ADA EXHIBITION TEXTS

Endless Knot: Struggle and Healing in the Buddhist World

Endless Knot: Struggle and Healing in the Buddhist World is organized by BAMPFA staff and guest curated by Yi Yi Mon (Rosaline) Kyo, assistant professor of art and Chinese studies, Davidson College, with BAMPFA Associate Curator Elaine Y. Yau and intern Guanhong (Andy) Liu.

The global spread of Buddhism has resulted in art as varied as the countries, languages, and cultures that make up the diverse continent of Asia and the broader Buddhist realm. *Endless Knot: Struggle and Healing in the Buddhist World* strives to illustrate these diverse histories and entanglements. Made by artists from the second to the twenty-first century from East, South, and Southeast Asia, as well as the United States, the artworks gathered here prompt us to contemplate the interconnectedness of the corporeal world that traverses time and space.

Endless Knot looks at how Buddhist practitioners and those living in the Buddhist world throughout time have understood dependent arising, the simple yet profound idea that all things are dependent on other things. The endless knot represents the idea of an endless cycle of existence (*saṃsāra*), which leads to suffering, yet also points to

the means of escaping suffering to reach enlightenment (nirvāna). As one of the core tenets of Buddhism, the concept prompts practitioners to think through their individual actions (karma) of body, speech, and mind, along with the sequence of events they will trigger. Struggles leading to suffering can arise through both internal and external causes, and as the exhibition presents, the process of reflection and healing can come from a variety of methods—some linked directly to Buddhist practices and others influenced by Buddhist philosophy.

The first of the exhibition's three sections, "The Ever-Shifting World," highlights the consequences of geopolitics, which can create conditions of struggle, yet at times offers potential for novel ways of understanding the world and exchanging ideas. The second section, "Karmic Formations," concentrates on artists'

explorations of karma, the root of individual circumstances, and the transmission of Buddhist thought. Finally, “Struggle and Healing” explores how everyday people in the Buddhist world have sought to alleviate suffering and bring stability to their lives.

The Ever-Shifting World

Image makers strive to make sense of the world around them through a multitude of mediums. Compelled explicitly or implicitly by the Buddhist idea of causes and effects, artists contend with the constantly changing world around them. The groupings in this section of the exhibition highlight how past actions and karmic ties have become the basis for present circumstances. Here artists use Buddhist visual culture or thought to come to terms with unexpected encounters and circumstances and, in the case of contemporary Asian American artists' works, to contend with the rippling effects of war, colonialism, and political struggles.

Binh Danh

United States, born Vietnam, 1977

Study for Metempsychosis

2005

Chlorophyll and resin

BAMPFA collection, bequest of Anne L. McGrew
2012.36.1

Binh Danh uses chlorophyll and light in a photosynthetic process to recover images of people who went missing during the American-Vietnam War. According to the artist, the leaves “contain the residue of the Vietnam War: bombs, blood, sweat, tears, and metals,” while the deceased from the war have been “incorporated into the landscape of Vietnam during the cycles of birth, life, and death.” The term *metempsychosis* in the title refers to the migration and rebirth of souls into a different form. Danh’s process-based, material transformation captures the transmutation of

both the national landscape and the people of Vietnam, while pulling from Buddhist ideas about rebirth and karmic causation.

Yong Soon Min

United States, born South Korea, 1953

Strangers to Ourselves

2004

Single-channel video; color, sound; 7:54 mins.

Editor: Koh Byoung-ok; sound synthesizer mix: Koh Byoung-ok; actor: Allan deSouza

Courtesy of the artist

Strangers to Ourselves takes its title from a book by Julia Kristeva that explores the state of being a foreigner in a country not one's own. In the opening frames, the artist has several works—Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*; Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*; and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*—literally "on her mind" before they topple over and float down a waterway. The video visualizes the way that these postcolonial theorists' works have shaped the artist's thoughts

and approaches to art production. As Yong Soon Min explained, her own passport joins the mix of floating text, as it “symbolically facilitates bodies as well as ideas to become diasporic.” The artist often creates works that comment on the state of being Asian American and the impact of geopolitics—in particular, the proxy war on the Korean Peninsula backed by the United States and Soviet Union—on her life’s trajectory.

