
Voice of Amida-shu, Amida-kai and The Amida Trust: Pureland Buddhism: Absolute Grace, Total Engagement: Issue 25, Winter 2011

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RUNNING TIDE



Icons and sacred spaces

Running Tide

Running Tide offers a voice for faith and practice, as well as critical, existential and socially engaged enquiry within the broad framework of Pureland Buddhism.

We publish short articles, poetry, pictures, interviews, comment and Buddhist resource materials.

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The Amida Association, an association for spirituality and its application. Amida-kai is the association for everybody interested in the Trust's work, for the application of spiritual principles to empirical world problems, and to the exploration of the meaning of spirituality irrespective of faith alignment.

4 **Give Fudu a break!**

Dharmavidya David Brazier OAB

"What then is the "striving" of Buddhism? It is a letting go and a returning to simplicity. The simplest state of life is love"

6 **Reflections on icons and sacred spaces**

Richard Meyers

"An icon may be a door leading to sacred space which in turn serves as an entrance into a greater reality of which we are a part."

9 **What's the point of chanting?**

Aramati Heine OAB

"Even if the everyday Nirmanakaya exists, is there any Sambhogakaya or Dharmakaya? And even if there is, it seems implausible that either of these other realms would have ears, so what is the point of chanting?"

12 **Adventures in painting**

Maitrisimha Kouwenhoven OAB

"I wanted it to express musical movement and liveliness, every voice like a bubble on the stream of Dharma"

14 **Jizo**

Prajnatara Bryant OAB

"With each memory I painted a symbol on a stone and placed it in a circle around gentle Jizo"

16 **The Indistinct: notions of continency and identity in Eastern and Western thought**

Simony Morley

"We sense we are in the presence of something obscure; a twilight atmosphere, a dim, vague, impalpable ambience..."

20 **A shrine of grace**

Kuvalaya Abel OAB

"Gradually, inspiration comes. The first thing to go is the television"

22 **Extract from *deadman...***

Images and words by *Mat Osmond*

24 **What's on guide & contact details for Amida centres**

Membership Of Amida-Kai is open to anybody who supports Amida Trust and is interested in spirituality and its application. To join please send a donation (£20 per year suggested) to Amida Trust with a covering letter. Membership of the Kai does not imply membership of the Amida Order or School or any particular religious affiliation. For subscription queries contact: The Buddhist House.

Editorial

Kaspalita



The first time I visited a Tibetan Buddhist temple I felt confronted by all the strange images and statues. They felt culturally distant, evoking none of the religious feeling I had when visiting Christian churches with beautiful stained glass windows and icons that were recognisably human.

The strange figures also challenged my idea of 'practice'. I meditated. I studied sutras. I occasionally burned incense. But I could not bring myself to recognise any devotional element in what I was doing.

Faith. Devotion. Relating to sacred beings. These were not part of *my* Buddhism.



I kept visiting the Tibetan temple. They were the only Buddhists close to my parent's house, where I was living at the time.

I started with their study group, and somehow, without really being conscious of the process, I found myself attending devotional pujas, worshipping Green Tara and Medicine Buddha, and volunteering to look after the offerings on the shrine.

My shrine at home became full of religious symbolism. I virtually stopped meditating, in favour of prostrating myself in front of the Buddha rupa.



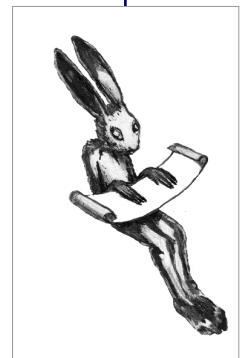
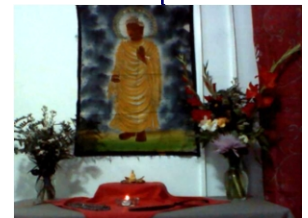
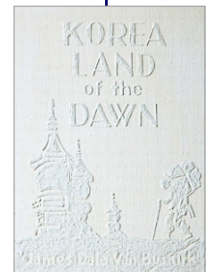
In his article this month Dharmavidya writes about how our practice can be about putting ourselves in a sacred space, rather than fighting the unstaunchable flow of karma that we find ourselves in.

My practice today encompasses both but I think there is a crucial message and a re-blancing in what Dharmavidya offers.

This issue also includes some wonderful personal reflections on our relationships with icons and sacred spaces, including Aramati writing about her 5 day chanting retreat.

I'm also really pleased to have three artists in this issue. Maitrisimha talks about the process of creating new icons and Simon Morley offers us some art theory. It's also a great pleasure to share some of Mat Osmond's words and images - in what might be described as an experiment in myth making.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together. For the colour edition go online to: <http://issuu.com/kaspalita>.





Fudu needs a break!

Stop slashing at negative thoughts, and start loving. By Dharmavidya

It is often thought that Buddhism is preponderantly introspective, but this is not really the case. At least, the teaching of Buddha himself seems not to have been so. He was, it is true, a master of meditation, but it is clear from dialogue after dialogue that while he values these introspective methods, he is constantly pointing to something better.

The something better has to do with the manner in which a person relates to the world. In his teaching, the elements of life are the six senses and their objects together with the elements of nature - earth, air, fire, water and space. Buddha's vision is of a person within a set of conditions. Before enlightenment he practised the introspective methods of yoga to an extreme but rejected this approach. He was enlightened when he saw the morning star - a phenomenon of nature over which he had absolutely no power whatsoever, yet which rises shedding its beauty upon us as a totally free gift. He then touched the earth which, similarly, supports us through thick and thin yet is "not me, not mine, not myself" and is something that I did not make, did not earn, and do not own. The morning star did not arise as a result of his practice or self-mastery.

When we look at Buddha's message in this way we see that we exist in a sacred space and are surrounded by powerful objects. The star sheds its light upon him and he was enlightened. When we say "he was enlightened" it is in the passive case. He did not enlighten himself. He received the light. We too receive the light. We receive light from innumerable presences that bless us each in their own way, day in, day out.

What then is the "striving" of Buddhism? It is a letting go and a returning to simplicity. The simplest state of life is love. Love is an end in itself and is the most simple thing. To receive the morning star completely is to receive love. To receive this day, this moment, this experience, is to receive love. From love



Fudu-myō (Hatagaya Shin-no Acalanatha)

naturally arises gratitude and from gratitude we too become loving. Our love meets with obstacles, of course, but it is constantly being recharged by the love that we receive.

Buddhism is to take refuge in this sacred space where love is constantly being refreshed and replenished; where our own love, though frequently frustrated and disappointed, arises anew again and again out of our gratitude. Within this sacred space we encounter the things of this world - the objects of the senses, the great elements. Buddhism is a yoga of attention. When the quality of our attention is such as to appreciate the love we receive, as Buddha did when he saw the star, then each such arising object is iconic. An icon is an object with power and the star was such for Gotama.

When a life is unskillfully lived it is still full of iconic objects, but the valency of the quality is reversed. Then a person feels oppressed by each thing that he



or she encounters. Life is one bad thing after another. Such a mind is always complaining and finding fault. Even if such a person learns that endless complaining is not socially acceptable, still they go on reiterating all that is wrong in their head and, when opportunity presents, they are soon busy sharing their sense of being a victim or their condemnation of other people, situations and events with anybody who will listen. Of course, there are generally people willing to listen because there are others with the same affliction who feel a similar pressure to ventilate all the bad gas inside their head. Such is a life in a world of poisoned space filled with negative icons.

Now some forms of spiritual practice seek to repress or deconstruct this mass of negativity. The practitioner learns to introspect and to be on guard, watching for the arising of negative thought and learning to destroy such tendencies as they arise. An image that conveys this kind of training graphically is that of Fudo-myō. A dark figure surrounded by smoke and flames, he has a lasso in one hand for catching delusive thoughts as they arise and a machete in the other for cutting them down. Being Fudo is one style of spiritual practice.

capacity to make us realise, at least fleetingly, the simplicity of love. At such times the complications of "body and mind" drop away.

This simplicity is represented in Buddhism by a wealth of iconographic forms. Images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas come in a myriad different forms. In the Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra there are lists of multitudes of different practices and the result of all of them is that one experiences the samadhi in which one sees Buddhas everywhere one looks.

