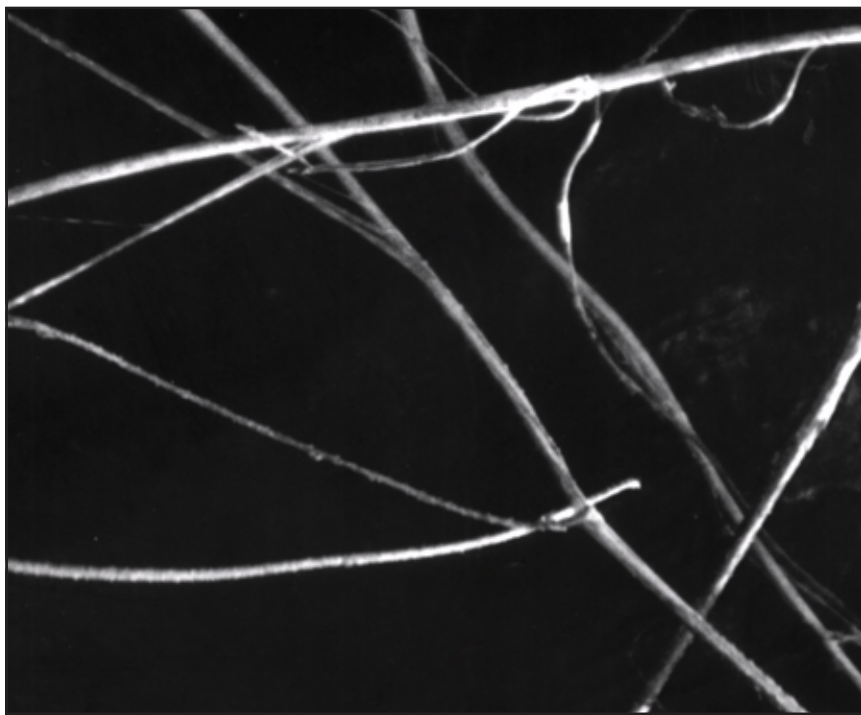
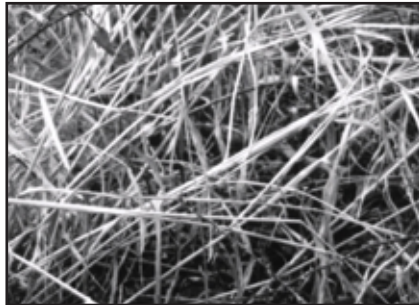


DHARMA & ART

A SPECIAL EDITION OF
DHARMA LIFE
published by
THE MISSOURI ZEN CENTER
SUMMER 2003



DHARMA LIFE
is a publication of
The Missouri Zen Center
220 Spring Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119
(314) 961 6138
www.missourizencenter.org



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DHARMA LIFE

Missouri Zen Center, a non-profit organization, publishes a newsletter providing information & views for the Buddhist community.

"The term 'dharma art' does not mean art depicting Buddhist symbols or ideas...dharma art refers to art that springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state...appreciating the nature of things as they are and expressing it without any struggle of thoughts and fears. We give up aggression, both toward ourselves, that we have to make a special effort to impress people, and toward others, that we can put something over on them. Genuine art—dharma art—is simply the activity of non-aggression...

Creating a work of art is not a harmless thing...

Art is extraordinarily powerful...it challenges people's lives."

—Chogyam Trungpa

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Zen Poetry

— Seido Ronci

*Who says my poems are poems?
My poems are not poems.
After you know my poems are not poems
then we can begin to discuss poetry.*
—Ryokan

Here's a brief poem by Basho:

Pond,
frog,

splash!



Some of you might say, “Well, that’s not a poem.” So what? Do you think it matters what you think? What do you gain by saying it is a poem or it isn’t a poem? And if you think it’s not, who suffers? Who is the you who says, “That sucks!” And what have you benefited from such a declaration? You’re just annoying yourself. Those monks who wrote poems wrote mostly from the standpoint of silence — of seeing the world without the interruption of an “I”. If you can go where the poet was, that moment of pure, total awareness, you know how profound it is to be sitting quietly by a pond, looking at the water, when suddenly a frog leaps from nowhere and makes a splash! There you go, into the unborn...into the gates of heaven. What can you say but, “Ahhhhhh”?

Here's a similar poem by the poet Issa:

Frog and I
eyeball
to eyeball.

