

Map23_XuanMyHo April 4 NG Transcript

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Mosaics, Vietnam, artists, pieces, art, gallery, materials, work, art fairs, artwork, learn, culture, Woodside

SPEAKERS

Nina Garcia, Sam Pereyra, Xuan My Ho

Nina Garcia 00:04

Well, Sam, if you'd like to take it away.

Sam Pereyra 00:07

Yeah, yeah, definitely. So again, Xuan, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us. Super pleased to meet you. Like Nina said, I'm Sam. It's very, very nice to meet you. I'm actually a huge fan of your artwork. I've seen your exhibits at Kaleid here in San Jose. And I'm a huge fan. So, I'm very excited to speak with you today about your artwork.

Xuan My Ho 00:29

Thank you.

Sam Pereyra 00:30

Yeah, yeah. So I'll go ahead and split these questions, just so I'm reminded of what we want to go through. So first and foremost, we're just going to kind of establish, you know, like the basics. So if you could please state for me your full name.

Xuan My Ho 00:45

Xuan My Ho. My is pronounced like a me. It's like a Vietnamese come from French. So, Y is E. That's what it's pronounced E not Y.

Sam Pereyra 00:57

Okay, thank you for that, because I was definitely miss mispronouncing it then. And so, thank you, I appreciate that. And if I can ask, what culture is you identify with?

Xuan My Ho 01:10

Vietnam?

Sam Pereyra 01:11

Vietnam. All right.

Xuan My Ho 01:13

So, I came in when I was 23, which was 1979. A long time ago. So, I am Americanized too.

Sam Pereyra 01:29

gotcha, gotcha. So, Vietnam and American as well. Okay. Um, and if you could just tell me kind of broadly, if you could just tell me about your art and what exactly it is and any other art forms that you do as well.

Xuan My Ho 01:43

I do both 2D and 3D. 2D includes the wall hangings, the mirrors, the large-scale murals, that is on commission or the community project that I have volunteer for. And I also do the three-dimensional mosaic which is like an animal like a rooster, alligator, pig, dog, cat, that kind of things. And then I do also abstract three dimensional also, actually, about 3D. I started with the outdoor a mosaic such as outdoor table on the cement base, large you know, the large garden tables and benches, and then also water fountain and, and, and bird back, but lately, I don't do that anymore. Because these items, these 3d are very heavy. And I don't have more energy to roll them around and sit outdoors and do this. So I just focus on the wall hanging or the self-build indoor sculptures.

Sam Pereyra 03:06

Gotcha. So you would say maybe that like it was a bit of a transition used to do more of like the outdoor stuff a little bit more labor intensive and now you prefer like wall hangings,

Xuan My Ho 03:15

Right. Yeah, I started mosaic with the ceramic, which is mainly for outdoor bird bath and water fountains and benches. And then later on, I figured out that "Oh, I like to try the hanging." So, I started with wall hangings. And there are different materials instead of mosaic inside ceramic only. I also use stained glass, mirrors, seashells all kinds of materials you can think of.

Sam Pereyra 03:49

Well yeah, so I'm actually curious as to how you get the materials like the glass the seashells like do you keep sort of like a supply of like Oh, I like this material. I might use it I'm going to keep this do you kind of like collected over time and then use it when you feel

Xuan My Ho 04:09

I have done this for 23 years now. And I started Goodwill, you know shopping at Goodwill. And then because Goodwill, sell things that's not the whole set. It's like a few pieces here a few pieces there but for sometimes for the big piece like for the large outdoor table the trim need to have a full dinner set. So, I went to Ross department store to buy the full brand-new dinner set. So, I think I have collected about 200 dinner sets across department store. It was funny that there was one time that I went to the store and they were having a big sale so on the on the dinner sets I bought nine set. Nine set in which five different sets mean duplicate, even like there are two duplicate sets. So, the cash registers said, why do you buy so many? I just smile, I don't I don't want to say I smashed them to the mosaic because I don't think people think that, you know, think that is really crazy, you know, to break brand new things. So that's how obsessed I am then I became the member of Soul Society of American Mosaic, which is no they changed to International America Mosaic, which is abstract class of mosaic artists, internationally.[MTM: See <https://americanmosaics.org/category/mosaic-art/international->