To be in such a samadhi is to be in that sacred space where everything that is present is a positive icon.

We can say that, in a sense, the obstacles to enlightenment are numberless, but enlightenment itself is simple and cuts through them all in a single stroke. Love is simple. I have seen it said that love depends upon understanding and this leads people to envisage a long and complicated course in developing understanding. It is not so. Love is love whether one understands or not. Indeed, love is the embracing of what is other and what is other is inevitably to varying degrees beyond the reach of one's understanding. If there were no mysterious, hidden part, then the object of attention would not be other

We exist in a sacred space

The problem with the Fudo style of approach, while it has some value, is that the supply of negativity is, in principle, fathomless. It can go on forever if the source is not dealt with. Buddha realised that one has to have a fundamentally different approach to the root cause if Fudo is ever going to be able to take a rest. I have heard people say, training is all detail and I used to think this was true. For Fudo it is true.

But for Buddha it is not true. For Buddha, when the tree has been cut at the root it does not grow again. This cutting at the root is not to be achieved by more and more detail. It requires a change of heart.

Change of heart involves both a sense of the great simplicity of love and also an upwelling sense of gratitude. These things arise naturally when we see our life situation clearly. Methods such as nei quan and chih quan, devotional practice, events in our life that touch us deeply, looking at a sunset or seeing the morning star can all help. I have met many ordinary people who have had a glimpse as a result of a near death experience or through being close to somebody else who died. All these things have some

and the embracing of it would not be love. Love accepts simply and feels grateful. A person who is in the flow of such a life is not particularly introspective. His or her attention is upon the glory arising, be it the morning star before one, or the earth beneath one, or the sky above.

Even when such a person is introspective as we would say nowadays, or when, as Buddha might have said, he is deploying the sense base of the mind, the attitude toward what is encountered by that (mental) sense base is no different. Dreams arising, thoughts arising, sentiments arising, feelings arising, are all just the same as the star arising. Each has its power - its iconic quality. Each is further evidence of the glory that we receive. Such a life is, in one sense, passive because it is an appreciation of receiving, but it is only such a life that can be exuberantly active because only in such a life is there no internal conflict: only in such a life in which one lives in the glory that is everywhere can Fudo rest. ★

Dharmavidya is spiritual leader and co-founder of the Amida Trust.



Reflections on icons and sacred spaces

Richard Meyers, conservationist and Amida London member, writes about his own relationship with icons and with sacred spaces



Christ the Saviour (Pantokrator), a 6th-century encaustic icon from Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai (public domain)

Generally, when I hear the word 'icon' I think of Christian images gracing the walls of Greek Orthodox churches. I find many of them beautiful. A large part of their attraction has to do with a simplicity and purity of expression. There is a directness about them. Some give the impression of being roughly executed, though probably will have been created according to a prescribed methodology and tradition. In addition, icon painters tend to mix their own paint, from natural pigments, again using a specified method.

Icons are not pretty, but are usually bright with the power to grab our attention. They are in marked contrast to the saccharin 'holy' pictures we were given at school, which serve an entirely different purpose. We do icons an injustice if we observe them casually. It is when we look at an icon with our full attention that we engage in a form of prayer. We are connecting with what is Holy and turning away from the small self.

An icon may be a door leading to sacred space which in turn serves as an entrance into a greater reality of which we are a part. Certain features within nature are also able to do this. In the French Pyrenees last Spring, gazing up at the night sky, I had a sense of being lifted up out of my shoes by the amazing infinity of stars. Ruth and I were on a small roof patio, striving to identify constellations. It was when I used my binoculars that I was really knocked for six. Stars beyond number, with us in the midst of all this splendour. Experiences such as this inspire us to awe, incredulity, and ultimately gratitude.

Woodlands are also rich with what is sacred - take a tree, an oak for example. Home to over



photo by Antonio Martínez - Creative Commons

700 distinct species, an oak tree is a huge ecosystem. With roots that spread out, mirroring underground the immense canopy overhead, the tree absorbs recycled water and diluted nutrients. The broad trunk has a deeply fissured bark with leaf-filled branches reaching up to receive light from our nearest star, the sun. Remarkably, each leaf is unique. Of the many thousands of leaves present, no two will be exactly the same shape. This fact alone is wondrous. The miracle of photosynthesis occurs with each chlorophyll-filled leaf working its magic. As energy packed glucose is created, crucial oxygen is released as a by-product. The miracle of life in all its myriad forms comes home to us as we contemplate an oak tree.

Even as a child, certain places felt somehow special, places where I could relax and, on some deeply personal level, take ownership of. Particular locations became places of refuge for me. One such place was an enormous redwood tree on the edge of Tilgate Forest in Sussex.

With my back against the soft bark I would gaze up into the spiraling branches, catching occasional glimmers of blue through the wind tossed leaves. Almost hidden by other tree species, in an area that had once been a formal garden, it had become overgrown and I could sit there unseen. The link to human activity in the past added to the atmosphere of the place. The wind coursed through the trees and pheasants were sent scuttling skyward by my black Labrador Mick, a regular companion on my walks back then.

Treasured memories include early morning walks out through newly fallen snow and the return journey, stepping into my own foot prints. Another time I felt particularly honoured by the sight of an albino squirrel who sat watching me from a branch. The sight of this somehow heraldic beast made a big impression on me, and I recall being awestruck as though in the presence of an angel or some other supernatural being.



Always a big reader, I devoured Jack London's 'Call of the Wild' and other similar yarns, all of which added to the magic of my own local Yukon. Things are no different today - in some ways my appreciation of wild nature has grown stronger. I naturally gravitated toward employment that allowed - in fact, demanded - that I increase my deep connection to nature. For the past 30 years I have worked within nature conservation, managing reserves and teaching a wide range of related topics to local children and adults. It has been a joy and a blessing. It has also served as a spur to further my own appreciation for the sheer otherness and yet kinship with our non-human cousins.

Somehow an icon works like a hook, connecting us to what is greater. As I say, many things in nature can do this. A rock or a pebble may be what transports us. Those of us with household shrines often have one or more pebbles strategically placed. Why would we put them on our shrine unless they held deep meaning for us? Just holding a pebble, feeling its weight and texture, and realising that this smoothness is due to the buffeting of time over millennia is both humbling and inspiring. Walking on a pebbled beach, whatever else is going on - I always have one eye open for the significant stone, the one that speaks to me of where I am currently in my life.

Sacred space may also be found within the self - during serious spells of illness, for example. Being sick can bring us to a place of acute need which can be experienced as a spiritual crossroads. This is not to understate the devastation that a terminal diagnosis can initiate - just that if we are fortunate (and this is where spiritual traditions can help us) we may receive the grace of a broader vision and increased insight into vulnerability and compassion, both for ourselves and other beings. We are all subject to old age, disease and death - no one and nothing is exempt.

An icon has the potential to open us to a world larger than surface appearance. It provides a

window to other deeper realms. What we must do to realise the truth of this is take the time to encounter the reality behind the image. In the Orthodox tradition an icon is not just a symbol of the sacred, it is itself sacred and is regarded as a curtain between this world and the spiritual realm. The same thing applies to Buddhist iconography. Contemplation of the Buddha, as represented for example in statues of Amida or Quan Shi Yin, may initiate an immediate and seismic shift in the devotee. Our hearts have been touched by what has occurred, and our lives altered on a deep level.

Sacred space can arrive unexpectedly - there often seems to be a randomness to the way it turns up. We stumble across it when we least expect to do so. On another level, although our thoughts are elsewhere, we will be poised attentively - in readiness for when the grace arrives.

Out for a walk in the countryside, the air is suddenly charged with rhapsodic sound - a pair of skylarks singing as one, although separated by a large field. What is heard is indescribable in its beauty. Only gratitude is appropriate, and appreciation for what we have been given. It is this unbidden quality that is sacred - we receive it as a gift from the Universe. What else can we do but say 'Thank you' and bow deeply to the ground in response?

