

Elemental Music Possibilities in Visual Art

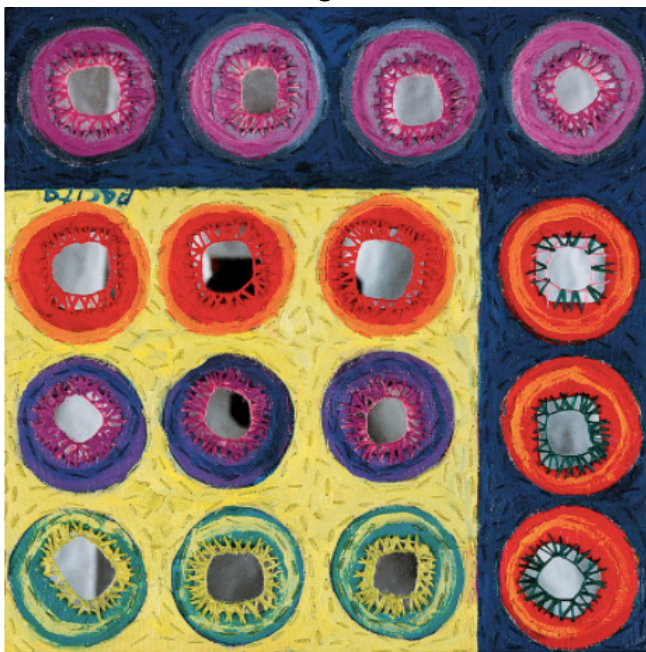
by Kaitlin Beck

I first learned about the Filipina artist Pacita Abad after seeing a social media post from California-based music educator, Czarina Jimenez. On July 31, 2020, Abad was featured in a Google doodle commemorating her reception of the Philippines' Ten Outstanding Young Men award on the same day in 1984; she is the first woman in history to receive this recognition. While reading about Pacita's life, I was continually struck by how amazing she is—adventures around the world, constant learning, and the creation of innovative artistic mediums, all reflective of these experiences. To me, she embodies everything we want our students to experience while engaging with the Schulwerk.

When looking at Pacita Abad's artwork, one cannot help but notice the possibilities for making music. For instance, if we utilize some of the colors and groupings in her piece, *Honey and Saffron*, in what ways could that inspire improvisation, composition, or movement?

When I look at this piece, I see multiple versions of an elemental form, all you have to do is change the orientation of the artwork:

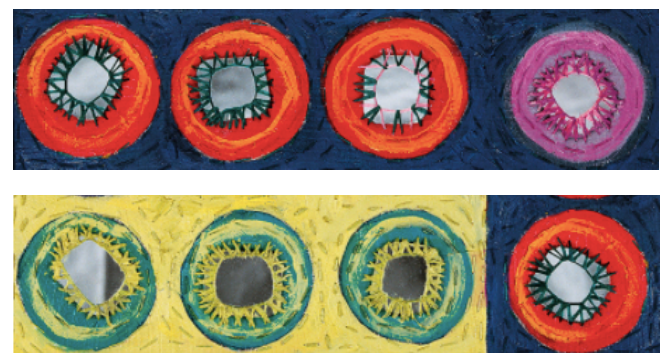
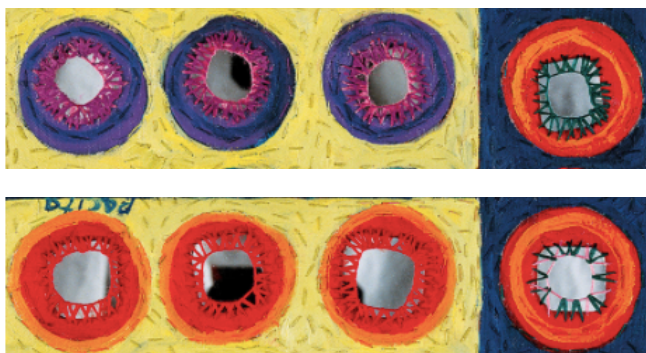
Original



One Rotation



Sections in aaab form



Although each of these iterations from the piece are in aaab form, they could be used in many ways. Some things that came to my mind include:

- Movement sequences (any grade level)
- Introducing elemental form through pictures or objects
- Exploring terraced dynamics
- Improvisation with rhythmic building blocks
- Small group creations for a sound story
- Using a piece from the volumes and moving it to a different mode (colors and moods! ☺)
- Small group work combining movement, speech, instruments, recorder, etc.
- Class or individual composition in aaab form
- Student created artwork inspired by Pacita Abad

So much of Pacita Abad's artwork provides inspiration for further exploration in the classroom, from pathways to shapes to formations. Her life was an example of lifelong learning and creation, a story worth sharing with your students.

If you would like to learn more about Pacita Abad, I would recommend the following resources:

- https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/pacita-abad
- <https://pacitaabad.com/>

I created a Powerpoint about Pacita to share with my students, feel free to use:

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TE19OQEQH75Kjy780V726T7gHBzKkf0T/view?usp=sharing>

The slides do contain a lot of information, some of which I do not share with students, purely because of time. Whatever you choose to share, taking time to intentionally immerse yourself in the life of the artists, authors, and musicians we expose our students to is part of honoring their craft and humanity. Happy exploring!