



Embassy of the United States of America

Jakarta, Indonesia

September 21, 2001

Ms. Pacita Abad
C/o Tuan Sing Holdings Limited
30 Robinson Road
#12-01 Robinson Towers
Singapore 048546

Dear Ms. Abad:

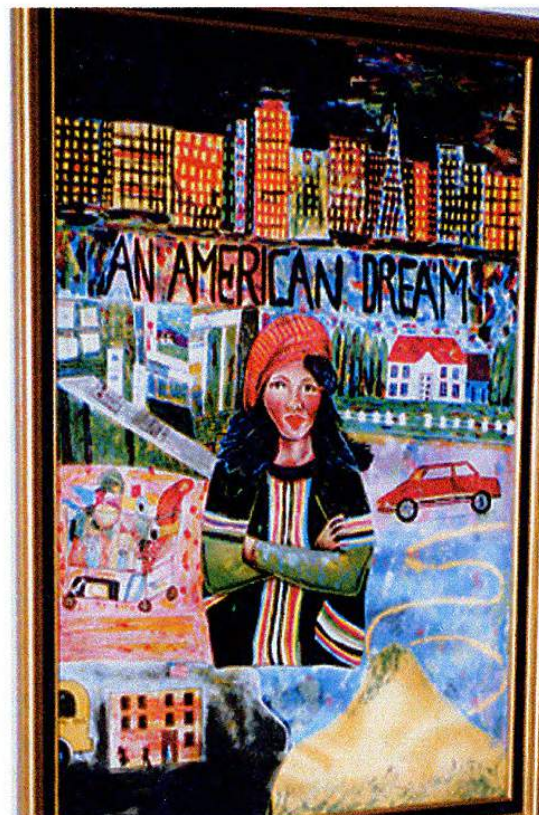
On behalf of the Embassy of the United States of America, Alene and I wish to thank you for your contribution to the State Department's Arts in Embassy Program at the Ambassador's residence in Jakarta. Your work represents the best of American artistry and creativity. Indeed, it represents America's cherished freedom of expression, American diversity and the American people themselves. In addition, your work truly complements the residence's colonial Dutch architecture and Indonesian influences. The many high-level Indonesian and American government officials, business professionals, cultural leaders, academics and others from the international community who have attended representational events at the residence have all admired your work.

If My Friends Could See Me Now is displayed in the living room, where all of our receptions are held. The painting's vibrant colors, energy and thought-provoking theme make a lasting impression on all who see it. Attached, please find a photograph of *If My Friends Could See Me Now* as it is displayed in the residence.

Again, we thank you most sincerely for sharing your work and your artistry with us the past two years. I wish you all the best as your career continues to flourish.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Gelbard
Ambassador



ART

IN EMBASSIES
PROGRAM

40th ANNIVERSARY

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The ART in Embassies Program:

The American Tradition of Cultural Diplomacy

Andrew Solomon

For forty years, the ART in Embassies Program of the Department of State has ensured that visitors to United States ambassadors' residences encounter artwork of the first order. Among all the government's arts programs, this one has been undisturbed by shifting fashions in sponsorship; it has grown steadily since its inception. The program places some 3,500 works by 3,000 artists in about 180 ambassadors' residences, borrowing from a base of more than 8,000 current and past lenders and deploying a small collection owned by the Department of State. What began as a scheme of high-minded decoration has become an integral part of our diplomatic process. The presence of American art not only beautifies the residences and gives the public spaces of the ambassadors' homes an aura of seriousness, but also indicates America's immense creative scope. To communicate simultaneously in the languages of diplomacy and art is to speak with a clarity and depth that neither mode could achieve on its own. At a time when the United States must argue its case with allies and opponents, the universal language of artists helps to bridge gaps in understanding as no treaty or aid package can. The display of American art helps others to understand us. Much diplomatic conversation must be confidential, but the use of art is a vivid form of public diplomacy. The ART in Embassies Program places art where much of our government's foreign negotiation unfolds, and where world leaders are regularly invited to consider the quality of their relations with the United States. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said, "Each work of art becomes a diplomatic instrument, each artist an ambassador. It is an outstanding program."