A final thought - sacred space is not always about being in a place of transcendence. Perhaps more often it is a place of quiet - our diverse components are gathered together and we are at peace. We are at peace with ourselves and with others. It is here that we discover a capacity to love and experience compassion for this wounded, warring, yet beautiful world. We are sometimes alone and sometimes in company in these special moments. I think this is a good place to end these few words on a topic close to my heart. ★

Richard Meyers is leading a nature walk at the vernal equinox, in London. See the events guide for more information.



What's the point of chanting?

Other Power breaks through. Aramati writes about her five day chanting retreat



Aramati during the arts retreat at Amida France 2011. Photo by Jnanamati

In August 2011, I did a chanting retreat in the retreat hut at Amida France. The retreat hut is near the edge of the woods and a wild flower meadow, in a secluded corner of the estate. Sujatin, the head of the ministry team, had suggested I practise 'until it permeates every cell in my body'. At first I did not know how I could do that, but after a few days I had the idea of doing a chanting retreat (as I had done a five day chanting retreat the previous summer in the same hut). I thought a chanting retreat would both deepen my practice as Sujatin had suggested and might also provide comfort and benefit to others, as they would know I was doing practice at that time. Sujatin agreed with

both aims.

I began the retreat in the evening just before dusk, which in France at that time in August was between 9.45pm and 10pm. I chanted in front of my shrine in the candlelight for a while and then went to bed. My shrine was made of boxes covered by a piece of golden yellow fabric. The Buddha rupa just fitted comfortably on the upper box. Beneath him on the first evening was one fat red candle and two tea lights in glass holders, and the next day I added some posies of wild flowers.

For the whole retreat I used the form of Namo Amida Bu that we normally use to do the



prostrations to. I love all our tuneful chants, but wanted to keep it simple and felt that chopping and changing between chants would probably lose the depth and intensity that just doing one thing might bring.

Last year when I had done the five day chanting retreat I had lost concentration at points, especially when doing things like lighting a fire to make a cup of tea, making breakfast, getting dressed, or when I first woke up in the morning until I remembered I was on a chanting retreat. So this year I was determined to try to do better, which for the first 36 hours or so I succeeded in doing. However, to do something which takes one's attention like lighting a fire and to chant at the same time, I found I needed to put the chanting onto the back burner, and go into 'autopilot' mode.

using my own words and expressing it differently every day, e.g. I pay homage to; I give my respect to; I have faith in; I put my trust in; I give love to; I give over my entire will to; I give thanks to; I honour; I give my commitment to; I give humility to; I give faith and obedience (which is the meaning of my name, Aramati) to; and so on.

So I started doing this on the retreat on that first day, on the basis of 'feel the doubt and do it anyway', giving praise to Amida, to the unimpeded light, to the infinite light, to the source of unconditional love, to unconditional acceptance and so on.

When I had done about a dozen prostrations to Amida in various forms, I suddenly felt inspired to do a number of prostrations to each of the

Is Amida no more than a lump of metal?

By the middle of the first full day, nearly 36 hours into the retreat, when all I was doing was sitting in front of my shrine chanting, I found my chanting had become automatic and was meaningless. I was unable to make any connection with what I was chanting, or with Amida Buddha, or with anything. Sitting there, doubts came in: What is the point of chanting? Is there anyone to chant to? Is there any Other Power, any other force in the universe that can have a transforming effect? Or is Amida no more than a lump of metal, admittedly a beautifully shaped lump of metal, in front of me? Both on this retreat and at other times in the past, my 'dark night of the soul' comes as a spiritual desert, pointlessness and staleness, rather than as agony and despair. Prostrations have always been the most powerful way for me to connect with Amida, so I decided to do 108 prostrations to see if it would help, especially as the chant I was doing particularly lent itself to this. 108 is a traditional number for prostrations.

In our normal services, I use the five prostrations to go for refuge to our five refuges,

other refuges. When it came to Sangha, I started doing each prostration for a particular Sangha member, so I did one for each Order Member, each aspirant and everyone else in the Sangha that I could think of. I ended up doing 108 prostrations each day, and including in the 108 a prostration to each person. On the retreat as a whole, it felt really powerful connecting with each of you, especially as part of my inspiration for doing this chanting retreat was to benefit all in the Amida Sangha, particularly those of you who are too busy to fit in as much practice as you would wish.

Even in my state of doubt on that first day, it still felt good to connect with you all and I realised that I did still believe in/have faith in love. I could see that the love of one human for another can have a transforming effect on the second person. But I still had doubts. Even if the everyday Nirmanakaya (the physical world) exists, is there any Sambhogakaya (all the archetypal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and their realms, including Amida Buddha and his Pure Land) or Dharmakaya (ultimate truth itself, transcending both the physical world and the



archetypal/spiritual realm)? And even if there is, it seems implausible that either of these other realms would have ears, so what is the point of chanting?

The second day was a lovely sunny day, not too hot or too cold. I set up my shrine in dappled shade at the edge of the field and continued to wrestle with my questions. I did not take the whole shrine, just the Buddha, the upper box which I covered with some red fabric, and a tea light. The Alternative to Violence Project, which I am a facilitator for, says Transforming Power is available to draw on in difficult moments in life, if you turn to it. If you do, it will give you the strength that you need. And I believe this idea because I have seen that it does. But sitting there at the edge of the field I suddenly felt it personally for myself, not just as an idea

felt the love pass through me and out into the universe; outpouring and unfolding like clouds, in infinite abundance. As the connection to the sacredness of all things grew, and as I just carried on chanting I realised that for me the Nembutsu is a way of connecting to the sacredness of all things and to Other Power. The Nembutsu was no longer pointless, but was a powerful way to connect to all this. The next morning Caroline, who accompanied my retreat, said that I looked radiant.

After that wonderful middle day, for the rest of the retreat I had a mixed experience, some positive spells and some negative, but all held by Other Power within the container of the Nembutsu.

Reflecting at the end of my retreat about the

The Nembutsu was no longer pointless

but as a felt experience. I felt transformed. I felt the sacredness of the space I was in. I did the 108 prostrations for the day and felt held by and connected to Other Power. I felt the sacredness of the long grass and the rich biodiversity of wild flowers, predominantly white and yellow, in front of me, the summer sounds, crickets, the hum of a bumble bee or fly. At one point some birds had a loud conversation. The ground I was sitting on was Holy Ground.

But I continued to wrestle with the Nembutsu. If a cricket rubbing its wings to give those characteristic summer sounds is saying Nembutsu by manifesting his/her cricket-ness, then what is Nembutsu? Does Nembutsu have to be limited to saying/listening to the Name? A cricket would not have a name in mind when rubbing its wings. It seemed extraordinary that after all this time with Amida Sangha, it was only now I was really asking what Nembutsu is. At first the connection with Other Power came and went a bit. But gradually it strengthened and grew. At one point I felt unconditional love from a powerful but undefined Other Power. I

Nembutsu, I noticed that when I could give the chanting my full attention and I was not doing anything else but chanting I found I could chant more wholeheartedly. But at other times, when doing practical things like having a wash and getting dressed, keeping up the chanting enables it to seep into one and work at an unconscious level. Thinking about the role the Nembutsu had played in the retreat and how it would have been different if I had been doing a solitary silent retreat (which I have done a number of) I realise that there was the conscious level including all that I have described above, and that the Nembutsu had also affected me at an unconscious level. For example it pulled me out of my loss of faith more easily, more quickly and more powerfully than I think would have happened on a silent retreat in the same hut, same field etcetera. And doing a prostration a day to everyone in the Amida Sangha certainly connected me far more powerfully to all of you than would have been the case on a silent retreat. I hope doing this retreat might in some small way have been of some benefit to you too. ✨



Adventures in painting

Maitrisimha writes about the process of creating 'Nembutsu' icons



I finished the painting above, 'Nembutsu', just before my 65th Birthday.

It is an attempt to express the experience of continuous nembutsu (which we practice during the Bodhi retreat) in an abstract 'western' way.

