

BUDDHISM



INFLUENCE IN THE WEST-PART 2

WESTERN ART_CONTEMPORARY

Nam June Paik

Nam June Paik was a Korean-American artist who transformed video into an artist's medium with his media-based art that challenged and changed our understanding of visual culture.

Interested in finding ways new technologies, at this time, TV could be exploited by artists, and influence by Fluxus he created a new form in art, Video Art.

Let's see if Buddhist ideas influenced any of this.



Nam June Paik, posing with a TV screen.

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Nam June Paik

Zen for Head, a performance piece, is an interpretation of a 'score' by another artist, LaMonte Young, who was associated with the Fluxus movement of the 1950s and '60s.

This group was interested in putting the possibility of artmaking in the hands of ordinary people. Young's "Composition 1960 No. 10" consisted entirely of the instruction: "draw a straight line and follow it."

A couple of years later, Paik did just that, dunking his head in a bowl of ink and dragging his hair like a giant brush along a scroll of paper.



Nam June Paik, *Zen for Head*, 1962

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Asian Brush Painting

In Zen Buddhism, a *circle that is hand drawn in one or two brushstrokes can be used to express the moment when the mind is free to let the body create.*

The *circle* symbolizes absolute enlightenment, strength, elegance, the universe, and *mu* (the void).

It is characterized by a minimalism born of Japanese aesthetics drawing *ensō* , a disciplined-creative practice of Japanese ink painting.



Zen drawing

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Nam June Paik

This piece, *Zen for TV*, manipulated a real TV set to only play a single moving line.

Most of you have little or no memory of a CRT television set. This one from the 1940s was converting waves from the air into a signal. It was possible to set the signal to a line, as opposed to an image, thus subverting the expectation for a TV set.



Nam June Paik, Zen for TV, 1963.

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Nam June Paik

Another piece entitled, *TV Buddha*., has a live video camera focused on a antique Buddha statue, and live feeding through video camera into a TV.

So Buddha is watching TV – but he's also watching himself watch himself in meditation. Certainly, there's comments here about Buddhism and current tendencies to 'zone' out on TV (or social media) presented with some humor and social commentary.



Nam June Paik, TV Buddha, 1974

Maybe a sort of electronic meditation?

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Nam June Paik

Storm King Park is a large outdoor sculpture park in New York State, not far from STAC.

Here you can see a sculpture by Nam June Paik. He imagines an archeological site composed of:

Old, empty TV consoles are dropped haphazardly onto the ground.

Included in the piece are artificial flowers, bronze and stone Buddhas and bronze mask self-portraits that stare blankly toward the heavens as if waiting for UFO's.



Nam June Paik, Waiting for UFO. Storm King Art Park

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Zhang Huan

Chinese artist Zhang Huan began his career as a performance artist. Much of his work focuses on social problems.

After 2004 the figure of the Buddha shows up in his work as a result of visiting Tibet and Southeast Asia.

An aluminum sculpture is the first component of Berlin Buddha. The second component is an ash Buddha made by casting dry ash to the interior of the aluminum sculpture. These two sculptures were installed facing each other. As time goes by, the environment will affect the work, as the floor will tremble with movement, the ash Buddha will also change and fall into pieces.



Berlin Buddha, 2007, Ash, Iron and Aluminium
Aluminium Buddha Part: 146 x 114 x 102 inches
Ash Buddha Part: 138 x 189 x 114 inches

BUDDHISM_Zhang Huan

Zhang Huan

“I cherish a genuine love for Tibetan religion and culture, believing that there is rebirth and paying more attention to the living conditions of humanities in this life.”

He is influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, such subjects as fate, desire and death.

These ash drawings and the use of ash in his work refer to the incense burned in Buddhist temples.

Zhang Huan uses the ash as a medium that has meaning associated with Buddhism but also is the substance left when natural things are burned, including human bodies.

Sea No. 18, ash on linen, 150 x 280cm, 2012
Free Tiger Returns to Mountain No. 1, 2010



Zhang Huan - 'Free Tiger Returns to Mountains No.1', Ash on linen, 2010, 110 x 150 cm. - © Zhang Huan Studio

BUDDHISM_Zhang Huan

Zhang Huan-Storm King Art Park

Three Legged Buddha is a copper and steel sculpture standing twenty-eight feet high and weighing more than twelve tons—represents the bottom half of a sprawling, three-legged figure, one of whose feet rests on an eight-foot-high human head that appears to be either emerging from or sinking into the earth 3 legged figure. One foot rests on an 8 ft human head that is either sinking or emerging from earth.

It is modeled after fragments of bronze Buddha sculptures Huan encountered in Tibet in 2005. The head is self-portrait and panels open so incense can be burnt. Smoke comes out the nostrils, eyes and toes.