Sopheap Pich

United States, born Cambodia, 1971

Buddha

2010

Ink on paper

Collection of Kalim Winata and Randy Wilk

This print, based on Sopheap Pich's 2009 rattan sculptural work *Buddha 2*, shows a disintegrating Buddha similar to the sculptures the artist saw as a child during the regime of the Khmer Rouge (1975–79) in Cambodia. While pointing to political events, the transparent figure also embodies Buddhist concepts of impermanence (everything changes) and nonduality (all of the world is interconnected).

The Khmer Rouge, also known as the Communist Party of Kampuchea, gradually gained power through the support of the North Vietnamese Army

and Chinese Communist Party in the late 1960s. Because of the destabilization of governments resulting from the Cold War's devastating proxy warfare in Southeast Asia, the Khmer Rouge won the Cambodian Civil War in 1975.

Imperial Portrait *Thangka* of the Fifth Dalai Lama

China, Qing dynasty, 17th century

Embroidered silk

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.1

As indicated by the Chinese characters at the bottom, this intricately embroidered imperial portrait *thangka* of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–1682), was commissioned by the contemporary Qing prince Aison Gioro Shuose (1629–1655), whose father was the first emperor of the Qing dynasty, Hong Taiji. The Fifth Dalai Lama, also known as The Great Fifth, was the first of the Dalai Lamas to officially visit the Qing court in Beijing in 1653.

Just as the Ming emperors of China fostered relationships with the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the Qing emperors

established close ties with the Gelug sect. These historical ties, starting in the Tang dynasty, would later become China's reason for laying claim to ethnically Tibetan territories after 1949.

Frieze of Nāga Rāja

Densatil, Tibet, 15th century

Gilt bronze

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.37

Figure of Nāga Rāja

Densatil, Tibet, 15th century

Gilt bronze

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.36

These gilt bronze figures of the Serpent King, dating from the fifteenth century, were part of stupas (burial structures holding sacred relics) that stood more than ten feet tall and were constructed out of gilt copper. The remote Densatil monastery—founded in the late twelfth century by followers of the Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo (1110–1170), the leader of one of the schools in the Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist sect—was renowned for its special stupa type, which held the sacred remains of the monastery's deceased abbots (heads of the monastery).

The stupas of the Densatil monastery were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). During this tumultuous period,

teenage revolutionaries were encouraged to attack the “Four Olds” (old ideas, culture, customs, and habits), resulting in the destruction of many religious institutions.

Thangka of the Fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shekpa, Meeting with the Ming Yongle Emperor

China, Ming dynasty, c. 15th century

Opaque pigments and gold on textile

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2009.8

Since the 1950s, evidence of priest-patron relationships between Tibetan lamas (spiritual leaders) and Chinese emperors—like that presented in this *thangka*—has been used by the contemporary Chinese state to lay claim to ethnically Tibetan territories in the northern Himalayas. The Fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shekpa (1384–1415), met the Ming Yongle Emperor, Zhu Di (1360–1424), in Nanjing when the emperor issued him an invitation shortly after ascending the throne. The Karmapa is the leader of the Karma-Kagyu school of the Kagyu sect within Tibetan Buddhism. While

in Nanjing, the Fifth Karmapa performed a universal salvation prayer for the emperor's parents. The artists who made this *thangka* used hieratic scale (a method of indicating the significance of figures through size)—with the Fifth Karmapa depicted much larger than the Ming emperor—to indicate the dynamics of their relationship.

Sakyamuni with Sixteen Elders (Arhats)

Eastern Tibet, 18th century

Opaque pigments and gold on textile

BAMPFA collection, gift of the Estate of Mark Levy
2021.32.4

Arhats, Buddhists who have gained knowledge about the true nature of the world and achieved enlightenment (nirvāna), are free from the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). The Buddha Śākyamuni, the central figure in this painting, is often depicted with sixteen arhats, his disciples, who have vowed to stay in this world until the coming of the next buddha. The subjects of this painting, which was made for veneration, are identifiable through the accoutrements held in their hands. The attendants below Śākyamuni, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, were two of his

closest disciples, emphasizing the lineage connection in the dissemination of Buddhist teachings.

