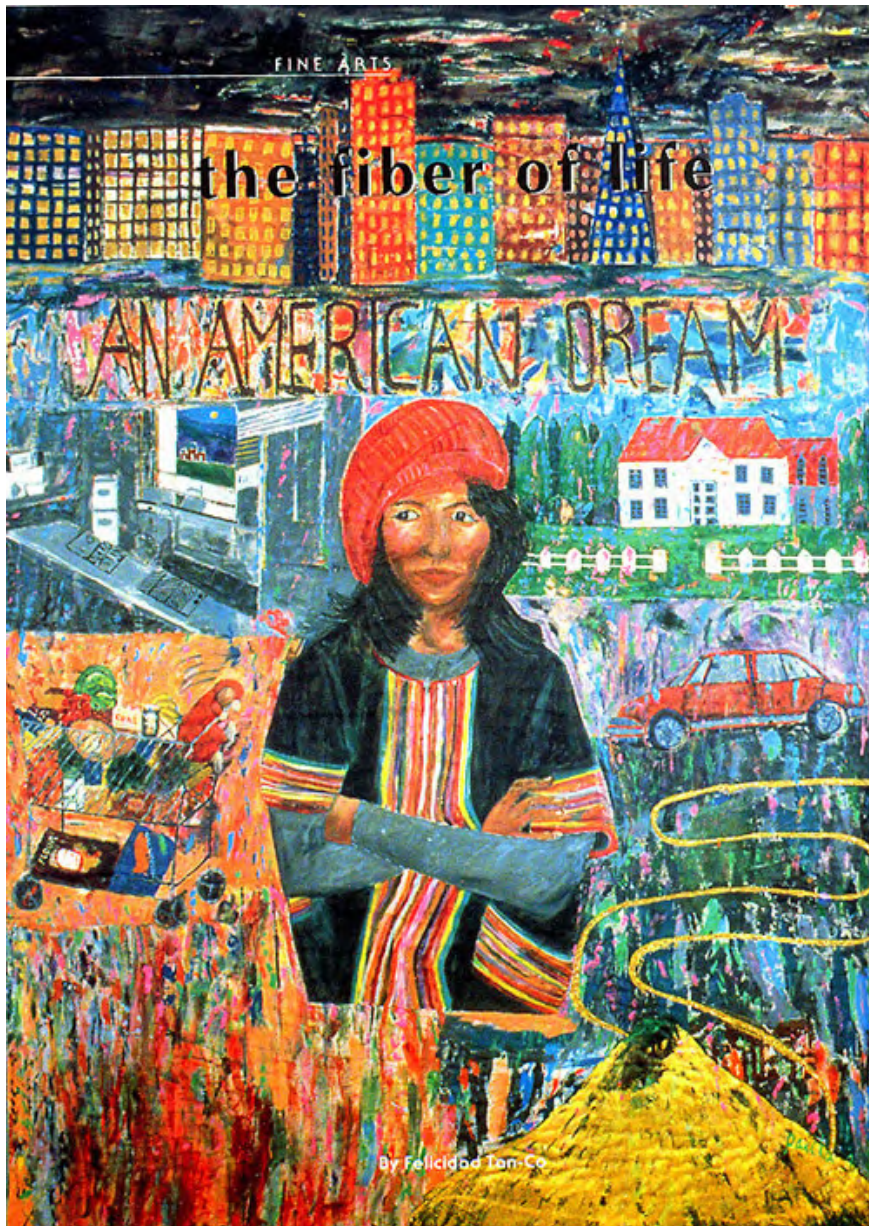
THE RECREATION OF  
RIZAL'S DAPITAN HOME

DESIGN CENTER PREDICTS  
1996 TRENDS

FINE ARTS

# the fiber of life

## AN AMERICAN DREAM



By Felicity Ten-Co

A few days after Paz "Ching" Abad-Santos' show opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, she was approached by a stranger in the museum.

Learning that Ching is one of the two artists featured in the *Thinking Big* exhibition, the gentleman immediately asked, "May I sing for you?" And before Ching could reply, Eduardo, the not so stranger now, sprang into a solo operatic repertoire complete

with dancing — even kneeling in front of the *Lent Ad Infinitum* twin panel tapestries Ching created for the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Forbes Park.

For Ching, this is ultimate compliment — this communion of kindred souls.

The *trapunto* (from the Italian word *trappungere* which means to embroider) works of her co-exhibitor Pacita Abad solicits similar response as art patrons ask if the quilt-like works are for sale.

Pooling the talents of Ching and Pacita, two artists who never worked together is a puzzle, a risk and definitely a challenge for any gallery. While the Museum used size as their bonding element, *Thinking Big* is not just about scale, Bigness is relative.

The two ladies, both installations artists, produce large works by Philippine standards. They also use indigenous materials exclusively and rely on organic fabrics to bring life to their interpretation of humanity. To emphasize their message they use large scale burlap or canvas.

Pacita Abad and Paz "Ching" Abad-Santos may have a common surname, but they are not even from the same clan. Their physical appearance, style, art composition, temperament and inspirations are as far apart as the mountains and the sea. But like the landscape, they can survive side by side and produce dynamic interaction.