[mosaics/](#) And they have a conference yearly. So, I, in a different state of California, of the United States. So I traveled to different 12 different states for 12 consecutive years to attend that conference, that have presentation of around the topic of mosaic, and also take classes from international mosaic artists over there to learn different techniques, because I think that mosaic is a has a variety of techniques to do in different kinds of type of mosaic, you know, so for me to learn different techniques is very good, because I feel my strengths and then find out what is what is what are my strengths to focus on. So since then, when I learned that, from international mosaic artists, I discovered that, you know, mosaic wallhanging, doesn't have to be all flat. They have to be popup, here and there. So since then, I learned that I saw all my if you, if you see, you'll notice my mosaic is my mosaic wall hanging is not totally flat, you will see is raised intentionally and use different kinds of combination of mosaic materials included that make it thicker, and things that thicker and stained glass or vitreous glass is thinner. And that is to give the raise up to make the 2D more three dimensional. And that is I'm always excited. And I'd really love that.

Sam Pereyra 07:28

Thank you. Thank you so much. That's so funny, though. I can imagine. Yeah, the cashier being like, why do you need so many dinner sets? That's funny, but so

Xuan My Ho 07:37

Back, get back to you about the collections of my materials. I'm addicted to collect so many materials in different kinds of things. So now I have nine cabinets in four bedrooms from my son after he left to college. So, there's no room for him anymore. And also, one shed. So, it's a huge collection of my materials is amazing that I don't know if I move, I don't know how to carry this. So many.

Sam Pereyra 08:12

Wow, I love it. I love that there's variety. That's awesome.

Xuan My Ho 08:16

Yeah.

Sam Pereyra 08:17

Very cool. So, if I could ask you what kind of motivates you to create your pieces? I know you mentioned that you volunteer for like the public commissions but just kind of in general, what motivates you to make these pieces?

Xuan My Ho 08:29

Well, I started to in doing music in 1979. And then in normal sorry, that's the year I came here. I started mosaic in 1998. And then in 2000 You know I live in Woodside. And you know Woodside have a Kings Mountain Art Fair. I'm not sure you heard about that. But is the top five art fair in California. And then so and it you get in its not easy. It's a jewelry art fair on Labor Day weekend, every year and to get in is not easy, because there's a lot of competition. And then my neighbor said you know you live here on Kings Mountain. There is the free jewelry, you mean you don't have to bring jewelry in because you're a resident of local art. You can join in as a local artist without any jewelry. So, it's a privilege, you know,

to get in without being you know, not worry about not being accepted. So, I joined after I did mosaic only two years, I said you know I don't have too many. But I joined because my neighbor said you know your mosaic is more than just happy you need to show the people about your skill set. So, I did so amazingly the first day I sold one table set. And then the third day you know, Neil Young? Yeah, he's the legend artists of the rocks, rock stuff, right? And then, not the rocks at the, the star in the singing of the famous one for singers. So, he stopped by on the third day and he looked at my table set the table mosaic with the four chairs of mosaic I call. Suddenly I forget the name, it's been so long, but it's on my website, but and he bought that at the end of the day. His wife, his ex-wife, Peggy Young came in the morning and look at that and then he came back in the you know, we close art fair at five o'clock he came at 4:45 And he said, "Oh, this set is beautiful." And then he bought it. So that is really huge motivating for me because I'm the newcomer to come out to the art fair and the famous artists singers bought the set. So that is a huge motivation. Since then, I did mosaic every night after work. I go back I go home from work, have dinner and then 9:30 I work until midnight every night on weekends sometimes I work 10 hours just obsessed with it. My wrist hurts, my neck hurts my shoulder and then so that's how I started so since then I joined the art fair of Kings Mountain every year for 23 years now and then after a few years I joined more art fairs in the Bay Area and become a successful artist and then I joined the gallery. wow wow. I would be very motivated and obsessed as well if Neil Young bought one of my pieces... that's really. And then later on his former wife Peggy young bought one mirror, one mirror to give a gift to his friends. Since he started to want to buy that mural for her daughter for the house in for the bathroom in the house in Hawaii. Yeah, and then later on, I heard that they get that gift to a close friend.