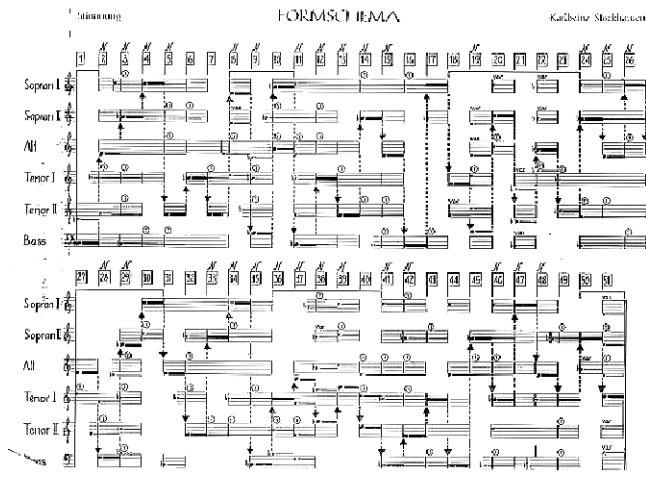
I was trying to find a way to express nembutsu through painting.

Religious art has always fascinated me. Nowadays it seems not at all done to even think of religious art in the art 'scene.' But I wanted to see if it was possible to find form and movement in painting a religious experience. For that is what continuous nembutsu is - a religious experience.

I admire the Eastern Orthodox icons as I do Buddhist icons and art. All the elements in orthodox icons have a preconceived religious meaning, most Buddhist art likewise. Painting an icon on wood is a fascinating mixture of absorption,

artistic intuition and respect for the media: wood, textile, chalk, egg-tempera paint, gold leaf and varnish. Most icons are painted according to a canon of line drawings of whole icons or elements of them. Since ancient times there have been icon books that were used by monks/painters to copy a line drawing onto the panel. Tibetan tanka painting is likewise done on prepared and gessoed linen, with egg-tempera, and here too, the tankas are painted according to a canon. Every detail has a predetermined meaning.

There are magnificent examples of icons of all religions that surpass their liturgical meaning and use and are examples of great transcendental art in their own right, like Rublev's Icon of the Trinity for example. In this icon the perfect love of God is represented - it's magnificent. Even more so because it follows the prescribed canon and the artist nevertheless succeeded in giving the work an abstract expression.



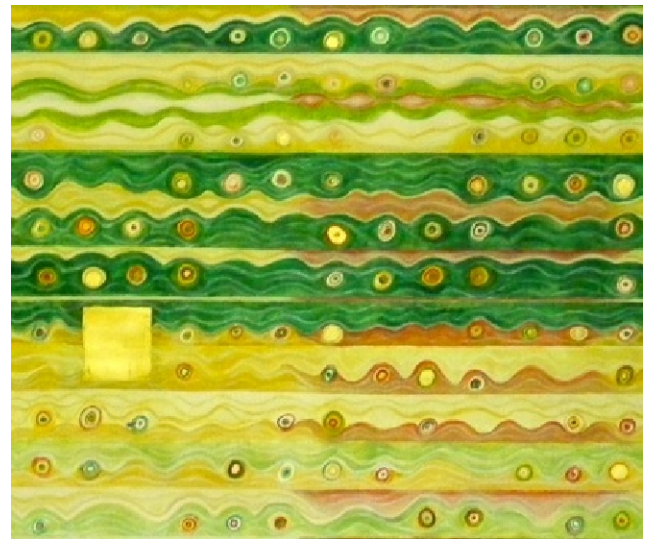
Stimmung, by Stockhausen - listen at <http://goo.gl/otR2e>

The nembutsu painting was an attempt at imagining an icon of the nembutsu (as act or liturgy) outside a canon of form. How could it express certain ideas in a 'Western expressionist' way. So this was the experiment - is it possible to make a sort of icon by abstract-expressionist 'stylistic and symbolic' means?

I wanted it to express musical movement and liveliness, every voice like a bubble on the stream of Dharma, which is Life.

Annetta, my companion, referred to a playful translation of the word Universe; being one song. I like the reference to the Greek 'Harmony of the Spheres'. In this way continuous nembutsu singing is a way in which we celebrate life by harmonizing with the song of the Universe (which is a love song, of course).

Padmaghosa compared singing the nembutsu with works of the composer Stockhausen, in particular his work for six voices, called 'Stimmung.' The



Detail from 'Nembutsu'

German title has a double meaning: tuning (as tuning a musical instrument) and mood/atmosphere.

In looking at the score of this work, I saw it as a basis for a painting of the nembutsu in the same way as the line drawings were used by icon painters as the basis for the icon.

The golden square is meant to be Amida's mysterious appearance during the continuous nembutsu singing. In the Pureland tradition, gold is the color of the sacred. As you can see we chant groups of four nembutsu and then rest for two. But sometimes one can be mistaken.... singing five nembutsus when you are caught up in the stream of singing or singing two nembutsu and being distracted. So although one experiences a pattern, there are dissonances too, because of 'mistakes.'

Overall the continuous Nembutsu is a soundscape, and that is what I somehow wanted to show. ★



Amida Triptych by Maitrisimha



Jizo

Bodhisattva of those who mourn

by Prajnatara



Jizo carved by Mike DeVecchi.



November 2010, I received a delicate, one foot tall, wooden statue of the standing Jizo, Bodhisattva of “Great Vows”. The carving, skilfully made by sangha member Mike DeVecchi, was presented to me as an ordination gift from my husband James. Upon receiving it feelings of tenderness and calm came over me as I beheld my Jizo through misty eyes. While yet unfamiliar with the many dimensions of Jizo, I intuited that this piece would indeed become a precious addition to our shrine and to my spiritual practice.

The Bodhisattva, called Jizo in Japan, is known by several names including Ksitigarbha in India and Ti-tsang in China. Jizo is one of four great Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana and is known as the Bodhisattva of “Great Vows”. His name means Store House or Earth Store and two of his most remarkable vows read: “Only after the Hells are empty will I become a Buddha”, and “Only after all the beings are taken across to Enlightenment will I myself realize Bodhi”.

Jizo is revered for his Great Vows which

with death in general and still of the illusion that technology had all but taken care of childbirth risks and infant deaths, I found myself shattered to experience, first hand, traumatic births and a significant number of infant deaths. At first I found the work unbearable but with time, experience, and sincerity of purpose I settled into ten fulfilling years of working daily with losses that few in our culture dare to think about. Moved by the mizuko kuyo ceremony I decided to honour the children who had died during my time at the hospital by celebrating this ritual.

The time was night and the season winter. I gathered stones from past summer walks, and laid them on a cloth before the shrine. With candles lit and the Sutra said I began to remember in detail all the tiny babies who had died. With each memory I painted a symbol on a stone and placed it in a circle around gentle Jizo, feeling cathartic as I finally allowed the weight of having witnessed so much loss and sadness to be released. Tears, as bitter-sweet as memories of my mother, soaked my face as I

I beheld Jizo through misty eyes

elucidate the qualities of compassion, tenacity, courage and engagement in everyday living. This makes this Bodhisattva a natural patron for the protection of children, relief of suffering, mother relationships, pilgrims, difficult transitions, childbirth, and children who have died.

As Jizo becomes more familiar in the west, associated practices blossom. One such practice is called the mizuko kuyo, common in Japan and slowly finding a home in the west. It is a memorial dedicated to children who have died before adulthood. Some elements of the memorial service include recitation of The Heart of Perfect Wisdom Sutra, chanting, and creating symbols (traditionally tiny garments sewn out of red fabric and placed on the Jizo statue) for each child being mourned.

I began my professional career as a chaplain in a neo-natal intensive care unit. Unacquainted

recalled babies carried to and from the morgue, babies needing holding as they died because their own mothers were too sick or afraid, babies who died of abuse, and babies who died after valiant efforts to live. How precious these memories are and how grateful I am to finally allow them the honourable space they so deserve. I finished the ceremony with some chanting and slipped quietly to bed.

Jizo awakens aspects of courage, compassion, benevolence, ordinary living, optimism, and determination. This month Jizo, who normally sits on our ancestor's shrine, will be given primacy of place as our Sangha calls to mind those who have died or are sick. It is in the everyday life, abundant with joy and sorrow when Jizo comes with an impish smile, offering us inspiration and comfort. ★



The Indistinct

Artist Simon Morley explores ideas of contingency and identity in Eastern and Western thought

As an artist I have become increasingly interested in an aspect of experience that is provisional, contingent, pending or in process, and in trying to find ways to convey this experience through my work. Recently, since moving to South Korea, I have also been learning more about East Asian art and ideas, and have concluded that what I'm interested in can best be described as the 'indistinct'.