Attributed to Chen Hongshou

China, 1599–1652

Luohans (Arhats)

1615–52

Handscroll: ink and color on silk

BAMPFA collection, museum purchase
1976.17

Most likely painted by an artist influenced by Chen Hongshou, who was well known for the exaggerated facial features in his paintings of historical and religious figures, this work's style suits the depiction of legendary and fantastical Buddhist figures of South Asian origins. Unlike the nearby *thangka* painting *Śākyamuni with Sixteen Elders (Arhats)*, this ink painting of arhats, or *luohans*, reflects the Chinese artist's visualization of foreign "others," while following the Chinese convention of making figure paintings on long handscrolls with minimal background details. Careful

placement of the figures rather than the background elements suggests spatial cohesiveness. The artist differentiated the arhats from the multiple surrounding attendants and disciples by adding a radiant glow around their heads and using hieratic scale.

Yun-Fei Ji

United States, born China, 1963

The Three Gorges Dam Migration

2009

Handscroll: woodcut; ed. 45/108

BAMPFA collection, gift of the Elliott Galleries (Flora and Lisa Bloom)
2015.8

Yun-Fei Ji, an ink painter recognized for his talent at an early age, graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from China's Central Academy of Fine Arts while still a teenager. Ji noted how his travel along the Silk Road, especially seeing the Buddhist paintings at the Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, influenced his approach to narrative representation.

While Chinese ink paintings generally consist of a balance between voids and presences, the surfaces of Ji's scroll abound

with washes and details, layered on one another to contradict the serenity expected in an ink handscroll, and instead present the uncanny, surreal scenes of a world out of balance and people displaced as a result of the Three Gorges Dam construction in the 2000s.

Li Huasheng

China, 1944–2018

Cormorant Fishermen

20th century

Album leaf: ink and color on paper

BAMPFA collection, gift of James H. Soong
2021.37.4

During his travels to Sichuan in search of an ink painting teacher, Li Huasheng was exposed to the rhythms of Tibetan monasteries, which greatly influenced his later abstract works. Though he received formal training in Socialist Realist painting—a dominant style during the Maoist era (1949–76) in the People's Republic of China—Li experimented with ink painting on his own by studying historical works.

Like his mentor, Sichuan artist Chen Zizhuang (1913–1976), Li used

brushstrokes sparingly, leaving most of the paper untouched to let viewers draw their own conclusions. The tradition of using voids and abbreviation of forms greatly influenced Modernist painters across the globe, especially in Europe and North America.

Ad Reinhardt

United States, 1914–1967

Selection from Portfolio of Ten Screen Prints

1966

Silkscreen

BAMPFA collection, gift of Donald Magnin Fund Foundation
1971.70.1–2, 5–8

Ad Reinhardt, born and active in New York, drew from his knowledge and appreciation of Chinese painting, as well as Daoist and Zen Buddhist philosophies, to explore the use of voids and abstraction. After seeing the first major Chinese painting exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1954, Reinhardt began to solely create his black paintings. Drawing from what he saw as the abstract approach in landscape painting—in which standardized forms of mountains, rocks, and waterways could be

reconfigured in numerous ways—Reinhardt created geometric, standardized grids as the backbone of his compositions, which he then layered with black paint. The almost invisible abstract structure prompts viewers into a state of meditative looking, asking us to reconsider assumptions about the visible world.

Al Wong

United States, born 1939

Square Burn

2017

Paper with burn marks

BAMPFA collection, purchase made possible through the Boyce Family Endowment Fund
2017.67

Al Wong, a San Francisco native whose art ranges from film installations to works on paper, used burn marks in this work to suggest a square that could be either forming or disintegrating. Challenging our perception to see both the form and the burn marks alluding to a void, the work dismantles presumed binary distinctions. A student of the Sōtō Zen monk Shunryu Suzuki—the author of the seminal book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*—Wong has practiced Zazen, Zen Buddhist meditation, for decades.

