

# Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art

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佛教的藝術



Feb 10 – May 20, 2012 at Asia Society Gallery  
The Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine, 9 Justice Drive, Admiralty, Hong Kong

## PRESS RELEASE

## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### New Asia Society Hong Kong Gallery Opens with “Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art”

Hong Kong, February 10, 2012 – Asia Society Hong Kong opens its new gallery with the exhibition **Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art** in the newly restored and transformed site of a former British explosives magazine. The exhibition showcases the world-renowned Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection of Asian Art—gifted to the New York-based Asia Society by its founder—shown alongside contemporary works by leading Asian and Asian American artists. The exhibition will be on view to the public from February 10 to May 20, 2012, at the Asia Society Gallery (Former Magazine A), part of the new Hong Kong Center, with state-of-the-art exhibition, performance and conference facilities, located at Justice Drive in Admiralty, Hong Kong. The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation is the Presenting Sponsor of **Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art** exhibition and the related education programs, lecture series and film series. Bank of America Merrill Lynch is the Corporate Sponsor of the exhibition.

**Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art** comprises sublimely beautiful and deeply spiritual works of art, representing traditional and contemporary masterpieces from a range of Asian cultures. By featuring selections from its permanent collection, Asia Society pays tribute to its founder JDR 3rd, who hoped to illuminate Asian cultures through art. As the leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding between the United States and Asia, the Society works across the fields of arts and culture, policy and business, and education. Mr. Ronnie C. Chan, Co-Chair, Asia Society and Chairman of Asia Society Hong Kong Center said, “Fittingly, **Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art** showcases the complexity and beauty of our cultural interconnectedness by examining the enduring power of Buddhism in both traditional and contemporary contexts.”

The exhibition showcases 13 traditional artworks from the Rockefeller Collection dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, shown alongside 6 contemporary works by leading Asian and Asian American artists who draw inspiration from one of the world’s great religions. Through these traditional and contemporary works, the exhibition considers how Buddhist art has been transformed by local cultures from India across Asia over time. Images of buddhas and bodhisattvas carved in stone and wood, cast in bronze, and painted on cloth are included among the traditional works in the exhibition. Visitors will see four contemporary artists’ individualized responses to Buddhism and exploration of Buddhist themes, from conceptual to scientific and from ritualistic to communal. Each of these artists—**Montien Boonma**, **Zhang Huan**, **Michael Joo** and **Mariko Mori** has approached Buddhism from a different perspective.

The exhibition provides visitors with an opportunity to consider ideas about Buddhism, religious art and the artist’s exploration of religion in contemporary contexts. Most of the works are view in Hong Kong for the first time.

**Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art** is made possible by presenting sponsor, the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation. Mr. Robert Y.C. Ho, Chairman of the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation said, “Our mission is to promote cultural awareness, mutual understanding, and an appreciation for Buddhist

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philosophy and art, which combined with the Ho Family's commitment to Hong Kong's transformation over the past 150 years, makes this important exhibition a fitting venue for expressing our vision and values."

Mrs. Edith Ngan Chan, Executive Director of Asia Society Hong Kong Center, said, "In addition to showcasing the **Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art** exhibition, Asia Society Hong Kong will concurrently offer a public lecture series on Buddhism, a Buddhist film festival, a bilingual docent program, and on-site educational programming for Hong Kong schools to teach local children about art, culture, and diversity."

The exhibition is cocurated by Dr. Adriana Proser, John H. Foster Curator of Traditional Asian Art and Dr. Miwako Tezuka, Associate Curator of Contemporary Asian Art, Asia Society Museum, New York. Dr. Melissa Chiu is Director of the Asia Society Museum and Vice President of Global Art Programs at Asia Society.

For more information and a schedule of exhibition-related events, please visit [AsiaSociety.org/hong-kong](http://AsiaSociety.org/hong-kong)

## Details of "Transforming Minds: Buddhism in Art" Exhibition:

<b>Address</b>	<b>Asia Society Gallery (Former Magazine A)</b> <b>9 Justice Drive, Admiraty</b> <i>[Entrance located next to British Council/ opposite to Conrad Hotel Hong Kong]</i>
<b>Opening Hrs</b>	<b>From February 10 to May 20, 2012</b> Tuesday – Sunday: 11am-5pm Last Thursday of the month: 11am-8pm Closed on Mondays & Public Holidays (except February 13)
<b>Admission</b>	Adult HK\$30 Asia Society members HK\$15 Seniors (aged 60 or above) & individuals with disabilities HK\$15 Full-time students & aged 18 or below FREE
<b>Enquiry</b>	2103 9511 <a href="http://www.asiasociety.org.hk">www.asiasociety.org.hk</a>

## For media enquiry, please contact:

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## INAUGURAL COLLECTIONS IN SPOTLIGHT:



**Michael Joo**

### **Bodhi Obfuscatus (Space-Baby), 2012**

- Mirrors, flat-screen monitors, video projection, fiber optic cable, live surveillance cameras, and Gandharan Buddha from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Asia Society, New York: Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection, 1979.3. Installed dimensions variable.
- Commissioned by Asia Society Hong Kong Center, Hong Kong. Originally commissioned in 2005 by Asia Society Museum, New York, and supported by the Nimoy Foundation, Los Angeles
- Photo courtesy of Davis Thompson-Moss



**Mariko Mori**

### **Kumano, 1997-1998.**

- Single channel video, sound
- 8 minutes, 50 seconds
- Asia Society, New York: Purchased with funds donated by Carol and David Appel, 2009.003
- Photo courtesy of Asia Society Museum, New York



**Zhang Huan**

### **Long Island Buddha, 2011**

- Copper and steel
- H 170 x L 210 x W 177 cm
- Collection of Zhang Huan Studio
- Photo courtesy Zhang Huan Studio



**Buddha**

### **India, probably Bihar, late 6<sup>th</sup> century**

- Copper alloy
- H. 68.6 x W. 27.3 x D. 17.8 cm
- Asia Society, New York: Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection, 1979.8
- Photo courtesy of Asia Society Museum, New York

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## ABOUT THE CURATORS

### Melissa Chiu, Lead Curator

#### Museum Director and Vice President, Global Art Programs, Asia Society



Dr. Melissa Chiu is Museum Director and Vice President, Global Art Programs, at Asia Society responsible for overseeing the programming for the Museum in New York, and museum facilities in Houston and Hong Kong. She was previously Founding Director of the Asia-Australia Arts Centre in Sydney (1996-2001). As a leading authority on Asian contemporary art, she has organized nearly 30 exhibitions of artists from across Asia including a retrospective by Zhang Huan, a survey of Yoshitomo Nara, and an exhibition of art from China's Cultural Revolution. Chiu earned a M.A. in Arts Administration (1994) and a Ph.D. (2005) in Art History and is the author of numerous articles and books including *Breakout: Chinese Art Outside China* (2007), *Chinese Contemporary Art: 7 Things You Should Know* (2008), *Asian Art Now* (Monacelli

Press, 2010, co-authored with Benjamin Genocchio) and an anthology, *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader* (MIT Press, 2011, co-edited with Benjamin Genocchio). She has served on numerous panels including the Institute of Museum and Library Services and New York State Council on the Arts and currently serves on the board of the Association of Art Museum Directors, the American Association of Museums, and the Museum Association of New York.

### Adriana Proser, Cocurator

#### John H. Foster Curator of Traditional Asian Art, Asia Society Museum, New York



Dr. Adriana Proser is John H. Foster Curator of Traditional Asian Art. A specialist in Chinese art, over the last thirteen years she has organized and coorganized over forty exhibitions featuring diverse works from all over Asia. These include the exhibition "Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art." Proser has also coordinated and served as in-house curator for the international loan exhibitions "Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China's Liao Empire" and "Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707-1857" for Asia Society Museum. Her most recent publication is *Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art* (Asia Society Museum and Yale University Press, 2010), for which she served as editor and contributor. She received a Ph.D. in Chinese art and archaeology from Columbia University. She was formerly Assistant Curator of East Asian Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

### Miwako Tezuka, Cocurator

#### Associate Curator, Asia Society Museum, New York

Miwako Tezuka is Associate Curator at Asia Society in New York. She received a Ph.D. in Contemporary Asian Art from the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University in 2005. In 2003 Dr. Tezuka cofounded PoNJA-GenKon (Post-1945 Japanese Art Discussion Group), a global online network of over 150 specialists and students, working in the field of contemporary Japanese art.

At Asia Society she has cocurated "Yoshitomo Nara: Nobody's Fool" (2010), "Yang Fudong: Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest" (2009), "Projected Realities: Video Art from East Asia" (2006), and was curator of "U-Ram Choe: In Focus" (2011), "Mariko Mori: Kumano" (2010), "Go Figure: Five Contemporary Videos" (2010), "Yoshihiro Suda: In Focus" (2009), and many others.

She has published in various languages. Her most recent publications include: "Music on My Mind: The Art and Phenomenon of Yoshitomo Nara" in *Yoshitomo Nara: Nobody's Fool* (New York: Abrams, 2010); "Kori Yumi, Antenna, Kengo Kito: essay and interviews" in *Tokyo Visualist* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2009); "Imagine Again and Again: Copies of a Portrait of Minamoto no Yoritomo by Yamaguchi Akira" in *Impressions* (March 2009).