By the 'indistinct' I mean an aspect of art that is provisional, contingent, pending or in process. The indistinct is that part of art, a painting, say, that is undifferentiated,

"Cloud, banks of clouds hide something: but what?"

Hubert Damisch, *Theory of /Cloud/*

cease to signify monolithically, we encounter an openness of gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and perturbations of meaning. But also of possibilities.

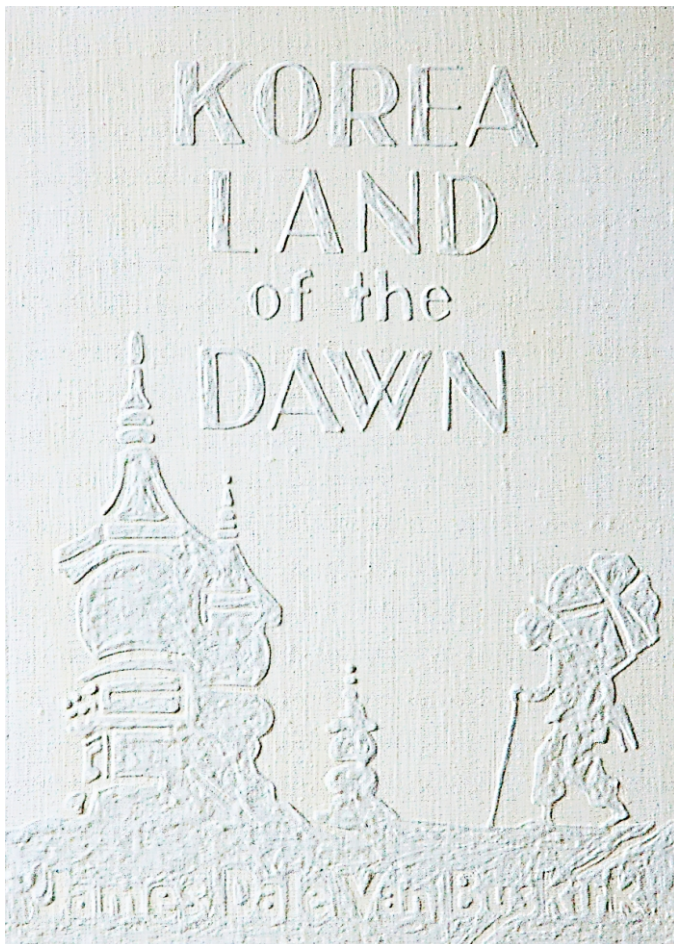
The indistinct implies a certain undecidability that affects and also infects what we see and think, forcing us to recognise the limits of our knowledge and to explore what we don't know, perhaps what we are afraid of. We are constantly being confronted by new experiences that are too vertiginously complex for us to ever fully encompass them

"Let go of 'I am'
Let go of 'I am not'"

Nagarjuna, *Verses from the Center*, translated by Stephen Batchelor

shapeless, without boundaries and indeterminate. We sense we are in the presence of something obscure; a twilight atmosphere, a dim, vague, impalpable ambience that occludes our view both perceptual and cognitive - one that is suggestive and perhaps mysterious. Like a chimera, we can only glimpse it. Is it the mystical, the infinite, the transcendent, the sacred, the Other? Or does it provoke in us confusion and perturbation, an affliction of blindness, a sense of meaninglessness? Never frozen, the indistinct undermines detached and neutral vision, testing but not entirely negating familiar space. Within the evanescence of the indistinct, where things

in our mind: they overwhelm us. We cope by retreating into a space of reflection in which the rational self can have some kind of control and mastery, can still understand what it experiences and so make distinctions and decisions. We are very good at identifying consciousness itself with such mastery. These structures are traced deep, and are the foundations of what Freud called the 'ego'. This 'self' is the product of the creation of inner boundaries which reduce all that it contains, such as memories and perceptions, to the psychologically shaped space of a particular subjectivity: the self-mastering 'I'. We control experience through a process of demarcation, fixation,



Simon Morley's *Korea Land of the Dawn* (1931): A hand painted book cover in white acrylic on canvas

organization, delineation, separation, formation, definition and rationalization. By establishing boundaries, we come to believe that the distinct nature of the identities that are formed are the precondition for true knowledge.

This is how the former Buddhist monk Stephen Batchelor puts it in his book *Verses from the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime*:

All that is certain in this world is that at some unspecified time one will die. As a means of coping with the anxiety generated by awareness of this fate, human beings elaborate a picture of life in which the self appears to be intrinsically separate from the multitude of other people and things that surround, attract and threaten it. In assuming a safe distance between "me" and "you", and between "me" and "mine", one feels able to manage whatever is boring, desirable or terrifying situations that face one.

One way of characterising the last two centuries of Western thought is to see it as engaged in the slow but sure erosion of the confidence we once possessed in this fixed, bounded and boundaried 'I'. In reading modern philosophy, poetry and novels, in looking at the visual arts and listening to music, we are often reminded that the ways we seek to represent the world through symbols and signs - through languages - are exposed as miserably inadequate tools for framing our experiences, for giving anything near a coherent account of the complex facts of reality. As a result, the arts and philosophy have become increasingly interested in the failure to make sense, in indeterminacies of meaning, and in boundary-free experiences of fusion and loss of identity.

The concept of the sublime, for example, which became an important aspect of thinking about the arts in the eighteenth century, explores the limits of consciousness in situations in which the experience of reality is registered as excessive and overwhelming. Initially, it was applied to describe aspects of nature that instill awe and wonder, such as mountains, avalanches, waterfalls, stormy seas, or the infinite vault of the starry sky. Today, however, rather than nature it is the incredible power of technology that is more likely to supply the raw material for what can be termed a characteristically contemporary sublime.

When confronted by such overwhelming phenomena our boundaries are challenged and we feel a heady mixture of fear and inspiration. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, writing in the late eighteenth century, pointed out that the experience of limitlessness the sublime describes reveals the fundamental inadequacy and lack at the heart of the 'I'. The experience surpasses any ability to represent it, to structure it through thoughts and feelings. But, argued Kant, we also end up with a clearer sense of our limitations. Later, Friedrich Nietzsche, seeking to more fully account for such a flux-like reality, took a more provocative stance, advocating a Dionysian spirit of excess in which the goal was to dissolve the ordered



and ordering self into the indivisible infinite. Indeed, a willingness to launch deep into the void which opens up when the boundaries of the self are threatened quickly became a central requirement for much of the radical arts in the modern and postmodern periods. But then awe and wonder can quickly blur into terror, giving rise to a darker aspect of the sublime experience that has always been part of its allure, when the exhilarating feeling of delight metamorphoses into a flirtation with dissolution, the 'daemonic' and death.

It is no coincidence that the concept of the sublime, and the willingness of Western thinkers and artists to explore what lies on the other side of the borderline dividing reflective consciousness from ecstatic experience, coincided with the period during which Eastern ideas began to become better known in the West and to influence its thinking. But the manner in which East and West understand the fundamentally indescribable totality of reality, and the wayward and uncontrollable emotions that are entailed, diverge.

This difference lies in what is judged to be the

caught within the nets of the sign-systems or languages deployed by human minds. Instead, we are invited to open ourselves up to a sense of absolute contingency, unpredictability, impermanence, emptiness and otherness. As a result, the fundamental insight of Oriental thought is that the human subject, the 'I' is neither limited nor distinguished by an inviolable and bounded individuality. Here is the thirteenth century Japanese Zen Buddhist monk Dogen:

To study the Way is to study oneself. To study oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to be awakened by all things. To be awakened by all things is to let body and mind of self and others fall away. Even the traces of awakening come to an end, and this traceless awakening is continued endlessly.