Sam Pereyra 12:48

Wow travels far. I love it. Cool. So, my next question for you is how do you promote your art so I you go to these art fairs, you meet people? So, like in what other ways? Is your art promoted? Or how does it get out into the world?

Xuan My Ho 13:05

So, I started when I going off I have my guestbook. And for people who love my art, you know, I asked them if they join my guestbook. And then every time I make a new piece, I send out the email announcement to them. And then now how they see my new pieces and they come to the art fair. So far I have built almost 900 people in my distribution list over 20 over 23 years and I've been successful with that because when I send out my email announcement, some people purchase it. You know, I don't sell my artwork on website but I build my website but now when I send out the email, I update my website on my website always have the price of the of the available pieces. So, people can check in and they contact me that they interesting to buy this week buy that piece. So that's how I promote my work. And then I go into the gallery, different galleries, but I left all except to Kaleid. The reason Kaleid is because, by the way in June I will be have a solo show at Kaleid I hope you and Nina can come in the whole month of June. I have three walls, three walls so Kaleid has a beautiful wall, large wall that I can present my available pieces I also have the prints of my original artwork. Because when I went to the office some artists said you know I know that I don't complain that their price is high because I know that how much how long it takes but I don't have money to afford it. But I would love to have a print of your original artwork. So that's how I started print out my original artwork. I started with the canvas, and

then later on now the technologies they have metal print. So, I do have metal prints. So, the Kaleid, I will print both original and the prints out to present my collection of mosaics.

Sam Pereyra 15:24

Oh, sounds very exciting. And would you say that your art form expresses your cultural identity in any way?

Xuan My Ho 15:34

In some way, because I am not sure that you have chance to read my bio, but I came to the United States as a boat people, one of the boat people. I escaped Vietnam after the war was ended in 1995, or 1975. So, I escaped in 1978 in my boat. And my boat has very small sufficient boat, its like 18 feet wide and six feet 18 feet long, six feet wide and have a 126 people will have no place to sit, no place to lay down a chair sit, you sit in the five, the five fish tank when they have fish tank to catch the fish and they put the fish in there. You literally 20 people sitting in one fish tank and then one there are five fish tanks. And 26 people sit on the on above the boat. So, I escaped for after that I was on the sea is very challenging is a long story. And we don't have time to talk about that. But after four days, I was saved by Navy ship from Malaysia and stayed in their refugee camp for six months and was sponsored by the church in Arkansas. So that's how I came to the United States.

Sam Pereyra 17:09

Wow, that's!

Xuan My Ho 17:10

So to me mosaic is broken pieces combined together as a healing process.

Sam Pereyra 17:22

Well, thank you so much for sharing that. That's very incredible story. Thank you. And would you say that you therefore face any roadblocks as an artist.

Xuan My Ho 17:35

So anyway, regarding about the culture, when I was young, when I was younger, I love drawing. I didn't have in my town, there is no class like here, you can take training to train your skill. So, I just take the magazine and try to learn myself. So, I love to draw the woman's head, hair and body. So, woman hair blowing the wind is fascinates me. So, you get to see that I did relate to my love of the country. So I do have a some reflection of making broken piece connect together. And also, the woman's figure is a part of my childhood when I was in Vietnam. So, I have quite a few of women either dancing or a different type. If you go to my figuratures and you will see quite a few women in there. So, what was your question about? Can you remind me again, your question again?

Sam Pereyra 18:50

Yeah. So first of all, again, thank you for sharing. It sounds like your art kind of reflects your life story, in a way so that's what I took away from that. But I was wondering if you face any specific roadblocks as an artist?

