



Vietnamese art exhibit featured at Hope College

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By Lucia Rios

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HOLLAND -- Nora Taylor pursued Vietnamese art in the late '80s because no one else was.

The Chicago woman had no personal ties nor logical reason she said. But the more she dove into Vietnamese art, the more her love for it grew.

A professor of art history at the Art Institute of Chicago since August, Taylor has lived and studied in Vietnam, speaks Vietnamese and visits the southeast Asian nation regularly.

Those ties led to her select artists to showcase in a traveling exhibit on contemporary Vietnamese art.

But she wanted to introduce Vietnam and its art without carrying stereotypes of the nation or its politics.

She only believed there was one way to do that.

"Women artists have interesting things to say about themselves," Taylor said. "They tend to stay away from big national themes and stay away from what the whole country is about."

"Changing Identity" is the first major exhibition of contemporary Vietnamese artists in the U.S. It features about 50 works by 10 artists from Vietnam.

The exhibition is stopping at 10 sites in the U.S. through March 2009. The exhibit is on display at Hope College's DePree Art Center & Gallery this week through Feb. 1.

Each woman has a particular way of shaping her work and identifying herself, Taylor said.

The exhibit might offer different views than expected, she said. They are not feministic artists or oppressed, but they have a more personal view of their country.

"I feel like I chose 10 artists that have their own style different from one another and whose work is pretty consistent and true to their own vision," Taylor said. "Each represents a different facet of women in Vietnamese society. ... I'm hoping that maybe it would change a little bit of people's ideas about Vietnam."

Send e-mail to the author: lakeshore@grpress.com

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