Sigmund Freud called the desire to abandon the illusion of the ego-self in favour of immersion in the non-self the 'Nirvana complex', seeing it as concealing an unhealthy yearning for the oblivion of death. From the point of view of Western ego-focussed thinking and its psychology, Freud

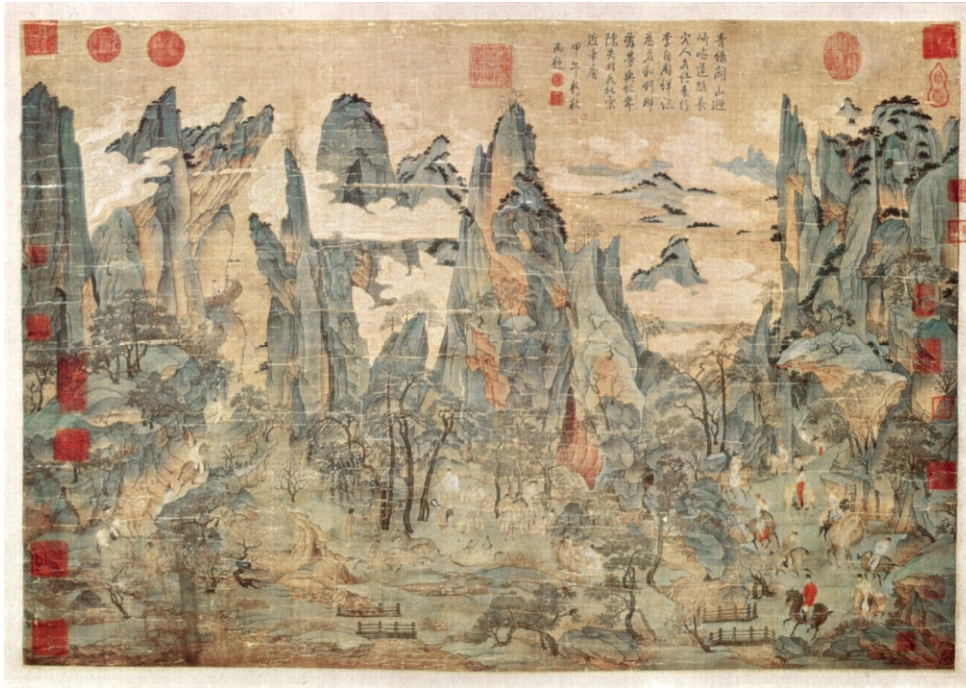
...the self exists in a state of becoming, one that knits together both the bounded and the unbounded...

ultimate meaning of the realisation that we are not separate, bounded identities. The idea that truth is not a matter of empirical observation was developed early on in Eastern thought. Much was made of the need to abandon belief in language's ability to reveal anything real. Oriental thinking steadfastly focused awareness on ontological lack or deficiency and on how we will inevitably fail to comprehend reality through our thinking.

In the Buddhist concept of non-duality, for instance, it is argued that only silence is an adequate response to ultimate reality. Zen, which drew heavily on Chinese Taoist ideas, teaches that understanding is wordless and can be transmitted only from mind to mind. The experience of reality is therefore understood to be something that cannot be

is certainly correct. But he misunderstood the fundamental insight of Oriental thinking, which is that the self exists in a state of becoming, one that knits together both the bounded and the unbounded. The self unfolds in a relational state whose identity is connective, contingent, dependent, and in process. In this way Oriental thought outlines a theory of consciousness that proposes a middle way between difference and fusion, between bounded, separate individuality, on one hand, and the boundary-less non-self immersed in the void, on the other.

As the second century Buddhist monk Nagarjuna puts it, we are torn between two impulses: "*I am me, I will never not be*" / *The longing for eternity*, and: "*I used to be, I am not any more*" / *The cut of annihilation*. But as he goes on: "*The sage avoids being and*



A shanshui (mountain-water) painting called *The Emperor Ming-huang's Journey to Shu* (copy), attributed to Li Zhaodao



Detail from *The Emperor Ming-huang's Journey to Shu*

nothingness". This is because the sage knows and feels that reality unfolds as the dynamic interplay between the two impulses, and the goal of life is to site consciousness on the threshold between being and nothingness, rather than to embrace either one at the expense of the other. This is what is implied in the Taoist concept of *ying* and *yang*, the intertwining of opposites that constitutes the *tao* and which was absorbed into Chinese Buddhism via *Ch'an* teachings and then into Korean *Seon* and Japanese *Zen*.

Importantly, such teachings emphasize that the vital energy necessary for the expanding of the self in time and space to take place originates from within the unbounded and unconstrained midst of the void. In referring to the interaction of the indistinct and the distinct, the unbounded and bounded, the Chinese use the word 'breath' - 'breath energy' or 'breath resonance'. As the French Sinologist Francois Jullien puts it, " 'Breath-energy' designates in the most general way, as a first term and even as the first term possible both that from which beings and things arise and that which animates them." It is in this 'between', Jullien writes, "through all these manifestations of vivacity and vitality, however diverse they might be, that spiritual resonance is found, even though we cannot fix it more precisely".

But how can this threshold between being and nothingness be shown? How can it be

visualized in art? One answer can be found in Chinese landscape painting. Here, differentiation and the establishment of boundaries is suggested by clearly delineated forms and by structural coherence such as through the depiction of rocks, trees, figures and compositional organisation. Meanwhile, a sense of boundary-free fusion is also conveyed through representations of things that are indistinct - clouds, mists, vague contours, undifferentiated fields of colour, minimally delineated forms and empty spaces. Success of a work was deemed to depend on the ability of the artist to bring the *yin* and the *yang* - the two contrasting elements, into living alignment. And it is out of the zones of the indistinct that the primary energy is said to come. For it is here that a sense of the unlimited the infinite - originates, as the phenomenal is freed from any restrictive, exclusive, constraining, or monopolizing aspects. But this interplay is also communicated on the level of artistic technique, in relation to the artist's physical engagement with paper or silk, brush and ink. In this way, 'breath resonance' passes through the body of the artist and into the work, and then onwards, to effect the work's viewer. ★

You can see Simon Morley's paintings and other works online at: <http://www.simonmorley.com>



A shrine of grace

Kuvalaya writes about creating a sacred space in her brand new home in Costa Rica



Kuvalaya and her mentor, Sujatin

Earlier in the year, I ran a workshop with Kasper where we explored “Practice in Everyday Life”. It was a weekend spent looking at our practice and how it supports us in everyday life. In the workshop there was space for the participants to share their practice, and to say what it meant to them, and how it supported them in their daily life. Hearing about the practice of others provided inspiration in my own life. One particular discussion that stood out for me was around Sacred Space. I found it interesting that everyone had established some sort of space for their practice. Some people had a full traditional shrine with a Buddha statue, candles, offerings and such. Some had shrines that were not overtly Buddhist, but rather a space for personal offerings and reminders. At the most simple, a single candle was lit in a meditation space. What was clear during our discussions that weekend is that our daily lives present us with any number of challenging or uplifting circumstances which we handle in the best ways we’re able, but the

formal demarcation of a space in our dwelling provides us with a much needed place of retreat. From hearing everyone’s descriptions of their own sacred spaces, it was more obvious that even that the size and arrangement is of secondary importance to the spirit of the space.

With that in mind, seven months later, packing for a move to Costa Rica, I looked at my suitcase open on the bed and the items from my shrine that sat next to it. The appropriate clothing and supplies for work had been packed, bedsheets, food and other items to help me settle into a foreign country in which I had only vague accommodation arrangements.

Considering the available space and the weight limit, I realised that my small rupa and most other things must be left behind. If I needed to, I could send for them later, I decided.

The first couple of weeks were a mixture of being extremely busy during the day and then having nothing to do in the evenings. I was still finding my feet in the city and meeting people, but on my own it was too dangerous to be out on the streets after dark (5.30pm) and so I spent the evenings alone in my apartment. To keep myself occupied, I threw myself into a lot of work-related research in the evenings. However, that work-based, auto-pilot existence was a lonely one and I realised one evening that some balance had to be restored.

Looking around my rented accommodation, still set up as it was left by the previous tenant, I realised that I hadn’t even made an effort to make my apartment feel like home. When I thought about what I could do to make it more homely my immediate thoughts went to my



shrine, the items for which sit in a pile by my bed, waiting for the opportunity to buy candles, a vase, water dish, etc. All waiting. Waiting for what?