What more needs to be said? Remember what Jesus said in the gospel of Thomas: The kingdom of the father is spread out over the earth, but people do not see it. Why not? Because we're always putting our egos first. Instead of letting the beauty of the world manifest as it is our small self has to put its two cents worth in and make some inane subjective comment that we naturally take to be both important and insightful. How stupid! Who cares? How does this save you from birth and death? How does this alter the fact that, if an accident doesn't take you first, you will get old, get sick and die? What good are your supposedly "profound" proclamations in light of the fact that you do not own your body or your mind?



Here's another Issa poem:

Just by being,
I'm here
in snow-fall.

Surely, some of you have had the experience of a heavy snow in the dark of winter, where silence seems to permeate the entire universe, and you're there, alone, standing in the cold, and you can hear the snowflakes drop: at that moment you are with god. What more do you want? What more can you ask for, for surely, anything beyond this, is a craving of the small self, shackled by chains to the ego whining, whimpering, sulking, "but what about meeeeeee?" What about you? What's missing?

Here's a beautiful little poem by Yuyu:

One sneeze—
skylark's
out of sight.

Ahhhh. Can you be there? Can you go to that quiet moment when suddenly you sneeze and change the universe? The truth is, you are always there but most people don't see it.

Zen practice means to see the world as it is. It is not a way to escape from the reality of the world, which includes joy and suffering both. Some people have the impression that *Zen* practice means to be above it all, unattached, aloof, transcendent... what nonsense! When it's time to suffer it's time to suffer. A *Zen* monk embraces his suffering and sheds real tears. When it's time to laugh, and I know this from experience, no one laughs louder than a *Zen* monk. And when it's time to cry, the same is true.

Have you forgotten the way to my hut?
Every evening I wait for the sound of your footsteps,
But you do not appear.

And this:

When I think about the sadness of the people
in this world,
Their sadness becomes mine.

Is this not the path of true compassion? To practice *Zen* means to be awake, alert, aware of the constant journey we make between heaven and earth, moment by moment, all of our lives.

Our ordinary life *is* the Way, the Truth and the Light. Most people can't see it because they're too busy thinking-thinking-thinking! In gnostic Christianity it is said, "To look for God is an insult to god, because God is everywhere." In *Zen* practice we say, "Stop talking and thinking and there is nothing you won't be able to understand." Why? Because the only thing that separates you from God is you!



The Power of the Line

—Gertraud Wild (*Garyo*)

Over 30,000 years ago, something magical happened deep inside a mountain, somewhere in Europe. In the darkness of a cave, illuminated only by the flickering light of burning animal fat on stone, a hunter took a piece of charcoal and started to draw. He drew the animal he was hoping to hunt; he saw it in front of his eyes and just recreated what he had in himself. The power of the line forming a shape was one of the first expressions of artistic creativity. Ever since, the meaning of the line has developed to such a complexity that it is able to carry the sum as well as the variety of human experience.

The line is the direct expression of human thoughts and emotions into a form. We all have learned to use it by training our hand to produce letters and sentences. In fact, by the act of writing, there is nothing in between thoughts and action; we just let it happen. Unless it is a calligraphic exercise where style becomes the main focus, we let our handwriting speak for itself. There is still the unity between inside and outside, between form and thought (formlessness). We can do this because we impose no expectations on ourselves of how to write. Hardly anyone is judged by their handwriting and therefore we can let the hand make the lines freely, in a personal, subjective and authentic way.

However, writing has its limitations. Thoughts are limited to our consciousness; words are almost always trapped in the duality of how we experience our world. The lines produced by our writing hand are a reflection of our personality, showing emotions and character, but unable to transcend our limited self. Deep inside, however, there is something more than we can understand, something whole, holy, and authentic. Transcending the world of experiences and thoughts, it looks for means of expression to develop its full potential. Like a flower growing out of its seed, it pushes outward toward manifestation.



Manifesting inner truth is a creative process where the world of duality ceases to exist. It is the artist who always has been able to transcend limitations by tapping into the creative well of the living spirit. In this sense, a simple line drawn freely and wholeheartedly is able to express the complexity of life. In looking at a drawing of Matisse, one is in awe of the power of the line. Matisse created with one graceful, continuous line, for example, the shape of a leaf, which expresses at the same time nature itself. Katagiri Roshi once said “if we wholeheartedly paint a certain scene from nature on canvas, it becomes not just a portion of nature that we pick out, it represents the whole of nature. At that time, the picture becomes a masterpiece.”

