

# Pacita Abad

Born 1946, Batanes, Philippines; died 2004, Singapore





**Pacita Abad** was born in 1946 on a small island in the Philippines. She planned to become a lawyer, but after traveling the world with her husband in the 1970s, she decided to become an artist who spoke up for people's rights. Abad visited 63 countries and learned about different cultures and art techniques which she incorporated into her own artworks. She believed art could help tell the stories of people who were often ignored.



Pacita Abad, *If My Friends Could See Me Now*, 1991; collection SFMOMA, purchase, by exchange, through a gift of Peggy Guggenheim; © Pacita Abad Art Estate; photo: Don Ross

*If My Friends Could See Me Now* is part of a series about immigration—when people move from one country to another to find safety, work, or a better life. In this work, a Brown woman wearing clothes that Abad picked up on her travels is surrounded by items including a car, a grocery cart full of food, and a house with a white picket fence. These items represent the aspirations, dreams, and material wealth that many immigrants aspire to when they come to the United States.

## Explore

What was the first thing you noticed about this artwork? Why do you think it was the first thing you noticed?

Draw or write about some of the objects or details you see in this artwork.

What is the story that you see in this work of art? Does anything remind you of your own story or another story you know?

### Fun Fact!

Abad often used bright colors in her work and included beads, buttons, shells, mirrors, sequins, and fabric that she collected on her travels. She also used a sewing technique called a **straight stitch**, which looks like a dashed line, to add color and texture to her work. It also helped hold together her **trapunto** paintings: canvases painted, then quilted, embroidered, and decorated with beads, buttons, mirrors, and cowrie shells.

## Create

Think about a place that matters to you—a neighborhood, a city, a spot in nature, even a room. What does this place look like? What do you do there? How do you feel when you're in that place? How does that place reflect your story, identity, or dreams and aspirations?

Draw that important place and include yourself in the picture. Use colors and details to bring the place and your story to life.



Cover: Pacita Abad, *If My Friends Could See Me Now*, 1991 (detail); collection SFMOMA, purchase, by exchange, through a gift of Peggy Guggenheim; © Pacita Abad Art Estate; photo: Don Ross

For more information about the artist and this work, check out [sfmoma.org/artist/Pacita\\_Abad](https://sfmoma.org/artist/Pacita_Abad)

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