Three Legged Buddha,
copper and steel
sculpture, 28 feet high



BUDDHISM_Zhang Huan

Zhang Huan--

This is a massive head made of incense ash and steel. It is a portrait of the top of Huan's head sitting on a furniture moving cart.

The piece fuses the artist's image with the lengthened earlobes representing happiness and good fortune in the Buddhist religion while the ash relates to cremation and burnt offerings.



Long Ear Ash Head, steel and ash,

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Cai Guo Qiang

Cai Guo Qiang is a Chinese artist based in New York who draws from Buddhist philosophy, Chinese history and mythology, and contemporary social issues. He creates spectacular installations and events large scale. The works reflect upon the globalized nature of our world.

In this piece a fake waterhole is surrounded by 99 replica animals – pandas and kangaroos, a horse, an elephant, zebras, monkeys and many more – all with their heads down as they drink.

The animals are presented as metaphors for how we need to all live together to save the planet.

Wateringhole, 99 life-sized replicas of various animals, water, sand, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia, 2013



BUDDHISM_Cai Guo Qiang

Cai Guo Qiang

Reflection: A Gift from Iwaki is a large sculptural piece created from a wrecked ship excavated from Iwaki Harbor (famous for Chinese porcelain).

It reflects cultural interactions across national and cultural boundaries by bringing together the history of the cultural and commercial exchange between Asia and the West

He included thousands of commercially made statues of Avalokitesara (some broken) that raise issues of commodity and spirituality.

Reflection-A Gift from Iwaki, 2004
Excavated wooden boat and porcelain
Dimensions variable



BUDDHISM_Cai Guo Qiang

Cai Guo Qiang

Reflection: A Gift from Iwaki

On another level, according to Cai, the installation represents historic ruins trapped under the sea, a silent sunken vessel containing broken porcelain whose states of decomposition reflect the destructive power of time and the inherent beauty brought out by its passage.



Reflection-A Gift from Iwaki, 2004

Excavated wooden boat and porcelain

Dimensions variable

BUDDHISM_Cai Guo Qiang

Cai Guo Qiang

His interest in pyrotechnics had origins in weaponry and physics, evolved into an affinity with traditional Chinese brush painting in a series of large-scale gun powder drawings.

The drawings, traditional images found in Chinese and Tibetan ink brush paintings, are created by sprinkling gun powder on the paper and lighting it in very strategic ways.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViVEUa9bn8w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILTT8ogRf50>



Buddha's Light, 90x122 in, 2006, gun powder and pigment on paper.

BUDDHISM_Cai Guo Qiang

Remember that Chinese art is influenced by Zen. This connection to nature is important to understanding how Buddhism developed in the East.

Qu Ding, Summer Scene, 1000s, Song Dynasty
Example of traditional Chinese ink brush painting.



Cai Guo Qiang, Unmanned Nature, 2008, Hiroshima City Museum, gun powder and pigment on paper.

BUDDHISM_Wolfgang Laib

Since the 1970s Laib gathers pollen from trees and plants in the countryside from his hometown in southern Germany.

He gathers the pollen in bottles and flies to places around the world to create short installments of yellow dust on museum or gallery floors.

He believes pollen fields have some kind of magical effect, spreading gentle, healing vibes for a distressed society.

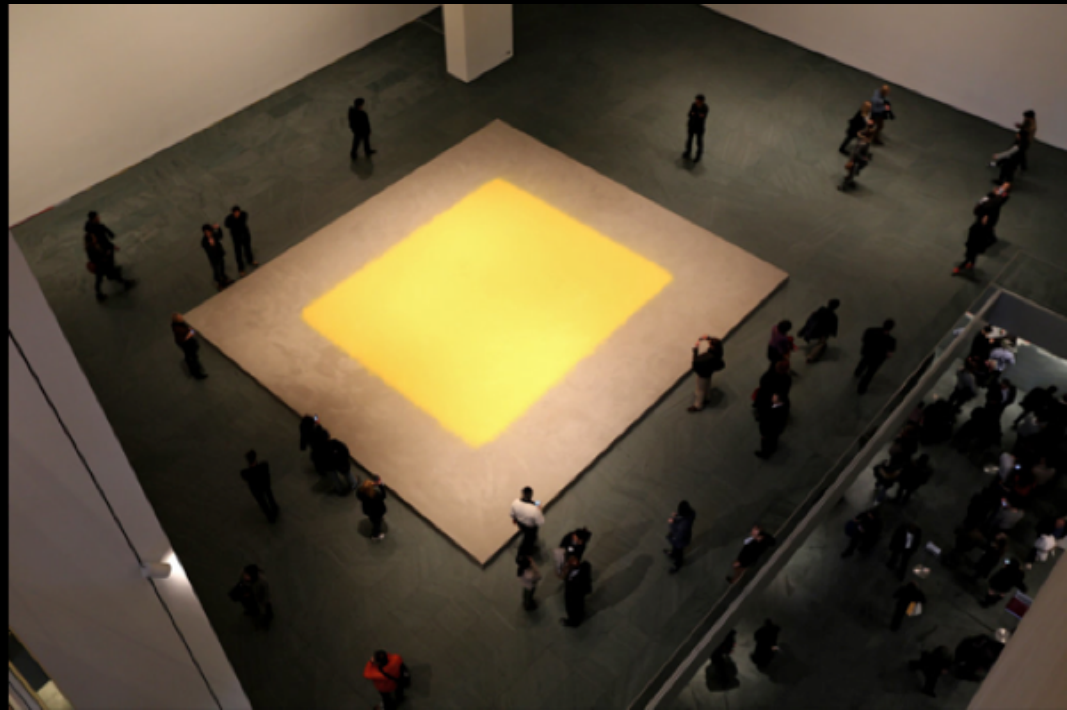
Laib installing, "*Pollen from Hazelnut*" 2013, MoMA