Xuan My Ho 19:07

Yeah. That is a mosaic is a labor intensive. It's really painful. I never been a painter but I don't know how, how the artist is in terms of endurance of doing the drawing painting for a long time but for mosaic it's painful. It is cutting, it's wrist pain. So, I had therapy for my wrist for a week, every week because when I work, my insurance was really good that they gave me therapy as long as I need also acupuncture as long as I need so I acupuncture for years. every week for my wrist. Focus on my wrist that's how I can continue to do the work. And then now I'm retired I don't have luxury acupuncture with the insurance cover like that. So, I find out that if I go exercise heavily like a Zumba or the stretching like just to stretch my muscle than I do in the morning and it will help me to do the mosaic you know, so what a few hours I have to take a break to relax that muscle again. So, it's the big roadblock for Mosaic is very tiring painful and cut yourself. I cut my fingers because it keeps the sharp you know hit your fingers you know so it's quite often when I do grinding I also grind my fingernails and my skin because I did small pieces, I didn't recognize it grinding my skin, my fingers and my fingernails you know?

Sam Pereyra 21:10

Oh yeah, it sounds like it can take a lot out of you for sure. Cool All right, well again, thank you so much. Nina if you want to go ahead and take over for the next part of the questions.

Nina Garcia 21:23

So for the next section of questions are going to be looking at your place within the community and the community around you. So, I know you said you work at home you get your materials bring it over there is there any other locations where you practice your art?

Xuan My Ho 21:41

No because I have so many materials when I do the project I spread put materials in the full studio to select the items from So a key change for me I need a lot of space and have a large studio at home that I can make a mess like a zoo in there to look for material and when I have a material in different cabinets you know so to have a different places I don't think I have enough room to bring out all materials that I need and then run back and forth you know to certain materials I do at home and also I do most qt night. So, you know is easy that to do at night and you're tired to just go to bed.

Nina Garcia 22:33

Okay, and beyond Kaleid gallery and you mentioned the American Mosaic or the Soul Society of America Mosaic. Are there any other organizations that support your work or that you work with?

Xuan My Ho 22:47

I did have different galleries in the past that my latest one I just left is the Main gallery. The Main gallery in Menlo Park is a beautiful gallery but I don't have time because this art gallery required the artists spend time and contribute a time in there and also do the work in there and volunteer you know, two days one or two days a month to physically do the sitting at the gallery. [MTM: <https://www.themaingallery.org/>] So, it took away of my time so I just left there but I did have that gallery and also other galleries in the past I forgot the name. Oh, Woodside Gallery which is closed because they took the store again. So yeah, so and also the mountain the mountain home something like Mountain Gallery in Woodside and also the owner left and also another gallery. So three, three gallery in Woodside that not exist anymore. Yeah. And the Main Gallery in Menlo Park.

Nina Garcia 24:06

Interesting. So earlier we asked how your cultural identity is expressed through your art form. How your art form kind of portrays how you have developed culturally. But the next question would be more in line of Do you ever find your culture influencing your artwork? So, are you seeing maybe symbols of your culture and how you make things?

Xuan My Ho 24:34

I did once I'm at my house because in Vietnam they have, you know how California is a bear for the state? Vietnam has the boat, it's a legendary boat it's not a real boat, but is the shape of the boat they call the Vietnamese boat to represent for Vietnam. So, when I went back home in 2006, I bought the plate that had the design of the bronze drum of the original. Vietnam has the bronze drum for the king in the past and then have a different design is very much detail with all the girls surrounding around the tree with their drums, you know. And also, my husband is a collector of the of the drums of the bronze. So, he has drums. And then so I bought that place made in marble and a small one with the design of the drum and I cut them in the circle it a square I cut into a circle, and designed that as central and put on the top in front of my entrance, my house entrance. If you go to my my website and you go to others, you will see that design that is represent of the bird. And I did that two times just for my house as a part of culture in Vietnam. I yeah, I show you if you have time, it's under. Well, I will send you later, I think. Yeah.

Nina Garcia 26:50

And do you have any artistic influences any other artists you look up to for your work?

Xuan My Ho 26:57

Ah, yes, Gustav Klimt. [MTM: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Klimt] The reason I love him because his stroke is just like a mosaic. His art is like mosaic like the pieces, you know, the, the fortunate majority of his painting has a stroke of mosaic, and also colorful, and I love that and also Van Gogh So these are the two artists that painters that I fall in love with.

Nina Garcia 27:36

I think that's interesting that you say so because I was looking through your artwork earlier. And you had a piece called "Blue Eyes". And just the more circular motions of it just the roundness I was getting. Yeah, very reminiscent of Van Gogh and those aspects.