While Wong took a different approach than Ad Reinhardt and Ōtagaki Rengetsu did in their nearby works, his material manipulation of paper to create an abstract shape still encourages us to question assumptions about the reality of the visible world.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu
Japan, 1791–1875

Dream of the Butterfly

19th century

Hanging scroll: ink on paper

BAMPFA collection, gift of Sean Thackrey
2019.51.10

Ōtagaki Rengetsu, born to a courtesan and a scion of a noble family, was adopted by Ōtagaki Teruhisa, a samurai who worked at Chion'in, a Pure Land Buddhist temple. Unlike other women artists, a substantial amount was written about Rengetsu during her lifetime, including an autobiography that she added to a letter to her friend Tomioka Tessai (whose work is also in this exhibition). Though ordained a nun of the Jōdo-shū branch of Pure Land Buddhism, Rengetsu later settled at Jinkō-in, a center for Shingon Buddhism, one of the esoteric forms of Buddhism in East Asia.

In *Dream of the Butterfly*, Rengetsu referenced the story of Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi (late fourth century BCE), who dreamt he was a butterfly and suddenly awoke to discover he was not. He then pondered whether he was in the butterfly's dream, reversing the assumed supremacy of human consciousness and experience over those of other sentient beings. Much like Al Wong's *Square Burn*, Rengetsu's work prompts us to question our assumptions about reality and the self.

The *waka* poem inscription reads:

うかれきて
花野のつゆに
ねぶるなり
こはたが夢の
こてふ成らん

Fluttering merrily and sleeping in the dew
in a field of flowers,
in whose dream
is this butterfly?

(Translated by Kuniko Brown in *Black Robe White Mist: Art of the Japanese Buddhist Nun Rengetsu*)

Karmic Formations

Different artistic approaches and object histories explore the interconnections of all sentient beings through actions (karma) of body, speech, and mind resulting in karmic causations. Whether they are the consequence of actions in previous lives or the present life, Buddhism stresses that one's current circumstances (and even the makeup of a person) are ever-changing and impermanent. Virtuous, mindful acts—such as generosity and compassion—lead one away from negative thoughts. Along with artistic depictions of karmic consequences, several of the works in this section capture the importance of interconnections between teachers, disciples, and compatriots along the journey toward enlightenment.

Do Ho Suh

South Korea, born 1962

Karma Juggler

From *2004: Six by Four* (Exit Art benefit print portfolio)
2004

Archival inkjet pigment on enhanced Somerset satin paper

BAMPFA collection, gift of Charles and Naomie Kremer
2007.29.3.6

Born and raised in South Korea and currently splitting his time between New York, London, and Seoul, Do Ho Suh creates installations, sculptures, film, and drawings. In this print, an abundance of swirls coalesces into a human form, pointing to the importance of past actions and consequences (karma) in the constitution of one's current state. Suh has also explored the importance of cause and

effect, especially in terms of interpersonal relationships, in his larger sculptural installations.

Wheel of Life (Bhavacakra)

Tibet, 18th–19th century

Colors on cotton, blue cotton, mount, and wooden hanging rod

BAMPFA collection, bequest of G. Eleanore Murray 2004.20.5

A common visual teaching tool located at the entrance of Tibetan Buddhist temples and monasteries, the Wheel of Life illustrates *saṃsāra*, the cyclical process of life, death, and rebirth. Here the Lord of Death, Yama, holds spotted frogs instead of grasping the wheel directly, which is unique. Please see the diagram for descriptions of the scenes within the concentric circles.

Vajrabhairava

Tibet, 19th–20th century

Bronze, gold, orange pigment, turquoise, coral, consecration materials, and wood

BAMPFA collection, bequest of G. Eleanore Murray 2004.20.105

Vajrabhairava, the wrathful form of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, is recognizable by his buffalo head and the implements in his hands, including a *vajra* (a ritual implement representing method and wisdom) and curved knife. Wrathful deities perform certain roles in Tibetan Buddhist ritual practice, such as helping in purification rituals and meditation or producing wisdom; they are not meant to be feared by initiated practitioners.

In a *yab-yum* embrace with his consort, Vajravetali, the deity is presented here in a “circular face” configuration, with the nine heads of Vajrabhairava arranged with

three on either side of the face, while two additional faces are stacked on top. The embrace, along with the *vajra* and bell, represents the balanced combination of wisdom and compassion needed to achieve nirvāna.