To become a master, it not only requires reaching back to the inner well of creativity, but also continuous practice. In this sense, art and meditation are based on the same principles. The goal of both is to transcend our world of duality and find higher truth by looking deeper into the world of appearances. Like the hunter thousands of years ago, who drew a line wholeheartedly, because still in union with the world around him, the artist expresses her/himself in the same way—by totally giving to the creative act, by becoming one with the creation.

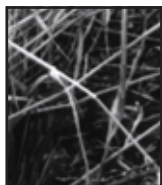
Joseph Beuys, the great spiritual German artist of the 20th century, once said in an interview about the future of art that in the end, art will cease to exist—because we all, as human beings, will become art ourselves. Art and the artist will become one. We will become authentic like a flower or a tree.

This, in my opinion, is Dharma art. Dharma is truth. Truth is authentic. Authenticity and truth is the Awakened Way. Awakened Way is the Art of Life. Then, Life is Art: Art is Life.



DHARMA IS ART

—*Rosan Yoshida*



What is art?

The popular idea of art is artwork (artifacts), formed and framed, stored and sold. Now artists artificially make artworks, even arts for art's sake. Dealers deal with them, often arts for money's sake. The conventional art form is a pretty painting. Now we are framed by our habits. Seeing nature, we exclaim "picturesque!" We become pretty fetish. Living beauty is lost to artificial forms. Claiming artist's uniqueness, self-identity becomes the selling point. Now artists become salesmen, enslaved to their artifacts.

A more sophisticated understanding of art is as activity for beauty. Humans cultivated spiritual capacities in the sciences for truth, ethics for goodness, and religions for holiness. Cassirer characterized humans as the symbolic animal, competent in handling symbolisms, including languages, myths, histories, sciences, arts, and religions. Humans as wise animals, symbolic animals, playing animals represent three areas of activities: intellectual, emotional, and volitional.

Where is art from?

Art starts from "Ah!" and "Alas!" It is expressed with our bodies upon matter, shared with society, and communicated through ages. As time passes, the process may become "pretty" limited, and then "pretty" commercial. Humans are advanced in the visual sense, so, perhaps, developed visual arts first. Later came music, dance, and story-telling with celebration of wild game caught or wars won, very much the matters of mundane, material life.

Because our senses are unlike those of dogs or pigs, olfactory, gastronomic, and tactile arts are less developed—not nil, but scarce, like perfume path or the culinary arts. This means we can and need to investigate into vast unperceived realms and forgotten truths.

Style is person—so, we must cultivate our personalities to create beautiful arts, shared and communicated with others far and wide. The process aims at holy harmony, not folly formalism.

What is art for?

Because of history and society, humans begin with what they inherit, civilized in artifices but separated from nature. Thus, only humans tell lies and become superstitious, as they grow older. We create arts for art's sake, but cooking a cucumber for cooking's sake will not make it crisp. Hunger is the best sauce. Heart is the best source. Heart is the source of beauty, beatitude, bliss, truth, goodness, and holiness. Heart, cultivated, creates new worlds and limitless life.

Cultivation is culture including arts, sciences, ethics and religions. Cultivation is verification of full function of life with "Ah!" and "Alas!" Here living art begins, washing one's face and rice like one's own eyeball. In cooking or gardening, one takes a step forward from atop a hundred foot pole. One picks a blade of grass and makes a holy shrine.

"Where flowers bloom, butterflies come." —*Ryokan*

"When I love mountains, mountains love me. When flowers bloom, the world is arisen." —*Dogen*

"The entire world in ten directions is a clear crystal ball." —*Xhuansha*

Who, where, and when is art?

Every single dharma—flower, butterfly, horse, human, wind, water—is wonderfully wrought through billions of years with the whole world. The old cook monk, endeavoring to dry mushrooms under the scorching sun of summer on hot bricks, replied to Dogen, when asked if someone else should perform this arduous task, "Others are not I. Why should I wait?" You are the art, here and now, in living limitless life, light, liberation and love. Living art listens to the symphony of the universe and shares in the universal harmony. Then every action becomes art together with all, everywhere, anytime. Now nothing is not art, everything is wondrous and wonderworking.



