

San Jose Museum of Art Unveils New Works by Tam Van Tran

SAN JOSE, CA.- In honor of its 40th Anniversary, the [San Jose Museum of Art](#) yesterday unveiled new commissions by two nationally known California artists. Most Secret Butterfly by Tam Van Tran, whose work was featured in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, marks the first time that the Museum's Council of 100 has commissioned a new work of art. Blind Faith by Bari Kumar is the first piece by an Indian-American artist to enter the Museum's collection and the first of Kumar's fabric pieces to be publicly exhibited in the United States. The two new additions to the Museum's collection of modern and contemporary art by prominent West Coast artists were unveiled at a members' preview yesterday and will be on view to the general public as of today.

"Throughout our 40th anniversary year, we showcase the San Jose Museum of Art's permanent collection, which has grown rapidly over the past decade. We are thrilled to further celebrate the collection with these special commissions by Tam Van Tran and Bari Kumar—innovators who both vigorously re-imagine the possibilities of painting," said Susan Krane, Oshman executive director of the San Jose Museum of Art. "We are grateful to the Council of 100 and to the Collections Committee, important Museum support groups, for making these acquisitions possible and for their belief in supporting the artists' creative process."

Van Tran's Most Secret Butterfly, 2009, a mixed media work of acrylic, staples, color pencil on canvas, and paper measuring 90 x 85 x 35 inches, is part of the artist's acclaimed "Beetle Manifesto" series. Van Tran uses natural materials like spirulina and chloroform mixed with acrylic, paints on canvas and paper, and then shreds his painting into strips. He then uses ordinary office staples to reassemble the work into a three-dimensional wall piece.

"Tam Van Tran's unusual materials and working methods result in works of exceptional beauty. He comments simultaneously on the natural world, the industrial world, and even science fiction," said JoAnne Northrup, chief curator at the San Jose Museum of Art. "It is a thrill to acquire a work that is so representative of this artist's most important and renowned style."

Most Secret Butterfly was created in part with funds provided by the James Irvine Foundation and was commissioned by the Council of 100.

Both works are now on view in the exhibition Variations on a Theme, which highlights the Museum's support of emerging and mid-career California artists. Variations on a Theme is on view through January 31, 2010.

Tam Van Tran

Born in 1966 in Vietnam, Tam Van Tran lives and works in Los Angeles. He graduated from the Film and Television Program at the University of California Los Angeles and holds a BFA in painting from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. He has received the Joan Mitchell Foundation award, a Pollack Krassner Fellowship, among other honors. Numerous galleries in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco have presented solo exhibitions of Tran's work. In addition to the Whitney Biennial in 2004, such museums as the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, UCLA's Hammer Museum, and the Asian American Art Center, New York, have exhibited his work.