

## HEMISPHERES



## Cover Artist Profile

## ON THE COVER

"In this painting I used the simplest colors to show farmers working in a field—I started out with more but painted nearly everything out. The figures are mere outlines sandwiched between an enormous sky and Earth, for me a way of showing how small man is in relation to the universe." / Lan Nguyen, painter

V IETNAMESE PAINTING HAS A SURPRISINGLY short history. The country's first official art academy, the Ecole des Beaux Arts d'Indochine, opened its doors in 1925 with French teachers who instructed students in Western-style painting. In 1945, when French rule ended, the school closed its doors, to re-open the next year as the Hanoi College of Fine Arts. During the long, hard decades that followed, artists were expected to be propagandists, creating only paintings that reflected patriotic themes. It was not until the mid-1980s, when government policy shifted toward openness, that contemporary Vietnamese painting truly came into being.

Artist Lan Nguyen—born in Hanoi and educated at the Hanoi College of Fine Arts—has woven those disparate approaches into a series of simple, expressive paintings that looks both East and West, both inward and outward. The medium is European but the subjects are quintessentially Vietnamese, drawn from Nguyen's own memories of Hanoi and of the countryside and villages beyond the city limits. Her influences are equally varied: everything from Picasso ("not just for his art, but for his spirit and his love of life," says Nguyen) to traditional Vietnamese *dong bo* woodcuts.

In 1996, a newly married Nguyen left Vietnam with her husband, Bruce Stanley, a correspondent with the Associated Press. Now living in London, she has already established a Western following for her contemplative visions of her native country (her work will be on view November 8–12 at the Alchemy Gallery, 157 Farringdon Road, London). But her most important audience is herself. "I like London," she says, "but I miss my people, the conversations, the landscape. I want to remember the peaceful and human side of life there." /END/ By Margaret Moore

On the cover, *Landscape of Earth*;Above, Nguyen, *Sitting Under the Sun*

FOR MORE INFORMATION / LONDON STUDIO: 44-181-938-2438

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## LAN NGUYEN

A PENSIVE YOUNG WOMAN DRESSED IN THE TRADITIONAL VIETNAMESE AO DAI SITS QUIETLY, HER GAZE turned slightly away from the viewer. Three people bundled up against the cold walk down a rainy Hanoi street at midnight. In a country village, worshippers hurry to a pagoda carrying trays of fruit and incense to offer along with their prayers for good fortune. ¶ In *Memories of Vietnam*, a series of oil paintings on canvas, Vietnamese artist Lan Nguyen presents a highly personal vision of her homeland. The stylized figures are people she has met or seen—a shy young waitress in a Hanoi restaurant, three homeless people she encountered one winter's night—but with an economy of detail and graceful play of proportions, Nguyen creates images that transcend cultures and boundaries. ¶ "I painted most of these works after leaving Vietnam in June of 1996," explains Nguyen, who now lives in London. "I wasn't homesick exactly, but these memories were and still are very powerful for me. They are part of me and have helped to make me who I am." /END/ By Margaret Moore