Eight Minutes

—Mike Pfeiffer

Eight minutes of writing. An eternity. Eight stars of a nameless constellation burning themselves out. The eight songs that a mockingbird can sing. Eight blossoms on the ends of eight small stems that have arisen in the eight days of spring. The eight lords of light, who praise the eight lords of darkness, who praise the eight lords of twilight, who praise the eight lords of light. The eight pictures of my black and white childhood. Eight clear rivers that leap from eight mountains to form eight sacred, calm lakes that harbor thought and consciousness. Eight moments of doubt. Eight moments of certainty. And between them the eight moments of transition, the eight connections to eight different realities, the alternate buddhas I might have been, might be, might become, might never see. Eight simple breaths drawn in and exhaled eight times. Eight types of noise surrounded by the eight types of silence, which finally engulfs all eight forms of being and not being. This number is arbitrary, but yet it feels true in all things and it displays impermanence. The sum of all earthly numbers, reduced at last to the single, wavering note of a bell, vibrating with the harmony of a great breathing into all the selves and all the not selves a universe can hold.

“Undivided mind is not concerned with big or small, gain or loss, recognition or non-recognition, enlightenment or non-enlightenment. Undivided mind transcends opposites. In Buddhist practice, study of the mind is the way to attain stable, undivided action beyond the world of relativity. We should accept things as they come—i.e., independent and momentary.”

(Dogen Zenji, “Learning through body and mind,” chapter 3, ‘Shobogenzo’)

A STORY

—As told by Eric von Schrader (*Eriku*)

A Western anthropologist was studying a “primitive” tribe of people somewhere in the undeveloped world. This tribe made made very intricate, gorgeous handcrafted objects. The anthropologist, asking about the objects through an interpreter, said that they were wonderful, high-quality pieces of art. The tribal members looked puzzled at his question. The interpreter said that the people did not understand the word “art.” The anthropologist explained that “art” meant special pieces that were different from everyday objects because they were more beautiful. Hearing this, the people replied, “We don’t have any idea of ‘art.’ We just make everything the best we can.”



NEAR AN HOA

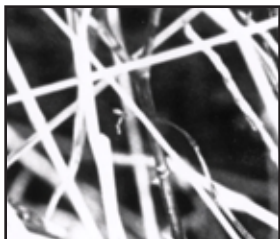
Under the dying sigh of a bursting flare in the night sky,
Sweat streams down faces with dry throats.
Alert eyes stare from shallow holes in the mud,
Scraped wearily when the steaming sun ruled.

Men are crouched, pressed against the dirt,
Shivering in the blackness.
Steel sings with a cruel rhythm, flashing its red tongue.
The hunted hunters kiss the mud, choking back a vomit.
Frantic, deliberate, they return death for death.

Groaning, an armour piercing fragment tears at skin and muscles.
Writhing on a sweat-soaked back,
Lips stick to dirty teeth in a grimace.
Bright red watery blood seeps through a shirt and flak jacket
To the muddy sand.
Tears trickle from white eyes.

Corpsman! Corpsman!

All the lonely ears
Ignore the gargled screams
And someone in the Goddamn filthy darkness
Cries for
God.



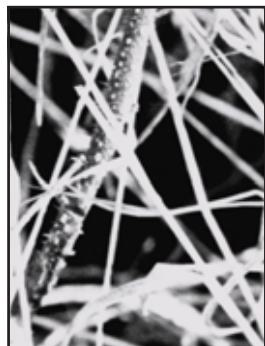
WAR

Something is lost
When young men die,
Life's the cost,
And the pain in old men's eyes.

—Ron Bodine (*Rokan*)

Fresh Tomatoes

It's been said that a person who can't get excited at the prospect of lunch is most likely to think nothing of Corfu, the Ile de la Cite, Mt. Saint Michel, the ruins of Ephesus and the grand canals of Venice and Brugge. Always it's the small things — condiments — a sprinkle of salt and pepper, chutney or horseradish, a bit of tarragon, a cloth napkin and a glass of wine prepare the mind for the Rock of Gibraltar, the Continental Divide, the Rhine, the Rhone, the Seine, the mighty Mississippi... consider lunch the mid-day luxury, not like breakfast, which some fools ignore, and others consider a chore, and not like supper either, too often too stuffed with the day's activities to taste a savory meat, lemon or cream sauce; or worse, dinner melodramatic, over-prepared, snared by old lace and doilies, silver and china. No. But lunch! basic, utilitarian, the simple high noon reminder that work is just part of the day and not all there is between sunrise and sunset. The prospect of a cheddar cheese sandwich with lettuce, sliced tomato and sprouts on whole grain bread with grey poupon; celery sticks, calamata olives stuffed with garlic on the side, and for dessert — hot coffee, pound cake or perhaps a slice of pie. The prospect of being filled with god, "enthusiasm" of bread and cheese, a table outdoors and one can just be, anywhere in the world, anywhere at all, see all there is to see with a little salt, a little pepper on a ripe and red tomato fresh from the vine — a splash of olive oil — ah, Roma!



