

# Interviews with Giang Dinh

Clair Bergstrom: Is there a philosophical basis to your work? What is your underlying philosophy?

Giang Dinh: Less is more.

I am trying to capture the soul of the subject, not just “copy” its shell.

Simplicity and elegance.

CB: I noticed that much of your work not only uses paper’s ability to curve but actually emphasizes it. Other origami artists seem to rely more on crisp folds to define planes. How did this distinction develop in your work?

GD: Crisp fold is like a pen line to me – sharp and constant.

I prefer “penciled lines” more than inked. At the same time one can see both light and dark; or softness and sharpness, even in the same line.

As with folding, this depends on the pressure from your fingers, just as one would draw with a pencil; this way has more feeling.

When comparing both approaches, one can also see the difference in the formation of shadows. I like to fold from white paper (or paper with the same color on both sides). This way the viewer will concentrate on the pure form and shadow.

CB: What origami artists have influenced your technique?

GD: Akira Yoshizawa, for his wet-folding technique and giving life to his works.

CB: Have you ever worked closely with origami engineers? What are your thoughts on the engineering side

of origami?

GD: No, I have not worked with origami engineers; I would love to someday. I think the engineering side of origami is amazing and I admire these artists, such as Robert Lang.

I think that I develop origami from more of an “Artistic” perspective.



I play with and sometimes follow the paper without having a clear idea from the start - I guess it’s the “unscientific” way. :)

CB: How does your work differ from that of others ?

GD: I prefer simple, abstract and 3-D works. Most of my works have no reference point. Each time I make a fold, or show a person how I made that fold, it comes out differently.

I like works that have depth and are built upon an idea. The same goes with painting; people may not see all the layers underneath, but they create a depth to the art. I also enjoy fold and display “series” myself. I have not seen my series displayed in exhibition completely to my liking.

An example of this kind of “idea” is shown here - “Unfold



# Less is more.

War, Make PEACE”

It is one piece of paper - black on 1 side, white on the other. You can use it to make a bomb, or fold it into doves. With the same energy, man power, and money, you can do one bad thing, or produce many good things.

Two sides of life, Two sides of ourselves.

If you pay attention, you will see that the black face, when turned over still has the crease pattern ( bad traces !). Then this can be cleaned up to produce a “pure” sheet of paper for the doves.

If you take apart the bomb or dove, they are simple origami pieces— nothing so special about the form. In this piece, the “idea” is more important than the “form”

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Hoang Tran: What is it about Origami that fascinates you?

GD: It’s like magic! Imagine... almost everything can be folded from a piece of paper! A piece of paper, and your hands - a conversation. Origami is an art of sharing; everybody can practice it, rich or poor. Origami can also be sculpture - an origami artist chooses paper instead of stone, metal or wood as a medium. One piece of paper--no more, no less. After Akira Yoshizawa folded his beautiful Swan, he said, “but a few minutes ago, it was just a piece of paper! “ I think it is wonderful.

HT: How would you describe your Origami style?

GD: Sculptural, free, and improvisational.

HT: In which ways has Origami changed your life?

GD: I feel calm and happy when I play with paper. You fold it but also follow it at the same time. Through origami, I have come to know many



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*I feel calm and happy when I play with paper. You try to become one with the paper.*”

wonderful friends around the world. We are connected by a piece of paper!

HT: What do you think about Master Akira Yoshizawa and his work?

When I first got his book, it left an immediate deep impression on me, seeing his art really opened my eyes. His works are not complex, but very sculptural and his touch breathes life into the piece of paper. I have not attempted to fold many of his models, but I learned a great deal by looking at pictures of his finished works.

have spent on one single Origami piece? And what was it?

GD: I do not keep track, because after a period of time I will look back at the models again and modify details. My first round with the model is normally no longer than a few hours; It takes much longer to “finish” the work to a point where I am satisfied. I normally do not keep track of time or even size of paper. When I fold, I “forget” time.

HT: Do you have any tips on how to become a successful Origami artist?

GD: I cannot say much about the marketing side, but from the artistic perspective you need to be passionate about your art. I am not a full-time paper folder but I am very serious about origami. I think you should try

to learn the techniques and then experiment with different “styles”.

Then you will see the path you want to follow and explore. Do what makes you happy and try not to care too much about trends. You need to find your own voice.

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Deanna Elaine Piowaty :  
Did studying architecture enable you to see and explore even deeper with your designs? Are you a practicing architect or do you create origami full-time?

GD: I am currently a practicing architect @ depdesigns.net. Studying Architecture and Art does help a lot (inspiration, composition, proportion, seeing things in 3D..) I do want to spend more time with origami and painting, they are my passion.

DP: My son who is twelve will spend hours folding complex origami designs from books and videos, but he insists that he is not creative enough to make something from his own imagination. What advice would you give him?

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*Simplicity and elegance.”*

HT: What is the longest time you

GD: After learning the basic techniques, play with a base, try to modify a design. The same base to fold the dog can make a fox or a cat, for example. I think it is easier to start with modifying simple design rather than complex ones. Have a sketch book, draw and write what you like. Origami is not just about folding.

DP: What are the elements that make for a good design?

GD: To me, a good origami design should capture the essence of the subject, maximize the use of paper and has a clean folding sequence.

DP: You do most of your folding with wet watercolor or handmade paper. Can you tell me why this is?

GD: Wet folding is a wonderful technique pioneered by Akira Yoshizawa. It allows you to fold thick paper and treat paper almost as clay to softly form shapes. When it is dry, the model will hold its shape very well. Origami equals Paper sculpture to me.

DP: Do you find yourself going into almost a meditative state when you work?

GD: You can say so. I feel calm and happy when I play with paper. You fold it but also follow it at the same time. You try to become one with the piece of paper.



My parents bought me origami books when I was in 2nd - 3rd grade (c. 1973-74). When the war in Viet Nam ended in 1975, we lost everything; from those books, I only remember some traditional models. In 1996, I came to a bookstore and saw the same book that my parents bought me more than 20 years ago (*The World of Origami* by Isao Honda). I bought the book and started folding again! Then I joined Origami USA. Soon after, I discovered more books, and went to Origami conventions regularly. At these conventions, I saw many inspiring works from folders all over the world. After 2 years, I started to create my own original models.

Inspiration can come from many sources, from modern sculptures to paintings, Zen paintings, graphic design, other origami artists' works and what I read and listen to...