Suddenly energised by my project for the evening, I set to work. Accompanied by the sound of rain on the tin roof I surveyed my apartment. Where to put my shrine? The bedroom seemed an obvious choice at first as there was a perfect recessed window area at the foot of the bed. I was taken with artistic visions of putting up a curtain and creating a little retreat area with a shrine, candles, flowers.....

but then back in reality I remembered that I wasn't really in a position to invest in a curtain, I had none of those objects in my little daydream and buying them would have been impractical. So I went to survey the combined kitchen, dining and sitting area. I studied the furniture that came with the apartment, rearranging it in my mind, feeling like I was trying to get the pieces from three different jigsaw puzzles to fit together to one picture.

Gradually, inspiration came. The first thing to go was the television. Taking up a significant portion of my small sitting area, it was a foreign object in my life which was never going to get used anyway (and is now acting in a more useful capacity as a shelf for spare towels in my closet). Then I moved and turned the table it was on and the two upholstered chairs until I figured out an arrangement I liked, with the chairs creating a boundary from the rest of the room and the table as the centre focal point of the room. It occurred to me how little I used the sitting area before and how much more welcoming it looks to me now without the telly as the focal point of the area.

I hung the batik wall-hanging of Buddha given to me by Sujatin above the table. A grey fleece blanket that came with the room is a perfect fit to cover the table. A red bandana from my boyfriend provided a beautiful accent. On the red square I arranged the dark wooden mala given to me as a birthday present by Dharmavidya and the green labradorite mala



Kuvalaya's new shrine

from my Sangha as a leaving gift. A wooden box found in the apartment proved to be the perfect resting place for the tiny Quan Yin rupa given to me by Modgala that used to sit near my seat in the Newcastle shrine room. A small tupperware would serve as my offering bowl and precious bottled drinking water sits to the side for the morning offering.

Kneeling in front of my shrine for the first time, I realised it was completely Other. Every item on the shrine had come to be in my possession through grace and generosity. Looking at them, I felt loved. Already, the room felt a bit more like home.

My shrine is now the focal point of the room where I eat, live and work (I did eventually manage to find some candles and a vase for flowers as well which have added to it nicely). In creating this space, the necessity of the sacred space that we discussed during the workshop those months ago really hit home for me. A physical sacred space in my life acts as a reminder. Like bookends to my day, I see it first thing in the morning before I go out to work and I see it when I return home. I see how I had been pushing my practice aside during the previous weeks, ignoring it and falling back into unhealthy mindsets. Seeing my shrine serves as a visual reminder to place the nembutsu at the centre of my life. And while there is nothing magical about the space, the separation of a physical space in my life provides me with mental space for retreat and quiet where inspiration can be heard. It is a place of refuge. ★



Extract from *Deadman*, a work in progress

Words and images by Mat Osmond



Deadman

There was a man who had been dead six thousand years.
Having been dead so long he was, naturally,
adept.
Still, he worked at it.
Day and night, perfecting death.

Deadman and hare

A long time deadman lay scheming in the dark before hare found him.

There he was, wedged into a flooded ditch, pale and waterlogged while all around the light shifted, dancing and melting on the grass.

Deadman was something out of place, the only still spot in all that movement.

Hare used her nose, she swam down and got beneath him, bringing deadman up to air. Deadman drifted slack and listless, he kept sliding off, passive as a drowned log.

So of course hare went back and got him, nudging deadman back to the surface, raising him up to breathe.

Hare had barely got him out of that, before deadman was off again:

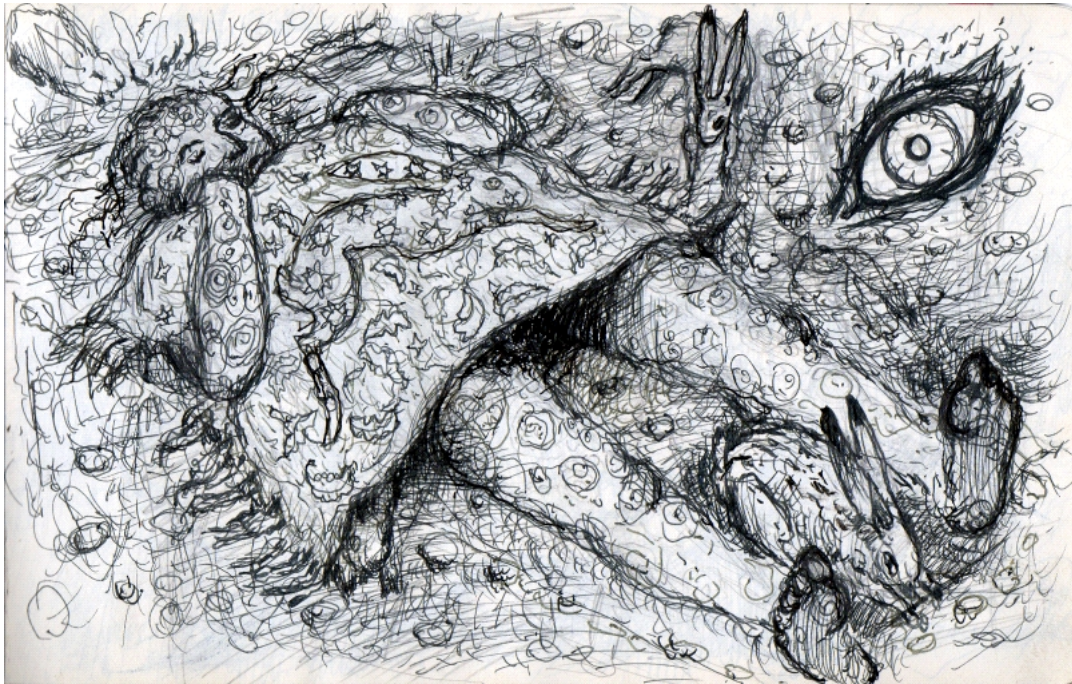
this time she found him casting about with his head in flames, thrashing and rolling, face scorched to brittle black.

Hare carried deadman back to water, and left him there to soften.

Next hare found him blown on the wind, a desiccated husk frozen stiff in the high cloud. Hare spooled a nimble thread and drew deadman in, reeling him back to earth.

Again and again hare brought deadman back.
Again and again deadman drifted away, dying over and over.





Deadman spores

Deep in the forest, deadman came upon a tree
and he crept under it, well out of hare's sight.
He made up his mind that this time she wouldn't interfere.

Deadman had a plan: from now on, he would not drink.
Gripping his mouth shut, deadman focused
on a world without infection.

This one took hare a bit longer; she had to handle the situation carefully.
Deadman sat as dry as driftwood, stiff and triumphant
and stupider than ever.

Hare waited for dark. A creeping mist, she stole down on deadman
as he sat there shutting his face. At first light, deadman was nowhere to be seen
so thickly had hare suspended herself between the trees.

Deadman locked his face, tighter than ever. He would not drink.

Even as deadman set his jaw, his fickle skin betrayed him
gratefully soaking up the dew. Recolonised by his old disease
deadman tried once more to stop, but weakly now; the game was up.

By morning hare had furred his whole body white. Deadman couldn't even tell
where he stopped, and the silent fog began. He felt himself spread into
the teeming chorus of the forest, his loosened skin dispersing through the trees.



What's on guide

Winter events in the Amida world

BODHI RETREAT

4th December - 8th December

The Buddhist House, Narborough

This is the most important event in the Amida year. Each day there will be Pureland Buddhist practice plus special events, including ordination ceremonies. For the full schedule see <http://amidatrust.ning.com/events/bodhi-retreat>

BODHI RETREAT (CANADA)

10th December

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

Annual celebration of Buddha's enlightenment. Contact amidamosaic@gmail.com

CRAFTWORK

10th December 2pm - 6pm

Amida London

Handmade gifts for all the family. Join Modgala for afternoon tea and to buy gifts that raise funds for our projects in India.