—*Seido Ronci*



The Problem is

The problem is
we think we exist suspended in the web
of day to day emotion
and expectation.

The problem is
you broke your favorite toy when you were five years old
and hid the pieces so your mother wouldn't find them.

The problem is
you thought the myth of romantic love
was true and that you would be loved in return
in equal measure
when you gave your heart and soul and marrow.
But you weren't.

The problem is
not such a big deal really because you learned
how to pick up the pieces of the broken toy.
You found your cracked heart to be seamless after all.
and you moved ahead.

The problem is
just a left over from last night's dinner.
The hot dog nobody wants.

The problem is
a joke.
So you laugh and stretch and pet your cat
and go to sleep.

—*Tina Lombardo*



Avocado

The Dharma is like an Avocado!
Some parts so ripe you can't believe it,
But it's good.
And other places hard and green
Without much flavor,
Pleasing those who like their eggs well-cooked.

And the skin is thin,
The great big round seed
In the middle,
Is your own Original Nature—
Pure and smooth,
almost nobody ever splits it open
Or ever tries to see
If it will grow.

Hard and slippery,
It looks like
You should plant it— but then
It shoots out thru the Fingers--
gets away.

—Gary Snyder
from Turtle Island

*This
Buddha
behind
me
is
empty.*

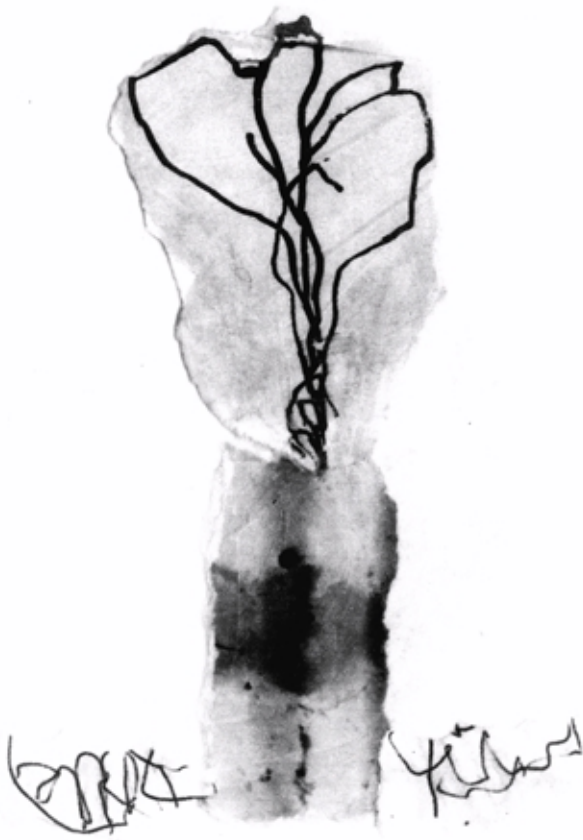
Zenshin is Sick

Sun-faced Buddha:
juicy burgers
chocolate milk shakes
oreo cookies.

Moon- faced Buddha:
dirty bedpans
morphine drips
awful delusions.

While on the bedside table
the early-morning light
glistens off the used syringe.

—Carl Jerome (Genzan Hokai)



Along the mountain road
Somehow it tugs at my heart
A wild violet

—*Bassho*

Balzac & the Buddha

I haven't read much Balzac
but I like to say his name.

It's the name I give to the hostess
while waiting in line for a seat.

It delights me to hear over the intercom:
"Balzac, party of three."

When I was in the Buddhist monastery
the Master would shout, "Katz!"

and I would reply, "Balzac!"
He would hit me with his withered stick.

