

I first met Dai Giang through his artwork at a friend's house. My friend, Jeff Booth, a jeweler, sculptor, and painter, had a beautiful painting of Giang's, hanging in his dining room.

I asked Jeff about the painting, and inquired about its artist. He told me all about Dai Giang and about his being a member of the art council we both belonged to - South East Seattle Art Council, and that Giang had volunteered his time to help create public art works in South Seattle .

Jeff also told me that Dai Giang's painting was loaded with iconography about the changing world of Vietnam and the role of women.

Two women in the painting were bathing, almost baptismally, in some incredible light with a dragon symbol. Jeff explained that Giang was trying to express his idea of the rapid change the world and Viet nam were going through , and how this change would impact the future for everyone.

The painting also expressed a concern of how this rapid change can leave us devoid of culture and traditions, and how we should learn to strike a balance between old, established ways of doing and being, and change; especially change that enhances personal freedom.

The paintings that Dai Giang is doing now are very different from the first piece I saw at my friend's house. His "Upside Down" paintings make me think of Morgan Russell and Jason Pollck, but Dai Giang's have more color and images that are read more literally.

Although Russell's paintings were more abstract, Dai Giang's biomorphic shapes, share an abstraction that has the same sort of spirit for life and kinetic energy. They certainly have as much movement and explosive tension as Pollack's work. Pollack had "all over painting" and Dai Giang has "upside down painting". Dai Giang plays an important contemporary role in art today. As a trained artist from Vietnam, Russia, Europe and China with a Third Prize Award from the International Competition of Art in Stockholm, Sweden, and a winner of the International Competition "The Best Contemporary Art, a "CD ROM" He is now living in Seattle, Washington.

Dai Giang is working with the group of artists that share his Upside Down" philosophy. This philosophy is a reflection of the rapid change the world is going through and its effect on human life.

Dai Giang has found a unique spirit that helps define ourselves within the change the world is going through. In the shadow of a global economy, the technology age, and cultures that demand more of the senses to communicate yet dulls them at the same time.

He does this by painting passionately and brings forth the unconscious, by combining it with many conscious images that we all recognize. He bridges the unconscious and conscious mind seamlessly in his paintings with softly abstracted scenes that tell a story, by floating upside down and rightside up images. He reminds us that all people have two dimensions. Like the Chinese saying, "so much happiness, so much sorrow", Dai Giang understands well the balance in life that all our riches could be gone in the moment. Life is precious and sorrow and despair come also with hope for happiness in the future. His knowledge of Zen, Buddhism, and KungFu have influenced him greatly and, I believe, we all will learn from the stories in his paintings right side up or upside down.

*(by Marta Olson - artist teacher, she is chairperson of the Art Department at Cleveland High School, and Secondary Art Education Representative for the Washington Art Education Association)*