Enshrined Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā*

Sculpture: Central Java, Indonesia, c. 11th century;
wood shrine: Myanmar, 18th–19th century

Gilt bronze, wood, and cloth

BAMPFA collection, gift of the Estate of Mark Levy 2021.32.8

Though this Buddha figure dates from eleventh-century Java, Indonesia, it was encased in a lacquered wooden shrine from present-day Myanmar in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Documented trade between Myanmar and its Southeast Asian neighbors dates to the beginning of the sixteenth century, when rice was shipped from Pegu (present-day Myanmar) to Melaka (present-day Malaysia) and Sumatra (present-day Indonesia). By the end of the eighteenth century, Dutch traders, who had a firm colonial foothold in present-day

Indonesia, had also established factories at Cape Negrais and Bhamo along the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. Trade allowed for not only the exchange of goods, but also the transmission of ideas and art objects. The term *Negrais* is a European transliteration of the Burmese *Nagariz*, the term for the Nāga Rāja or Serpent King (see the Densatil Nāga Rāja figures on view in the previous section).

Figure of Prajñāpāramitā

Tibet, 15th century

Gilt bronze

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.31

The goddess Prajñāpāramitā is the embodiment of the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, the Perfection of Wisdom sutra. In Sanskrit, *prajñā* means “wisdom” and *pāramitā* means “perfection.” As in most representations of Prajñāpāramitā, two of the goddess’s hands are in the *dharmacakra mudrā*, with interlocking index finger and thumb over her heart, representing the Buddha’s teaching. Her two lower hands are resting in her lap in the *dhyāna mudrā*, or meditation gesture. In addition to symbolizing endless cycles of rebirth and dependent arising, the endless knot also symbolizes the balanced combination of wisdom and compassion that can lead to nirvāna.

Tsherin Sherpa

United States and Nepal, born Nepal, 1968

Untitled

2017

Diptych: platinum leaf, gold leaf, acrylic, and ink on canvas

The KaoWilliams Family Collection

Tsherin Sherpa, a contemporary Tibetan American artist born in Nepal, studied traditional *thangka* painting techniques from his father, the master Urgen Dorje. Combining premodern painting techniques and iconography with contemporary images, especially of children, the artist comments on the chaos of contemporary life. Though the saccharine colors of the billowing clouds and multiple arms of a central deity draw us in with the promise of an orderly and readily intelligible *thangka* painting, the dripping paint and black-and-white depiction of young people at the bottom jarringly pull

us back to the contemporary world. This conflict encourages us to think about the fleeting happiness of some of the children and the precarity of others, especially the figure at bottom center, who holds a garbage bag over his shoulder.

Takashi Murakami

Japan, born 1962

Eka Danpi (Eka's Amputation)

2017

Woven paper, four-color offset printing, silver background, and cold foil stamp; ed. 104/300

Collection of Kalim Winata and Randy Wilk

This print tells the famous story of Eka, who, after unsuccessful attempts to convince Bodhidharma—the first patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism—to take him as a pupil, cut off his left arm to express his determination. The print focuses on an amputated hand on a handkerchief held by Eka, emphasizing this rather unsettling subject instead of depicting the whole story.

Takashi Murakami took inspiration from the fifteenth-century Japanese master Sesshū Tōyō's *Huike Offering His Arm to Bodhidharma*, which shows a similar hand

on a handkerchief. By adding colorful nail polish to his Chan Buddhist subject, Murakami befuddles viewers' perception of the subject's gender, further challenging the audience with the notion of self and emptiness in the twenty-first century.

Junggwang
Korea, 1935–2002

Bodhidharma (Dalma)

1981

Hanging scroll: ink on paper

Lent by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, gift from the artist through the San Francisco/Seoul Sister City Committee

Born Go Chang-ryul, the artist took his Buddhist name, Junggwang, in 1960 and became a monk at Tongdosa Temple. Often called the “mad monk” for his eccentric behavior, Junggwang used unconventional artistic practices that paralleled his preferred painting subject—Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Bodhidharma is famous for his Buddhist practice based in meditation as opposed to reading scriptures. He taught several disciples, including Eka (as seen in the

nearby work by Takashi Murakami), the method of Zen meditation.

