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Artist Huong's mural makes statement about immigration

BY RAQUEL GARCIA

The contentious immigration debate today evokes sharp memories in the mind of local artist Huong.

In 1975, a 25-year-old Huong escaped her native Vietnam and managed to make it to Subic Bay in the Phillippines where the American Naval Base and promise of freedom harkened.

Immigration Wall of Borders is a more than eight-foot tall and 200-foot-long peace mural designed by Huong and aimed at continuing dialogue on immigration-related issues.

"Immigration has been debated in the United States since the country was founded," Huong said. "We keep kicking the can down the road and have been doing that for so long. It is immoral and inhumane to discount the value of immigrants and I wanted to bring the issue forward as an artist to stir constructive discussion."

The mural is an interactive project whereby panels of quotes from famous thinkers on immigration are presented along with stark imagery of abstract forms representing naked humanity. There are open spaces in between the sepia toned quotes and art where viewers are encouraged to pick up a silver metallic marker and add their own remarks.

"We are all immigrants. How can anyone say what an American looks like? We are black, white, everything; our population is from all over the world. Everything I do is a very personal reflection about exile and the futility of all wars," Huong said.

Huong is a self-taught artist with more than 100 solo exhibits presented throughout Canada and the United States in her 30-year professional career. Huong's work has been shown in museums, galleries, outdoor exhibits and in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, DC. "The Peace Mural," representing over 2,000 works, was created as a protest to the Iraqi War in 2003. "Fragments of War" was 25 years in the making and completed in 2000 as a cathartic process to help Huong make peace with the tragedies of her war-torn past.

Artist Huong is pictured with a segment of the Immigration Wall of Borders peace mural.

"When we came to this country as refugees we had nothing. No clothes, no family, no identity, no country, nothing — only the naked truth. We, like all immigrants throughout history, carried with us just flesh and bone as we started over at the absolute bottom of society."

Huong hopes the immigration mural will encourage more people to speak out about peaceful principles and be an encouragement for young people to stay engaged in pressing social issues.

She plans to travel with the exhibit after locating an appropriate venue for its display in Miami. The idea is to take it on the road for several years and present the work of art in the southern border states of California, Arizona, Texas and Alabama where the immigration issue is hotly debated — and beyond.

The Peace Mural Foundation is an all-volunteer organization sponsoring Immigration Wall of Borders with a mission to promote civic education and action for peace and justice through the arts.

"By fate or chance on that day in 1975 I was destined to begin the journey that would forever change my life. In Vietnam I was a child of war; today I am a woman of peace. My art is my story, my art-biography and in a way that is unique to each viewer, the story of us all."

To find out more about Huong and the Peace Mural Foundation call 305-915-1018, send email to <immigrationmural@gmail.com> or visit peacemural.org. Her work also can be seen on YouTube.