

Fine Arts student takes top honours at international exhibition in Japan

by Marc Elias

Eight student artists from across Asia and North America were recently invited to Hiroshima, Japan for what Fine Arts student George Liem thinks is "the first international exhibition of its kind."

Their visit was the main event of *The Bridge '92*, an art exhibition and international exchange forum jointly organized by Japanese and U.S. students, and sponsored by Japanese interests.

For thirteen days in January, *The Bridge '92* exhibited the work of 61 student artists in a city that many consider to be a symbol of hope for peaceful communication between cultures.

More than 200 artists from some of the most respected universities and art institutes in China, Korea, Taiwan, Japan and North America submitted works. Concordia was well represented among the 549 entrants, numbering four of the 15 Canadian submissions. Of these, two, by Liem and Jean P. Montpetit, were selected for exhibition.

Liem's submission, a computer painting produced at the Audio-Visual Department's Multimedia Interactive Technology Environment (MITE), is titled *Under Water Land*. The work won him one of the top honours at the event, the NHK Hiroshima Award, which was presented by one of Japan's largest television networks. With the honour came an invitation to join seven of the other award-winning artists in Hiroshima as the Canadian representative to *The Bridge's* international forum.

The students stayed with host families to introduce them to the lifestyle and culture of the Japanese.

"The household where I stayed was a mixture of East and West," Liem said. "Their traditions are very deeply rooted, even through their fascination with Western culture. We communicated mostly through gestures, with a little help from our dictionaries, and eventually established a mutual understanding."

The forum's activities included a tour of Hiroshima, and a day as the guests of a local junior high school. The highlight of their stay, however, was a collaborative mural by the forum members, which for Liem was a perfect example of how art can promote communication between cultures.

"We chose 'birth' as the theme for our mural, and like birth, it was a difficult process at first," said Liem. "The hardest part was trying to talk to each other about what we wanted to do, because of all the translating that had to go on. It was easier just to show what we had in mind, and let the visual ideas take over. We started out very territorial, but eventually we expanded into collaboration."

Given Hiroshima's painful history, it was the perfect place for such an endeavour. One of Liem's strongest im-

Liem finds success and inspiration at MITE AVISTA

Fine Arts student George Liem, who was honoured last month with a major award for his multimedia painting *Under Water Land* at an exhibition in Hiroshima, Japan, attributes much of his success to the MITE AVISTA lab at Concordia.

Founded in 1989 by Helen Bambic-Workman and a group of dedicated students, MITE was designed to keep Concordia on the cutting edge of available multimedia technology, by mixing new and traditional ideas in an original way.

Workman describes the division of Concordia's Audio Visual Department as "one of the only visually interactive

teaching environments on the continent."

MITE's facilities embrace all aspects of creative computing, from desktop publishing to 3D animation to video production to multimedia paintings like *Under Water Land*. It is equipped with more than a dozen Commodore Amiga computer workstations.

Liem produced his painting on MITE's Video Toaster, a device that turns an Amiga workstation into a full visual production environment. The Toaster allows the computer artist almost unlimited manipulation of images in more than 16 million colours at broadcast resolution with a program called

Toaster Paint.

"*Under Water Land* started with an image of leaves, which I videotaped and digitized into the computer. After that, I imagined my picture like anyone else would. Only I was using a computer to put it together."

Liem's award puts him in the company of artists from some of the most prominent art schools in North America. Other *Bridge* awards went to students from the Rhode Island School of Design and the Pratt Institute, both prestigious institutions.

"Of course Concordia is in that league," Workman said. "We consistently have the most creative students

you could hope for. Everyone who works with MITE is very special, whether they are artists or any other kind of communicator. We're very proud of what George has done." Now recovering from a pleasant bout of culture shock, Liem is back at MITE working on an interactive computer presentation based on the series of paintings made at the same time as *Under Water Land*. This project is among a number of important works underway at MITE, including an interactive HIV/AIDS awareness project, and an animated short commemorating the opening of the new library building.