BUDDHISM_Wolfgang Laib

Laib has stated “pollen is the potential beginning of the life of the plant. It is as simple, as beautiful, and complex as this. And of course it has so many meanings. I think everybody who lives knows that pollen is important.”

Does this work remind you of Tibetan sand painting? It should.



Laib installing, “*Pollen from Hazelnut*” 2013, MoMA

Viewed from above at the Museum of Modern Art.

Left: Buddhist monks creating a sand painting.

BUDDHISM_Wolfgang Laib

Other sculptures include blocks of marble with shallow depressions filled with milk which refer to...

And installations of rice in dishes implying Buddhist ceremonial offerings.

In this piece, Laib used rice, a modest but essential food for most of India and Asia. The boat is a metaphor for travel and life, including struggles with nature.

Laib installing, "Wall of Passage" and "Passageway"
Brass ships with rice.



BUDDHISM_Wolfgang Laib

Laib resembles a Buddhist monk for whom gathering pollen is a form of meditation.

He believes pollen fields have some kind of magical effect, spreading gentle, healing vibes for a distressed society.

He gave up medical education to study Sanskrit, philosophy and religion, especially Buddhism and Jainism.

His art symbolizes the encounter of Eastern and Western cultural references and traditions.
impossible



BUDDHISM_Bill Viola

Bill Viola is a video artist known for creating haunting large scale video works with references to Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, and Christian mysticism.

His personal Buddhist practice, sets the tension between event and stasis, between movement and stillness.

Like John Cage, Bill Viola directly points at this phenomenon of 'stopping the mind' and opening awareness.



Above: three film stills from three different videos.
See titles below.

It is extremely difficult, maybe impossible to understand this work without seeing the videos in person as they are large, highly visual and completely immersive.

Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain Under a Waterfall), 2005 /

Fire Woman, 2005

Three Women, 2008

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg6wW3EOY94>

BUDDHISM_Bill Viola

His videos require the viewer to concentrate for a longer time to increase his or her awareness of detail, movement and change.

There are often references to destruction and renewal, using the nature elements, water, fire, earth and wind.

Because Viola considers our senses a path to spiritual awareness, the work is a blend of video, sound and music. His use of slow-motion is invites meditative and contemplative response

The Crossing, 1996, video installation

Watch a couple of minutes of the video, The Crossing, in the link above. I've included this statue of Shiva dancing as a reminder that in Hinduism, the notions of creation and destruction are also part of a continual process.



BUDDHISM_Bill Viola

Most artwork we've looked at in this class is either painting, drawing or sculpture. Video, like music, is a time-based media. We experience the subject revealed in time as opposed to a moment stopped in time, like in a painting or sculpture.

"We have to reclaim time itself, wrenching it from the "time is money" maximum efficiency, and make room for it to flow the other way – towards us. We must take time back into ourselves to let our consciousness breathe and our cluttered minds be still and silent.

This is what art can do and what museums can be in today's world".
Bill Viola



The Crossing, 1996, video installation

Here you can see the videos with viewers in the foreground. The films are usually shown in a very large scale so that figures are larger than life sized.

Viola was one of the first artists to use the medium of video in the 1960s.

BUDDHIST_Contemporary

This week I've fast forwarded to Art in the 19th and 20th centuries. We looked at how Buddhist (and Hindu) ideas influenced the artwork of the West. For the most part, this Eastern influence is not discussed within the context of this work. We focus on it here because this is our area of subject.

NEXT WEEK:

Next week is our final week of the semester. You will not have a lecture but you do have an annotation due.

In addition, your final Analysis Paper is due on Friday, May 4. This is the final day of the semester and all work must be submitted by noon to be considered for grading.

FINAL NOTE:

Thanks to all of you for your insightful comments and questions.

It's been my pleasure to bring some Eastern history, art and ideas to your attention.

Best in your studies.