BOOK STUDY

11th January

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

BELONGING AND ALIENATION DAY RETREAT

14th January 10am - 4pm

Amida London

In this modern individualistic world many people feel, and sometimes are, alienated and lonely. Many things underlie this alienation. In this retreat we will gently explore this together. How can we feel a greater sense of belonging and community? In Buddhist terms what is Sangha? How can we be a supportive, loving Sangha? Participants of all faiths (and none) are welcome to explore this and come together in our wonderfully diverse Sangha.

With Sr. Modgala

**ESTABLISHING A SACRED PRACTICE**

15th - 20th January

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

A five day residential retreat at the Amida Mosaic Centre.

PURELAND BUDDHIST RETREAT DAY

22nd January 10am - 4pm

The Buddhist House

A day of chanting and sharing in the Nembutsu way. Take time out of your busy schedule to enjoy time to breathe, relax, call out to the Buddha of Infinite light and life and learn a little about Pureland Buddhism.

With Aramati and Fiona Robyn

FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE IN OTHER CENTRED APPROACH

10th - 11th February

Ghent, Belgium

For the first time Amida Trust is offering The Foundation Certificate in Other-Centred Approach outside the UK. From Autumn 2011 it will be possible to complete the certificate in Ghent, Belgium. This weekend the subject is **Therapeutic Relationship in Other-Centred Methods**. For full details of the course dates: <http://amidatrust.typepad.com/psychology/belgium-course-calendar.html>

With Caroline Brazier

BUDDHIST PRACTICE & COFFEE

12th February

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

BOOK STUDY

15th February

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

ILLNESS AND DISABILITY DAY RETREAT

18th February

Amida London

Illness and disability happen to us all in varying ways as we grow older and affect us to varying extents as we live our lives, yet they are increasingly under critical scrutiny within our society. A day of personal sharing and affirmation, as we investigate how we ourselves are affected by the physical processes of living and aging.

With Padmaghosa Tony Danford

THE FEELING BUDDHA SEMINAR

15th February

Galicia, close to Santiago de Compostela, Spain



ZEN THERAPY: AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

17th - 19th February

Galicia, close to Santiago de Compostela, Spain

In an easily accessible way, this workshop will provide a rare opportunity to learn about the central principles, models and methods of Buddhist psychology. Contact: Sol, sgarcialvarez@gmail.com

SPRING COURSE PSYCHOTHERAPY BLOCK

18th - 26th February

The Buddhist House, Narborough

18th - 19th: Weekend One: small worlds: sand tray work and projective methods in therapy.

20th - 23rd: Four Day Section: exploring a myth: The Sun and the Ocean.

24th: Day Seminar: Creativity in Other-Centred Methods

25th - 26th: Weekend Two: Grief Work and Embodied Experience

STEPPING ONTO THE SPIRITUAL PATH

25th February, 9:30am - 12:30pm

Malvern Sangha

A retreat morning, thinking about each of our spiritual journeys. Followed by a bring and share lunch.

STORIES OF BUDDHIST SAINTS AND SAGES

25th February, 10am

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

A retreat day at Amida Mosaic.

PRACTICE AND POTLUCK

26th February, 4:30pm

Mosaic Retreat Centre, London, Ontario

POETRY READING

3rd March

Amida London

David Brazier will read from his poetry and invite others to join in and share their work too. A pleasant social evening with verse. We might even include one or two spots for impromptu group composition.

THE SPIRIT THAT CREATES

4th March

Amida London

Spirituality is often framed within traditional lines. A living tradition, however, is also a spring board for creativity. The creative impulse and spiritual inspiration are closely related phenomena. Appreciation of beauty opens the eyes of the spirit and spiritual awakening makes the world beautiful. Nowadays, however, many people are not tied to any particular spiritual or aesthetic tradition and must search for meaning upon an emptier canvas. In this day workshop we will explore the relationship between spirit, liberation and creativity.

With Dharmavidya



VERNAL EQUINOX WALK

18th March 2pm - 4pm

Amida London

Vernal Equinox Walk through Gillespie Park Local Nature Reserve. The seasons turn and spring is already underway in our gardens and nature reserves. Recently retired Nature Reserve Ranger and member of The Amida Shu and London (Sukhavati) Sangha, Richard Meyers will be taking folks on a guided walk just prior to the Vernal Equinox, through a beautiful nature reserve in the heart of London.

With wildflowers and bird-life as our main focus we will be taking a leisurely stroll around the reserve so don't worry if you're not as fit as you once were!

Meet at the main entrance to the park - turn right upon leaving Arsenal Underground Station - metal gates 100 yards on the right. Free event.

THE REAL MEANING OF MINDFULNESS

24th March

Amida Belgium

Mindfulness has become a popular concept that is increasingly widely used. However the essence of Buddhism is not a technique, but rather an attitude to life, an attitude that encompasses more than the present moment, more than oneself and more than what presents itself to consciousness. Mindfulness is a deeper and broader matter than we are often led to think. The mind that Buddha has in mind is something very big indeed. <http://www.amidalondon.org.uk/>

With Dharmavidya

TEN DIRECTIONS: CERTIFICATE IN OTHER-CENTRED ENVIRONMENTALLY BASED THERAPIES

5th -11th April

Amida France

Learning on this programme takes the form of a ten point wheel. In the work we will visit and revisit the ten dimensions of the therapeutic process. Each dimension consists of an aspect of the environmentally based work, and is itself grounded in other-centred concepts, which have both theoretical and methodological implications. See: <http://amidatruster.typepad.com/france/ten-directions-practicalities.html>

With Caroline Brazier

COMPASSION & FELLOW FEELING RETREAT

From the evening of 13th April, to the morning of 15th April

Milan

This meeting will be concerned with the nature of love and compassion as the core of what spiritual practice means. Contact Sumaya at The Buddhist House for more details.

With Dharmavidya

Event details are subject to change. For an up to date list of events see online:

<http://amidatruster.ning.com/events>

or contact sumaya@amidatruster.com

For contact details for all events and Amida Centres see next page.



Contact Amida

UNITED KINGDOM

The Buddhist House is host to courses and retreats throughout the year.

The Buddhist House
12 Coventry Road
Narborough
Leicestershire
LE19 2GR
UK

Telephone: 0116 286 7476
courses@amidatrust.com
www.amidatrust.com

Amida London is the office of the head of the Amida Order. It hosts regular day retreats and other events.

Sukhavati
21 Sussex Way
London N7 6RT

Telephone: 0207 263 2183
modgala@amidatrust.com
www.amidalondon.org.uk

Amida Newcastle has regular weekly meetings in Gosforth.

sujatin@gmail.com
http://lotusinthemud.typepad.com/amida_newcastle/

Amida Sheffield have weekly meetings

Telephone: 0114 272 4290
amidasheffield@blueyonder.co.uk
<http://pureland.wordpress.com>

Amida Malvern have weekly & monthly meetings in Malvern.

Telephone: 01684 572 444
kaspalita@amidatrust.com
www.malvernsangha.co.uk

Amida Nuneaton have weekly meetings.

Telephone: 07971 387 872

EUROPE

Amida France is our retreat centre in central France set in 30 beautiful acres of woodland.

Amida France
La Ville au Roi
18210 Bessais le Fromental
Cher, France

Telephone +33 (0)2 48 60 70 19
courses@amidatrust.com
<http://amidatrust.typepad.com/france/>

Amida Belgium has regular meetings, with a retreat open to newcomers once a year.

<http://www.namoamidabu.be/>

WORLDWIDE

Amida USA & Amida Hawai'i

The Amida USA is a non-profit church based in Hawai'i created to further the spread and practice of Amida-shu Pureland Buddhism.

<http://www.amidausa.org/>

Amida Mosaic (Ontario, Canada)

The Amida Mosaic Sangha is a community of spiritual friends. Amida Mosaic Sangha activities are held in London Ontario under the leadership of Prajnatarā T. Bryant, a Gankonin with the Amida Order.

amidamosaic@gmail.com
<http://amidamosaic.com>

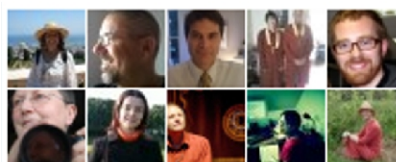
Online Sangha



Friends of Amida

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<http://amidatrust.ning.com>