The program encompasses almost all U.S. diplomatic missions overseas. Though the residences and chanceries are often most spectacular in countries with which we have a tradition of close economic and political affiliation, the art can be more stimulating and surprising for residents of countries that are geographically and spiritually farther from the United States, who are less likely to encounter our cultural production in public forums in their own cities. The exhibitions benefit not only visitors who come on business of state, but also the men and women of influence, political refugees, and friends and associates of Foreign Service members who pass through the residences.

The understanding that art influences international relations goes back to ancient history, manifest in the Romans' installation of statuary and architecture in cities throughout the empire. A new deliberateness about culture and nationalism came into being in the nineteenth century, when countries, especially those involved in colonial activities, began asserting the superiority of their own traditions. The conscious, proud American-ness of American art remained largely undeclared until the 1860s. Then all at once the United States came to see the glory of its art, to believe that this nation, which excelled in so many kinds of activity, was able fully to match and sometimes exceed the cultural accomplishments of other nations: "... if Shakespeare has not been equaled, he is sure to be surpassed, and surpassed by an American born now or yet to be born," wrote Herman Melville in his exuberant essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses." America's was a new genius, unlike any other. "Call [a true American artist] an American, and have done," Melville continues, "for you cannot say a nobler thing of him." Melville proposes that art reflects its nationality when it is most itself. American art need not portray America; by its very existence, it describes America. Melville's theme was given even more magnificent sweep by Walt Whitman in his 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*. "The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature," Whitman wrote. "Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall... The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it." So the artists of the United States strive to understand their country, and, in doing so, give new meaning to that country. The greatest artists do not simply speak of America; they also create it.



PACITA ABAD

Pacita Abad (1946-2004) was born in Basco, Batanes, a small island in the northernmost part of the Philippines, between Luzon and Taiwan. Her more-than-thirty-year painting career began when she journeyed to the United States to undertake graduate studies. After that trip, Pacita never stopped traveling or painting. She studied painting at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. and The Art Students League in New York City, and then started to “paint the globe”, living on 5 different continents and working in more than 80 countries.

Pacita's extensive travels to exotic destinations like Guatemala, Mexico, India, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Cambodia and Indonesia had a major impact on her life and art, and were the inspiration for many ideas, techniques and materials in her paintings.

Pacita's painting is characterized by constant change, experimentation and development from the 1970's, right up until her passing. Her early paintings were primarily figurative socio-political works of people and primitive masks. Another series was large scale paintings of underwater scenes, tropical flowers and animal wildlife.

Pacita's most extensive body of work, however, is her vibrantly, colorful abstract work – many very large scale canvases, but also a number of small collages – on a complete range of materials from canvas and paper to bark cloth, metal, ceramics and glass. A disciplined and prolific painter, Pacita created over 3,500 artworks and even painted a 55-meter long bridge in Singapore and covered it with 2,350 multicolored circles.

Pacita constantly experimented with ideas

that moved her beyond the confines of the traditional two-dimensional surface by developing trapunto painting, a technique of stitching and stuffing her painted canvases to give them a three-dimensional sculptural effect. She then began an almost magical process of transforming the surface of her paintings with materials, such as traditional cloth, mirrors, beads, shells, plastic buttons and other objects, which she synthesized with bold colors to create uniquely individualistic pieces of art. Underlying all of Pacita's work is a vivacious spirit, vibrant originality and a volcano of color. Her works are all about life and pursuing dreams, they are full of purpose, nothing tentative, and they are drawn from her personal experiences. Like the artist's life, Pacita's paintings are a celebration of pure passion, joy and color that come straight from her heart.

A truly global artist, Pacita had over 40 solo exhibitions at museums and galleries in the U.S., Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America. She also participated in more than 50 group and traveling exhibitions throughout the world. Pacita's work is now in public, corporate

and private art collections
in over 70 countries.

Read More

Website

<http://www.pacitaabad.com/>



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