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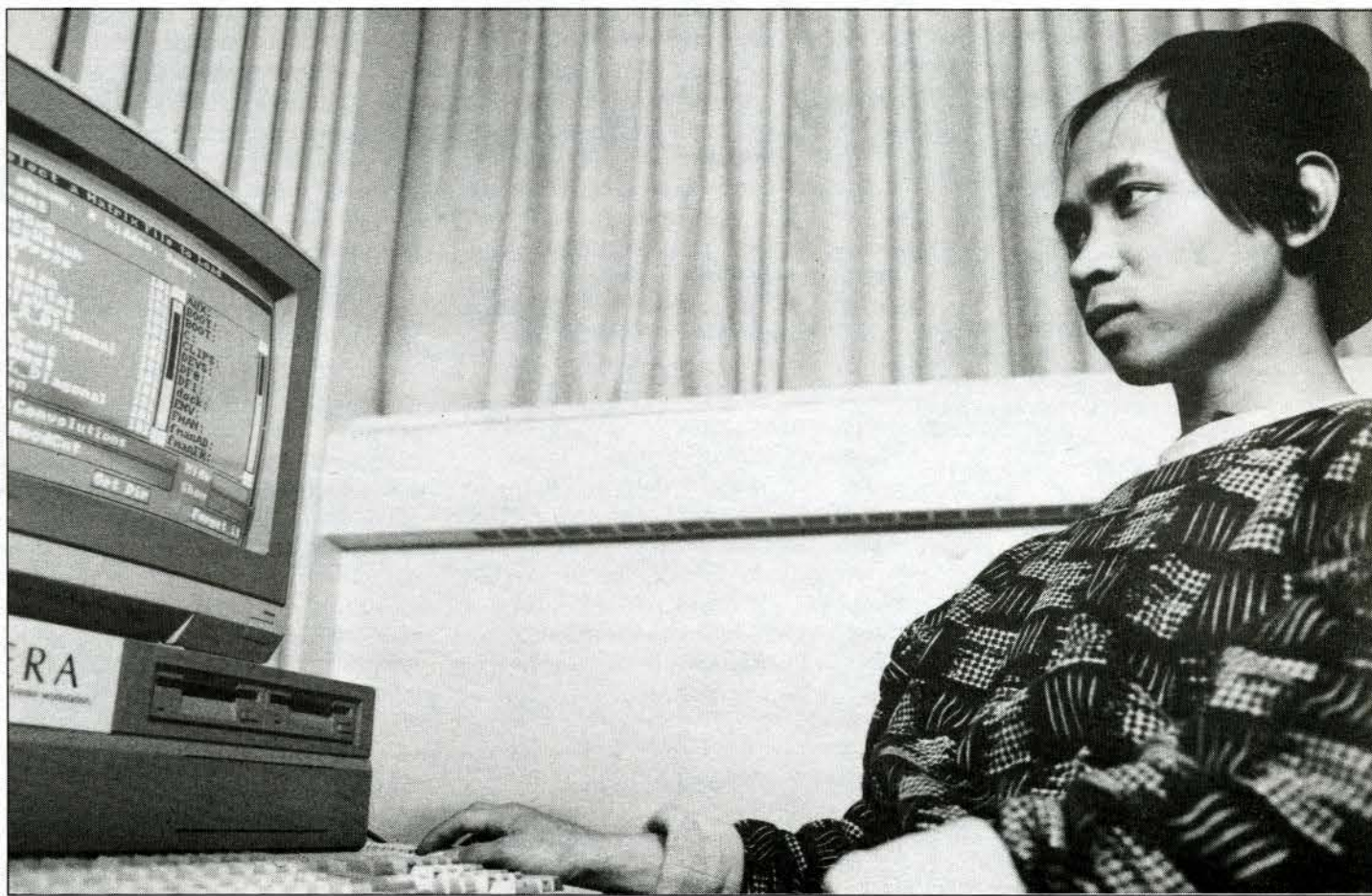


PHOTO: Marc Elias

George Liem uses an Amiga computer the way other artists use brushes and paints.

pressions was of his visit to the Peace Park, which was built upon the epicentre of the atomic blast, and which contains the city's Atomic Dome monument and museum.

"They don't exploit it," Liem affirmed. "They present the facts like a documentary, refusing to continually lay the blame for what happened. Now, Hiroshima is a modern city, like Montréal or Vancouver, and if you didn't know what happened here, it wouldn't seem strange that none of the trees are over 35 years old," Liem said.

Liem was impressed by the exhibits' variety and democracy of style. "They were figurative, abstract, conceptual. Their subject matter wasn't important, and neither was how they were made. Visual expression and communication were all that mattered."

One juror said that the pieces "bravely

bared the complexities of modern life," while maintaining the "youthfulness typical of studenthood."

One sign of *The Bridge's* innovation was that *Under Water Land* was one

among several that was performed on a computer, and one of two that won a major award.

"I think," said Liem, "that's a very good sign."

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Infallible refers to teachings that are "revealed by God" and thus immune from fallacy or liability to error. It is usually invoked when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* ("from the chair") of Peter, the first pope.

The most recent infallible teaching, in 1950, was the assumption of Mary to heaven, body and soul. Rulings on abortion, birth control and women in the Church are not infallible, although they carry that aura because recent popes have squelched dissenting teachers and theologians. Kaufman

called such actions "creeping infallibility" which has started to look and act like "galloping infallibility."

"Rome adopts the attitude that once it has spoken there is no longer doubt about the teaching, but Rome can maintain that position only if it has never made a mistake on an important moral issue," Kaufman said.

But the Church has made such mistakes. In fact, Kaufman pointed out, as late as 1866, a year after the U.S. Civil War had ended, the Vatican still approved of slavery.