Xuan My Ho 27:54

Yeah, thank you.

Nina Garcia 27:57

You're welcome. Do any other cultures may be some outside of the Vietnam, Vietnamese culture influence your work.

Xuan My Ho 28:08

I cannot think of other culture but besides I adapt to the mosaic style of America the modern most excited because Vietnam is a totally old style is not like wrong, but its ceramic is more than for the temple. But and now today, they try to capture the new style but majority are. So, in terms of influence in mosaic because mosaic was not popular in Vietnam. So, I'm more in American style on my work and adapt to the culture of, relate to what people are doing out here.

Nina Garcia 29:01

Okay. That's interesting. I know you had mentioned earlier how you had come to the United States and you had developed like a motivation for mosaic. But was there a moment where you, I guess, saw the differences between American and in over there, Vietnamese mosaics and was like, this is more in line with my interests with art.

Xuan My Ho 29:29

I think that Vietnamese mosaic is they need to improve more upgrade, upgrade to get out of their style. They just more traditional. Yeah, but they are beautiful. They have that they have they have their own style. mainly focus on Mandela, you know, flowers theme golden dream. And it's beautiful, but it's not my style. My mind is more abstract and free, then just a pattern. I don't like to do the cratons that is different style. That is Vietnam is more than the patterns, you know, doing repeating patterns, and they just, it's not the way I like. Yeah.

Nina Garcia 30:35

Okay. And what do you want the next generation of people in your culture to take away from your work?

Xuan My Ho 30:43

I like they be more elaborate, and be open, open up to the new style and learn new technology.

Nina Garcia 30:55

Okay. Sam, would you like to do the next part?

Sam Pereyra 31:03

Yeah, so my next question for you, Xuan is I know that we've already kind of talked about the different galleries at different art fairs. Gives me that you've participated in, but is there any additional organizations that you work with that you'd want to talk about, just to kind of give us an idea of the kinds of organizations that support this type of artwork?

Xuan My Ho 31:38

I know that I joined the mosaic artist group. And what that is that organization is just a group of martial artists we meet weekly, of not weekly, monthly, to show our latest pieces and exchange and exchange techniques, that kind of things, but not really an organization that, you know, doing things because mostly, I just don't have time. You know, it's just, it's just my obsession of mosaic and just want to default on that. That's why I took early retirement in order to have more time to do my work.

Sam Pereyra 32:21

Yeah, gotcha, gotcha. So, it's kind of like you are

Xuan My Ho 32:25

I love it. I love you know, I left the main gallery, because it took away of my time. You know, so I just need to be really more time for me.

Sam Pereyra 32:39

Gotcha. So, you really value your freedom in your artwork? That's correct. Gotcha. Awesome. Okay. Um, I did want to ask, though, earlier, you mentioned the international mosaic conference, is that an organization that you'd want to talk about a little bit more?

Xuan My Ho 32:59

Yeah, it's mainly is whoever mosaic artist wants you to join? And they can join. And they send you the newsletter once a while with the update of who's doing what, you know, he used mosaic inspiration from different artists, many you learn a lot, but later on, but it's expensive to be a member. Yeah, yeah. And then the conference is, each time you go to the conference cost you \$2,000 The minimum for the hotel for one week for taking classes. So, I did 12 Time 12 years and no, it took much too much money. You know? And now do they have Facebook, they have mosaic group on Facebook, they have mosaic group everywhere. And they have YouTube, you can learn a lot, you know, so I stopped doing that. So I don't I remove my membership. And also, you know, and also, I don't have time to, to read so many things, you know, and then so I enjoy like on the Facebook on the Instagram there are people pop up here and then share that I think I learned from there. You know, too, because it's really more instant, you know, update you know, then just join the group and read the long newsletters, you know. So that's, I have stopped joining the most society mosaic artists for at least maybe 10. No, eight years, maybe take eight years. Yeah, it's been a while because it's so expensive.

Sam Pereyra 34:44

Gotcha. So it's just a little bit more accessible kind of like online so it seems like you really kind of just create your own pie making are promoting all that. So, it's, it's more of like a one woman show. I like it.

