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## HUNG VIET NGUYEN: Places and Sacred Landscapes

By **Jim Gilles** - December 21, 2021

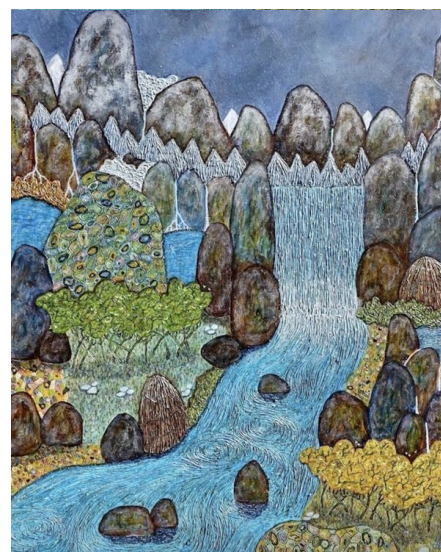
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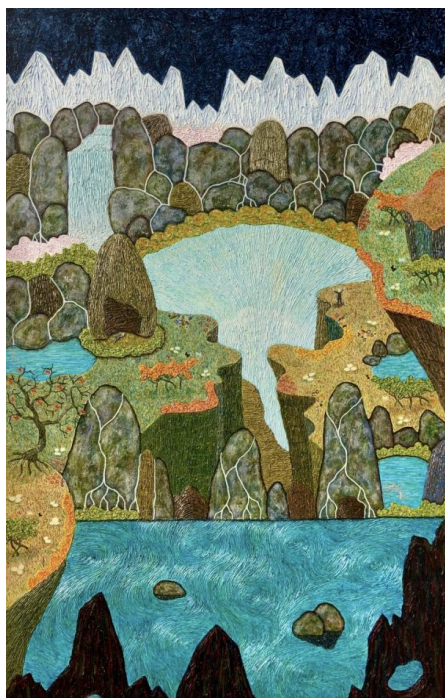
By *Jim Gilles*

Los Angeles, CA (*The Hollywood Times*) 12/21/21 – The financially-troubled Laemmle Theatres are doing their best to survive with the COVID pandemic and two of their larger theatres often display the art work of contemporary artists – in a gallery setting. Currently at the Laemmle Monica Film Center and the Laemmle Playhouse-7 in Pasadena are exhibits of artist Hung Viet Nguyen. Born in Vietnam in 1957, Hung Viet Nguyen studied biology at the Science University in Saigon. After relocating to the United State in 1982, Nguyen found work as an illustrator, graphic artist and designer. He developed his artistic skills carefully studying a variety of traditional Eastern and Western forms, media, and techniques. His complex, labor intensive use of oil paint reveals a mastery of texture. While portions of Nguyen's work suggest the influence of traditional forms such as woodblock prints oriental scroll paintings, ceramic art, mosaic, and stained glass, his ultimate expression as an artist asserts a more contemporary sensibility. Some viewers might sense a touch of Van Gogh fused with David Hockney.



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About his current exhibit, *PLACES*, Hung remarks, "While traveling I photographed favorite moments, places and scenes. From these images, I created works with ink and watercolor, applied two varieties of varnish for aging and crackling for a classic look. By capturing a cell phone image in a few seconds and then spending many hours to produce an artwork, I uncovered the relationship between the places and myself."

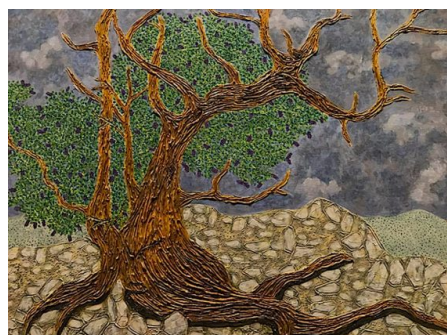
As to his process, he notes "I do plan for a little control, but during the process of painting things happen that I can't control. There is a certain edge of mystery to it even for myself. There is something out of control in my art; my artwork has its own life." That it does, a life that soars with color, a life that leads viewers into a world that's rich and nuanced, moving, elegiac. You may have been there before, you may have been there in another life, or within a dream. The paintings carry you along on a journey to a place that is beyond the ordinary, beyond the defined.

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Whether we are looking at beautifully created images of an "Ancient Pine" – based on trees Nguyen has come to know and love in the BristleCone Pine Forest – or spectacular seascapes, landscapes, or his wonderful images of birth, death, and the life cycle in his "Cruelly-Go-Round" series, the overriding sensation of seeing Nguyen's work is of discovering treasures. Sacred treasures. It is, without being overly religious, a blessing to see these works, a benediction riven with the vital sweep of a karmic life force.



*Hung Viet Nguyen, Bristlecone Pine*

Hung Viet Nguyen's mosaic-like paintings play like a precise and beautiful series of dreams. Each work has a hush about them, a reverence for nature and beauty that makes the show's title all the more true – this is a spiritual, sacred experience. The works shine like jewels as they reach into the depth of Nguyen's experience, which becomes a piece of each viewer's experience, too.

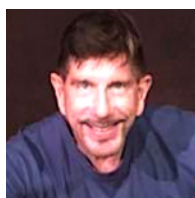
*Sacred Landscapes* is an exhibition to savor and enjoy, and it is appropriate to see the works in the gallery space at the Monica Film Center. Each piece is its own, highly cinematic world. And if, while at the gallery space, you're moved to take in a film, you'll find another glimpse at Nguyen's work, in the form of a short trailer the artist created. The trailer plays before each feature selection.

Nguyen's paintings have been exhibited at galleries, cultural centers and museums including LACMA and MOCA. His work was selected twice for the San Diego Art Institute's biennial *International Exhibition* (2013, 2015) where it earned a *Juror's Choice Award* each time.



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**Jim Gilles**

<http://www.thehollywoodtimes.today>

Jim Gilles is a native Angelo, with a wide range of interests. He holds several academic degrees from Cal Poly Pomona, Cal State Los Angeles, and UCLA, in English & Comparative Literature, History, and Education. He has been a teacher and university professor for many years and is still active in the academic community. Being an avid movie goer, he writes on film, including foreign-language cinema, feature films, documentaries, independent and experimental film. Having lived so long in Los Angeles, he is quite interested in the history of this particular city and appreciates its ethnic and racial diversity, as well as its fascinating history of filmmaking and popular music. As a world traveler, Jim has wandered into many fascinating corners of the globe and writes about his

experiences.

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