I once knew a dyslexic accountant;
he was often black and blue

and looking for work.
When he went to the Buddhist monastery

and the Master shouted "Katz!"
he punched the Master,

and the Master said, "Balzac."
The cook, overhearing this encounter,

merely muttered, "Rabelais."
That's why he's the cook;

he knows where his belly is.
When I say the word "Buddha,"

my two year old son shoots his finger
straight into the air.

I tell him that someday Balzac
will cut that finger off.

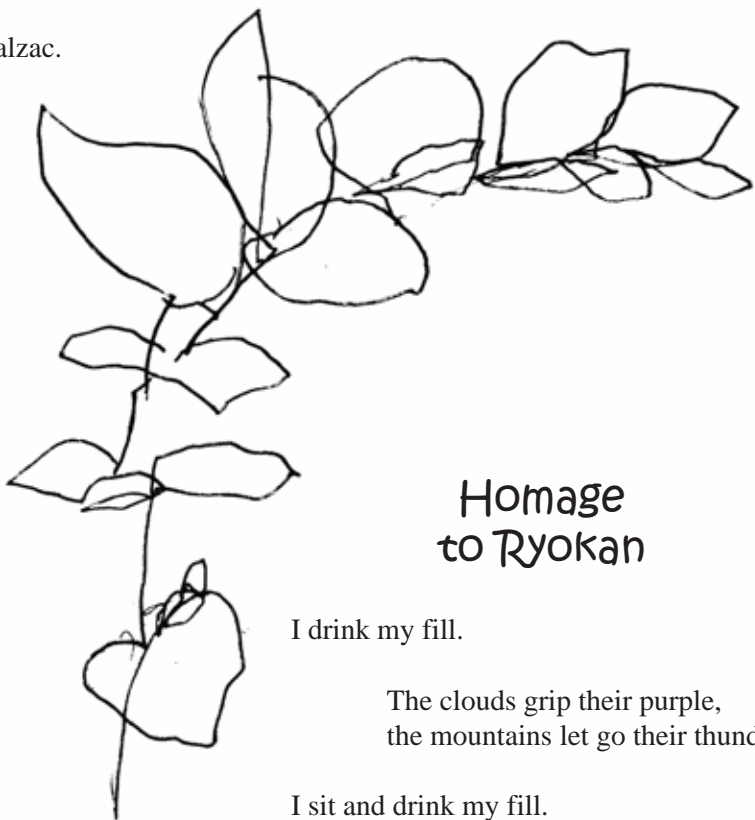
He grins, lifts his bottle
and says, "Juice!"

Before enlightenment there is, it is said,
chopping wood and carrying water.

After enlightenment, it is said,
there is chopping wood and carrying water.

Somewhere in between is the ferry.

Balzac.



Homage to Ryokan

I drink my fill.

The clouds grip their purple,
the mountains let go their thunder.

I sit and drink my fill.

How much I long to see
through the man
who sees through the moment.

I sit.

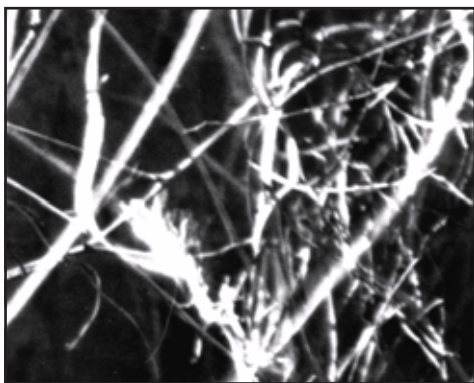
—Seido Ronci

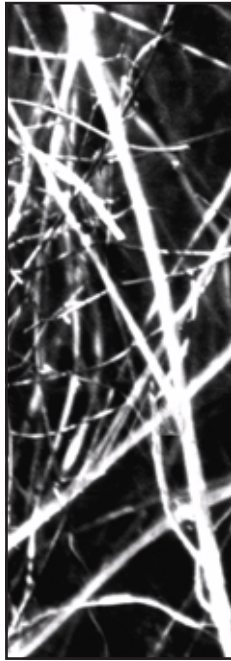
Hymnus Ad Patrem Sinesis

I praise those ancient Chinamen
Who left me a few words.
Usually a pointless joke or a silly question
A line of poetry drunkenly scrawled on the margin of a quick
splashed picture — bug, leaf,
caricature of Teacher
on paper held together now by little more than ink
& their own strength brushed momentarily over it

Their world & several others since
Gone to hell in a handbasket, they knew it —
Cheered as it whizzed by —
& conked out among the busted spring rain cherryblossom winejars
Happy to have saved us all.