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## ABOUT ARTISTS

### Montien Boonma

Born 1953, Bangkok, Thailand; died 2000, Bangkok, Thailand

Montien Boonma was born in 1953 in Bangkok, Thailand, where one of the most devout Buddhist communities exists today. In 1986, before leaving Thailand for Europe to continue his education, Boonma decided to become a Buddhist monk. While he was well-versed in the visual language of Western modernism and its theories, the majority of his work resonates with his religious background and deep humanism.

### Zhang Huan

Born 1965, China; lives and works in Shanghai



Photo courtesy of Zhang Huan Studio

Zhang Huan first gained critical attention with his intense body-based performance art in the late 1990s underground art scene in Beijing. Zhang is a quintessential global artist who lived in New York for several years, and then returned to China in 2005. Today he creates painting, sculptures, and prints, often on a massive scale, which reflect his practice of working with a community of artist assistants in his studio in Shanghai.

### Mariko Mori

Born 1967, Tokyo, Japan; lives and works in New York



Photo courtesy of David Sims

Mariko Mori is an internationally renowned Japanese artist who is known for performance, photography, sculptures, and video installations. Her earlier work from the 1990s often addressed issues concerning the status of women in contemporary Japanese society, and the highly artificial urban environment and the sense of alienation that is the result. She has since searched for the root of these contemporary problems, and has begun to explore what modern man has disconnected himself from, namely, nature and the realm beyond human control.

### Michael Joo

Born 1966, New York; lives and works in New York



Photo courtesy of Nadine Dinter

Michael Joo is best known for his installations that methodically examine how we perceive everyday life, history, and religion. Buddhism is a recurring subject in his art. For instance, Joo created a structure of empty, transparent plastic packing containers in the shape of a seated Buddha. This work ironically juxtaposes the concept of nothingness in Buddhism with the commodification of the religion as a fashion trend devoid of spiritual content.

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## About Asia Society Hong Kong Center

The Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK Center) was established in 1990 by a group of Hong Kong community leaders, led by Sir Q.W. Lee, then chairman of Hang Seng Bank. It was the first overseas center of the Asia Society, which was founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd in New York as a not-for-profit, non-government educational organization to promote understanding of Asian culture and countries. With offices in 11 cities in the U.S. and Asia, the Society organizes programs across the fields of arts and culture, business and policy, and education. The ASHK Center will host important temporary and traveling exhibitions of traditional and contemporary Asian art, organized in partnership with Asia Society Museum, New York.

Located at 9 Justice Drive, the Asia Society Hong Kong Center at the Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine carries historical, architectural and cultural significance to the city. Revitalized with funds generously donated by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and other local and international individuals and organizations, the ASHK Center combines heritage conservation with a distinctive modern aesthetic that has created a dynamic complex allowing the Center to extend our educational programs to the larger community. The transformed facilities will not only provide a unique venue for educational programs for students and the general public on heritage, arts, culture and contemporary affairs, but will also symbolize a partnership between the non-profit sector, local business and the Hong Kong government in heritage revitalization and cultural exchange.

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### About the presenting sponsor: Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation

Established in Hong Kong in 2005, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation is a private philanthropic organization engaged in strategic, long-term projects in Hong Kong and around the world. Its mission is to foster and support Chinese arts and culture, as well as to promote deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy and to apply it to everyday life.

Since 2001 the Ho family has been building a global network of Buddhist learning through the support of Buddhist studies at leading universities including Harvard University, Stanford University, the University of Hong Kong, the International Buddhist College in Thailand, the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto. In 2010, the Foundation provided funding for *The Buddha*, a documentary film by David Grubin about the life and teachings of the Buddha which was broadcast on PBS in North America. Additionally, the Foundation has provided funding for *The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Gallery* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the first gallery for Buddhist sculpture in the United Kingdom. The Ho family has also initiated the establishment of [www.buddhistdoor.com](http://www.buddhistdoor.com), one of the largest and most visited global websites on Buddhism.

In Hong Kong, the Foundation develops projects to engage young people in art, culture and creativity. Since 2005, the Foundation has reached nearly 40,000 young people through its three creative arts education programmes - *Through Our Eyes*, a photography programme; *Get It Write!*, a literary writing programme; and *Leap!*, a body education programme,; all designed to nurture creative talent for the future of Hong Kong. Since 2008, the Foundation has partnered with the Design and Cultural Studies Workshop to produce the *We All Live in the Forbidden City* project, which includes an award-winning publication series, a public exhibition and an educational outreach programme in which Beijing's iconic Forbidden City serves as a platform for cultural education and understanding. In 2012, the Foundation's partnership with the Workshop brings the launch of the *Forbidden City 100* documentary series on CCTV9, reaching millions of television and online viewers worldwide.

### About the corporate sponsor: Bank of America Merrill Lynch

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