Just as Bodhidharma veered from acceptable or traditional practice, Junggwang followed his own path in his painting and poetry. Though stripped of his religious position in 1979, Junggwang gained international notoriety after UC Berkeley's own Lewis R. Lancaster dubbed him the "Picasso of Korea."

Stephen Addiss
United States, 1935–2022

Tea

2005

Ink on scorched paper

BAMPFA collection, gift of Stuart Katz in honor of Stephen Addiss
2020.48.3

A scholar of Japanese painting and calligraphy, Stephen Addiss experimented with calligraphy, music, and poetry (among other creative endeavors) during his career. In Addiss's calligraphy, the relationship between voids and presences—both inside and outside each stroke—adds a dynamic tension to the simple character for *tea*.

Throughout his life, Addiss fostered a large network of scholars, artists, musicians, and art connoisseurs, making connections that led to experiments with materials he

researched, including the paper upon which this calligraphic work was created. The smoked paper, made with a process developed by Ray Kass during a session at Mountain Lake Workshop—a center for artistic, scholarly, and religious exchange in Virginia—points to the interpersonal connections that made this work possible.

Unidentified artist

Japan, 19th century–early 20th century

Tomioka Tessai

Japan, 1837–1924

Tea Cup with Bodhidharma

late 19th–early 20th century

Ceramic and handmade Raku ceramic with ink painting

BAMPFA collection, gift of Sheila and Geoffrey Keppel
2008.4.1

While the maker of this hand-modeled Raku ware tea bowl remains unknown, the dynamic calligraphy and painting of Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, are by the renowned artist Tomioka Tessai. Together, the cup and calligraphy celebrate rituals centered on tea that were part of monastic life and considered vital for both bodily and

spiritual health. The *kintsugi*, the golden joinery of the fissure over the rim of this tea bowl, manifests the Japanese Buddhist philosophy of celebrating an object not for its perfected beauty, but for its imperfections.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu
Japan, 1791–1875

Untitled (Calligraphy)

19th century

Ink, color, and gold on paper; three pieces of paper and envelope

BAMPFA collection, gift of Sean Thackrey
2018.83.18–20

Ōtagaki Rengetsu (see *Dream of the Butterfly* nearby) is known as the foremost nineteenth-century poet of *waka* (a genre of verse with a five-seven-five-seven-seven syllable pattern), an ink painter, a skilled calligrapher, and a prolific potter who inscribed poems onto ceramic tea and sake wares. In 1823, after the tragic deaths of many beloved family members, she took the Buddhist sobriquet Rengetsu (Lotus Moon) and created art for the remainder of her life. She became an intimate friend of and mentor to Tomioka Tessai.

Struggle and Healing

While advanced practitioners—such as Bodhidharma (mentioned in the previous section)—pursued prolonged or esoteric Buddhist training, everyday practitioners often turned to the worship of deities to provide tangible stability in their lives through longevity, good fortune, and health. Several of the objects in this section derive from lay Buddhist practices across Asia that have absorbed folk beliefs, deities from foreign regions, and new types of knowledge. Ironically, these pursuits for assuring tangible rewards run counter to Buddhist goals of accepting the impermanence of one's state of being and cultivating detachment. By contrast, other contemporary works embrace Buddhist teachings about the inevitability of change.

Goddess Tyche

Gandhara, 3rd century

Gray schist

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.4

Tyche, the goddess of good fortune, appeared during the Hellenistic age and was seen as a protector of cities, especially those established in new colonies by Grecian settlers in present-day southern Italy. Unsurprisingly, Tyche also appears in the Gandharan region (present-day northwestern Pakistan, extending into present-day Afghanistan), an area greatly influenced by Indo-Greek aesthetics. At the crossroads of trade routes that connected the Parthian empire to Indo-Greek cities in present-day Afghanistan, and extending its trade to Central Asia, South Asia, and China, the Gandharan region witnessed cultural and religious hybridity. Figures such

as Tyche were popular for the fortunes they could rain upon their worshippers.