Pacita is brown-skinned, petite and a garrulous speaker while Ching is medium-framed, *mestiza*,

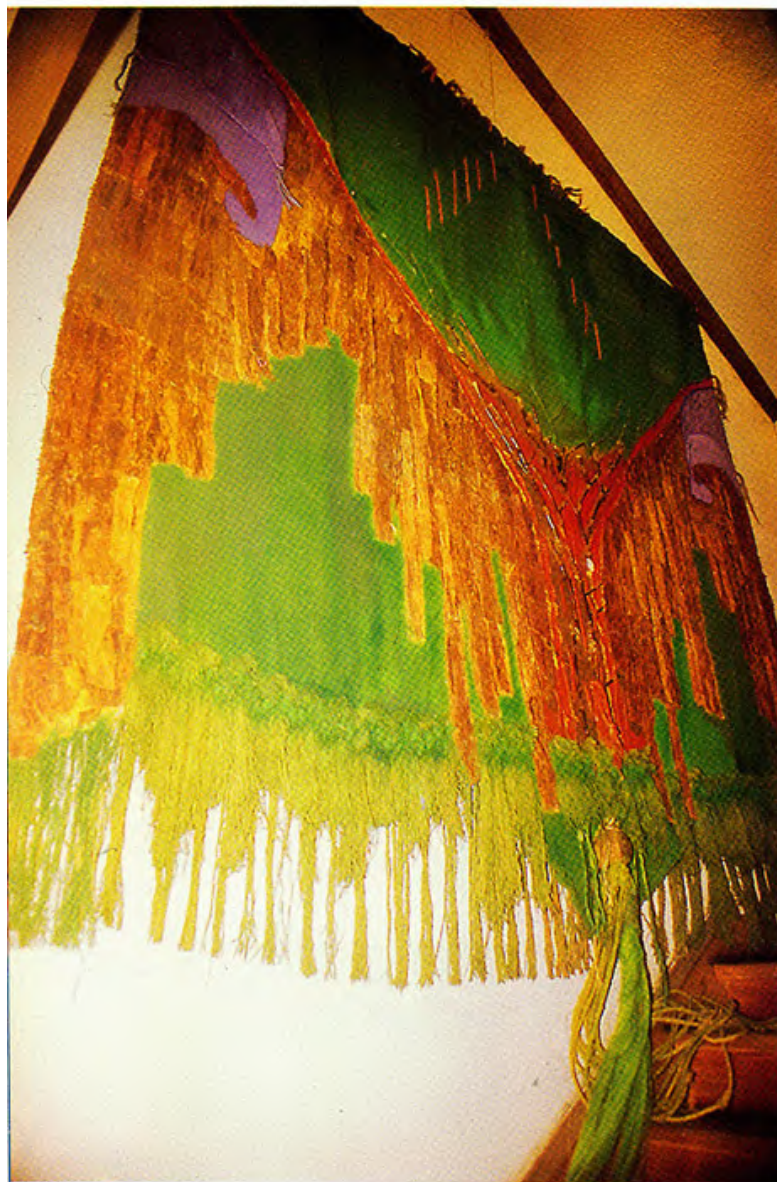


"Cross Cultural Dressing" – oil, fabric, plastic buttons on stitched and padded canvas, 254 x 345.44 cm., Artist's collection



The Artists, (left to right) Paz Abad-Santos and Pacita Abad.

(Opposite page) "If My Friends Could See Me Now" – acrylic and oil on stitched and padded canvas, 241.3 x 175.26 cm., Artist's collection, 1991



"The Tree of Life" – burlap, gugo, ropes, twigs with oil and acrylic varnish, 751.84 x 617.22 cm., Collection Galeria de las Islas

and introspective, even taciturn. Ching had relaxed Neo-Minimalist artworks which prompt meditation while Pacita veered towards crowded and decorative compositions that invite conversation.

Exploring if one artist's work competes with the other is a constant challenge to viewers. As in the earth, the *yin* and *yang* elements provide the equilibrium. Both approached art with visual meditations. The fibers of the canvases are feverish dreams fixed in the emotions of the moment.

At the Metropolitan Museum, Pacita's trapunto merges with Ching's burlap and the trees touch the earth. For a moment fantasy interlope with reality, although not quite clear where one starts or the other ends. To achieve the trapunto paintings, Pacita uses a basket of techniques like stitching, collage, silk-screen tie-dye and embroidery. Inspired by traditional forms and patterns of Panama, Mexico, Guatemala, Burma, Afghanistan, Africa, Indonesia and India, she picked up those elements from her travels with her husband.

Her works traveled the world not only in spirit but in form as her exhibitions span from Japan to Germany, from Bulgaria to Bangladesh. Honors are common to Pacita. The latest is the *Excellence 2000 Awards for the Arts* given by the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce.

Pacita's works are more reflective of the temporal world. Her trapunto weaves together the images in politics. Social issues of her Philippine homeland and her adopted United States are sprinkled with patterns from Polynesian and African art.

Her art reflects the identity of a part of the world where Pacita sets her luggage.

She chronicled the plight of refugees in the Cambodian border. She reflects on the richness of opportunities for an Asian in America as in *If My Friends Could See Me Now (Immigration Experience)* (1991), the identity crisis of women in her homeland *Filipina: A Rapid Identity Crisis*. Her painting is the world sewn together in multi-hued quadrangle canvases. Pacita's trapunto is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, Fukuoka Art Museum in Japan, Chase Manhattan Bank Collection in New York and Museum of National Afro-American Art in Boston.