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## Traveling exhibit stops at Metro art gallery

### Vietnamese artists look to challenge gender stigmas

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When thinking of Vietnamese women images of devoted mothers and wives, or victims of war are often evoked. This is not the case for the 11 women whose art is being exhibited at the Metro Center for Visual Art exhibition *Changing Identity: Recent Works by Women Artists from Vietnam*.

*Changing Identity* is a collection of work from 11 different Vietnamese women that will be on display at the Center through Aug. 2.

Nora Taylor, a professor and Alsdorf Endowed Chair of Southeast Asian Art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is the exhibition curator. Taylor specializes in modern Vietnamese art.

According to Taylor, most people view Vietnamese women as quiet and loyal housewives. The artists of *Changing Identity* are here to show the world that there is far more to Vietnamese women than just that.

Starting with war propaganda posters used during the fight for independence from France, Vietnamese men found that by depicting women in the posters would cause more men to join the army.

Most posters showed women dressed with army helmets and guns. "These posters were of women, and women were the embodying power of the land of Vietnam," Taylor said.

After Vietnam won their independence from France in 1945, women were not viewed as artists.

Taylor said that an art school in Hanoi, Vietnam had only three women graduate before 1945. After gaining independence, Vietnamese women made up nearly 50 percent of graduates.



Photo by GABRIEL CHRISTUS/[christus@mscd.edu](mailto:christus@mscd.edu)

Judith Burr, left, and A. Thiessen, right, discuss artwork June 5 at the opening of the Center for Visual Arts exhibition *Changing Identity*, which runs through Aug. 2. The CVA, which features international shows in addition to student shows, is owned and operated by Metro.

The art industry in Vietnam has been booming for the past 20 years, though male artists continue to garner more success and accolades than female artists.

A younger generation of women artists has begun to emerge and question the status quo, displaying a new identity for Vietnamese women through their work, just as those with pieces in *Changing Identity* have done.

The artists were chosen for this exhibition because their pieces depict Vietnamese culture without making it cliché.

"They found a way to show their art without the traditional dresses," Taylor said.

The media used in the exhibition run the gamut, from short videos to inks on rice paper. Water colors from

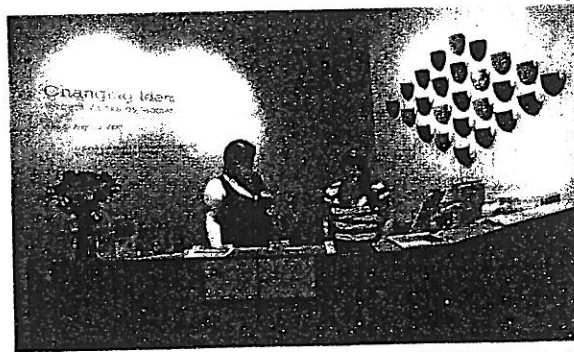


Photo by GABRIEL CHRISTUS/[christus@mscd.edu](mailto:christus@mscd.edu)

Metro students Amy Odorizzi, left, and Michelle Kimball, right, work the desk at the Center for Visual Arts on June 5th. The CVA is located at 1734 Wazee St.

Dinh Thi Tham Poong depict women running through the forests as they carry supplies. Photographs show the

time when Phuong Do returned to her native Vietnam for the first time. Nguyen Thi Chau Giang, who

has been compared to the Spanish artist Frida Kahlo, uses oils and often times paints self portraits depicting important events in her life.

One of the installation pieces created by Ly Hoang Ly, is a giant piece which contains little bits of unused diapers. The piece represents Hoang Ly's experience with her first baby.

"Here I discovered real materials from everyday life. It was the life of a young mom dedicating herself to her first-born baby and breathing the pure air of the artist's life," added Hoang Ly.

During this traveling exhibition, artists at times will join Taylor to help explain their pieces. Nguyen Bach Dan is one artist who came to Denver to speak about her art.

Bach Dan paints with inks on a very thin rice paper. Her paintings are scenes from nature depicting contrasts, using dark inks to bring out the brightness of her paintings.

"My feeling of the nature is really free romance and everlasting," Bach Dan said.

Bach Dan paints only nature scenes, mostly of streams and forests.

"The feeling comes and goes and leaves a sweet memory. The rustle of the trees, dry twigs helps me find that feeling to paint nature," Bach Dan added.

The Center for Visual Art is an off-campus gallery, located at 1734 Wazee St., that was founded in 1990 and serves as an interactive art laboratory for the Metro art department.

"The museum typically host artists who are local, national, and international level. We also have student exhibitions twice a month. I am very excited to have such an international power as this exhibit," museum curator Jennifer Garner said.

The Center is open Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays 12 to 5 p.m. Admission to the Center is free.