Xuan My Ho 34:56

Yeah, yeah. And I also post on my Facebook have, you know of my friends and show. Oh, I have to show here. Oh, it is, I made new pieces. And then people, you know. So it's more, I found that I found that through the email from my distribution list and through the media, social media is very helpful, you know, to and also to spread the word, you know?

Sam Pereyra 35:26

Definitely. All right. Well, thank you so much, Nina, if you want to go ahead and take charge for the next part.

Nina Garcia 35:32

Okay, so we're in the final lap of the interview. So, is there any photographs or work you'd like to share with us later for the project? It's completely optional, but

Xuan My Ho 35:47

I think I sent to you, right.

Nina Garcia 35:50

Oh, yeah. You sent me a picture in the email earlier.

Xuan My Ho 35:53

Yeah, yeah, I sent you earlier. But also at the same time, if you have time to look on my website, and you want whatever pictures, what piece of you like, you think that are your favorite one. Let me know. And I send you one. I sent you that one. I thought I sent you two of them. Yeah. Yeah.

Nina Garcia 36:17

And if people were to see this work, your piece on the cultural outlets, what would you like them to know about it, we could probably go into further details, once we finalize what piece we go with.

Xuan My Ho 36:29

Yeah, if people just see my work, I like to put post my website in there, because everything in there. And each page, when you click on the, the image, for each one, you click on the image, majority they have also another link on the top. On the bottom, we write that, you click on that you see a detail of that piece. So, for each one image, you click on it you will see the information that that piece what material I use, how much they weigh. What's the dimension. And then if they have to detail and you click on it, you'll see a detail of the piece. So yeah.

Nina Garcia 37:20

And is there anyone else you believe we should talk to in regards to this project?

Xuan My Ho 37:29

No, not sure. Do you have any suggestion?

Nina Garcia 37:35

We're just talking to a variety of people, not specifically artists, but also as well as people that organize art programs and those kinds of aspects. Yeah. So, and for the last question, is there anything in addition, you'd like to tell us during this interview?

Xuan My Ho 38:00

I can think of what I mentioned to you earlier about my work to represent for Vietnam, I just realized that I think somehow my website's missing. And not sure what happened. But it's missing quite a bit of those pieces. So, when I have time, I will update them with the represent for the one that the port of Vietnam. Yeah.

Nina Garcia 38:31

Okay. Well, thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to talk to us about your art and about yourself. We really do appreciate it. I'm going to get this transcribed and I'll send you out the text later,

so you could just kind of go through it and see what we had discussed. And I will get back to you on terms of photographs. I'll probably discuss with Sam some of her favorite pieces and discuss it.

Xuan My Ho 39:01

Would you like to join my mailing list?

Nina Garcia 39:05

Yeah, I'd love that.

Xuan My Ho 39:07

I definitely would to. Yeah, yeah. So, I when I come up. My upcoming art fair festival is in Cupertino Cherry Blossom in the end of this month. April 21st or something, but I will send out the email and you will see.

Nina Garcia 39:29

Okay, yeah, I think when I attach the consent forms for the photographs, I'll put me in Sam's personal emails. Okay. Yeah, so we can be on that for you.

Xuan My Ho 39:42

Yeah. So after this, where does this project go up to, I mean, put on the San Jose State?

Nina Garcia 39:53

It's gonna be the Mosaic Atlas. So, I believe earlier in our email threads, there should be a link for it. I can resend it again. But it's going to be a website with different cultural landmarks. So, your interview will be in downtown's section portion of it. And it will include audio visual clips to detail kind of just different cultural experiences within the bay.

Xuan My Ho 40:26

So when you have it done updated could you let me know?

Nina Garcia 40:30

Yeah, I'll keep you updated on that.

Xuan My Ho 40:33

Okay. Thank you, Nina.

Nina Garcia 40:37

Well, that's all I have for today in regards to the interview. I don't want to take too much of your time.

Sam Pereyra 40:45

Yeah, thank you so much. Again, Xuan.

Xuan My Ho 40:48

Thank you for reaching out me, reaching out to me.