Fortune-Telling Book

Myanmar, 19th century

Accordion book: ink and colors on paper

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.5

This divination book from present-day Myanmar (formerly Burma) captures the intermingling of local folk and Buddhist beliefs that shaped how everyday people attempted to create stability and overcome struggles. The written text divines the characteristics and futures of people born in specific years. For example, on this page, the text indicates that people born in the Burmese year 1142 will be extremely religious, with monks and priests approaching them for religious donations. These religious people will contribute whatever they can in order to ensure a good rebirth in the next cycle of *saṃsāra*.

Illustrated Medical Manual

Thailand, 19th century

Accordion book: ink and color on paper

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.23

King Rama III (1788–1851) of Thailand established royal medical schools at Wat Phrachetuphon (Wat Pho) and Wat Ratcha Orasaram, both Buddhist temples in Bangkok. Beginning in 1831, he also ordered the compilation of medical treatises like this one to be used for teaching medical practitioners. Wat Pho still administers the Thai Traditional Medical School today. These manuals reflect the holistic approach in traditional Thai medicine, which considers the physical, spiritual, and mental well-being of the patient.

Tsongkhapa, Avaoliteshvara, and Amitayus

Tibet, 18th century

Colors on silk, with brocade, wood, and silver knobs

BAMPFA collection, bequest of G. Eleanore Murray 2004.20.44

The central figure, Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa (1357–1419), emerges on a cloud from the heart of Maitreya Buddha seated in Tushita heaven. Tsongkhapa, the founder of the powerful Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism, appears in his iconic form, wearing a yellow hat and orange patchwork robe, and with hands in the *dharmacakra mudrā* (teaching gesture) above his heart and holding the stems of lotus flowers that bloom on either side of him. Because Tsongkhapa is the central figure of the Gelug, this image would have been used for veneration by practitioners within the sect.

Amitayus, recognizable because his hands are set in the *dhyāna mudrā* (meditation gesture) holding the long life vase, sits to the right of Tsongkhapa. Below Amitayus are White Tara and Vijaya; together, this triad is known as the Three Deities of Longevity.

Figure of the Medicine Buddha, Baishajyaguru

Tibet, c. 14th century

Gilt bronze

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.6

Baishajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha, is an important deity for medical practitioners in the Himalayas. He is typically recognizable by his blue form, as well as the alms bowl and the myrobalan fruit—an important herbal ingredient in Ayurvedic medicine—in his hands. Here, the artist hinted at the deity's identity through his blue-tinted hair, and the other attributes are missing.

Figure of Amitayus

Nepal, 17th–18th century

Gilt repoussé

On long-term loan from a private collection
EL.1.2007.10

One of the Three Deities of Longevity, Amitayus (Immeasurable Life) is usually depicted with two hands held in *dhyāna mudrā* (meditation gesture), upon which lays a long life vase that holds the nectar of immortality. Amitayus is often grouped together with White Tara and Vijaya, composing the Three Deities of Longevity (as seen in the nearby Tibetan *thangka* painting).

Marie-Dolma Chophel

France and United States, born France, 1984

Resilience

2022

Single-channel video; color, sound; 5:20 mins.
Courtesy of the artist

French Tibetan artist Marie-Dolma Chophel was born in Châtenay-Malabry, France, and earned her Master of Fine Arts from the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Chophel currently lives and works in New York, creating works on paper, paintings, and videos. In *Resilience*, a pendulum is trapped inside ice and black ink, unable to swing freely until the ice finally melts. As Chophel explained, "*Resilience* invites the viewer to reflect on our capacity to overcome obstacles—whether said obstacles come from inner

conflicts and/or are impacted by our environment—by facing our fears and the negative narratives that sometimes hold us back.”

Ōhishi Junkyō

Japan, 1888–1968

Waka Poem in Kana Grass Script

20th century

Hanging scroll: gold ink on deep blue paper
Collection of Dr. Stuart Katz

Ōhishi Junkyō's life is a story of resilience. Born to a poor family, she was adopted by the head of a geisha dancing studio and began her training as a geisha. When she was seventeen, her adoptive father attacked all the geishas, murdering five women and maiming Junkyō. Despite this, she continued to perform on stage as a storyteller. In her late teens, she began to practice using the brush with her mouth, learning calligraphy and painting. She married and had two children, but divorced at the age of thirty-nine and subsequently became a Buddhist nun. In her early sixties,

Junkyō founded the Bukkō-in Temple.