—*Philip Whalen*





*Mind set free in the
Dharma-realm, I sit
at the moon-filled
window watching the
mountains with my ears,
hearing the stream with
open eyes. Each
molecule preaches
perfect law, each
moment chants true
sutra: the most fleeting
thought is timeless,
a single hair's enough to
stir the sea.*

—Japanaese Master
Shutaku, 14c

Quotes

From John Cage

If you develop an ear for sounds that are musical, it is like developing an ego. You begin to refuse sounds that are not musical and that way cut yourself off from a good deal of experience.

I am trying to check my habits of seeing, to counter them for the sake of greater freshness. I am trying to be unfamiliar with what I'm doing.

I have spent many pleasant hours in the woods conducting performances of my silent piece, transcriptions, that is, for an audience of myself, since they were much longer than the popular length which I have published. At one performance, I passed the first movement by attempting the identification of a mushroom which remained successfully unidentified. The second movement was extremely dramatic, beginning with the sounds of a buck and a doe leaping up to within ten feet of my rocky podium. The expressivity of this movement was not only dramatic but unusually sad from my point of view, for the animals were frightened simply because I was a human being. However, they left hesitatingly and fittingly within the structure of the work. The third movement was a return to the theme of the first.

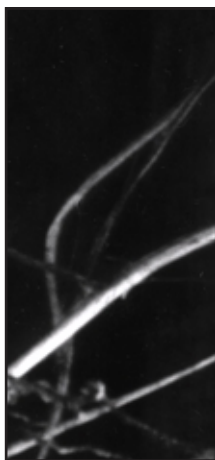
I have never engaged in sitting meditation practice. My music involves me always in sitting so that any more sitting would be too much. Furthermore, by the time I came in contact with Zen I had already promised Arnold Schoenberg that I would devote my life to music, which is concerned with the sense perceptions. So my meditation has been through my music, where I am trying to get rid of my own likes and dislikes and open myself to the flow of experience.

The most recent change in my attitude toward sound has been in relation to loud sustained sounds such as car alarms or burglar alarms, which used to annoy me but which I now accept and even enjoy. I think the transformation came through a statement of Marcel Duchamp, who said that sounds that stay in one location and don't change can produce a sonorous sculpture, a sound sculpture that lasts in time. Isn't that beautiful?

The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature in her manner of operation.

Theater takes place all the time, wherever one is, and art simply facilitates persuading one that this is the case.

In 1945 the great Buddhist scholar D. T. Suzuki came to Columbia to teach, and I went for two years to his classes. From Suzuki's teaching I began to understand that a sober and quiet mind is one in which the ego does not obstruct the fluency of things that come in through our senses and up through our dreams.



I gave a performance of my piece called *Empty Words Part IV* for the students of Chogyam Trungpa at Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. The piece goes on for two and a half hours and contains long silences of four and five minutes' duration, and then out of that silence I just say a few letters of the alphabet following a score which was written through chance operations from the journal of Henry David Thoreau. Meanwhile there are these very faint images of Thoreau's drawings being projected on a screen behind me, but they are very dim and hardly change at all—perhaps once every twenty minutes. I thought it was an ideal piece for a Buddhist audience, but they became absolutely furious and yelled at me and tried to get me to stop the performance. The next morning I had a meeting with Chogyam Trungpa, and he asked me to join the faculty at Naropa.

王

如

王如



*Art is not what expresses personality,
But what overcomes it.*

—T. S. Eliot



Erase the lines: I pray you not to
 love classifications. The thing is like a river,
 from source to sea-mouth one flowing life
 —Robinson Jeffers

For 300 years after the Buddha's death there were no Buddha images. The people's practice was the image of the Buddha; there was no need to externalize it. But in time, as the practice was lost, people began to place the Buddha outside of their own minds, back in time and space. As the concept was externalized and images were made, great teachers started to reemphasize the other meaning of Buddha. There is a saying: "If you see the Buddha, kill him." Very shocking to people who offer incense and worship before an image. If you have a concept in the mind of a Buddha outside of yourself, kill it, let it go.... Gotama Buddha repeatedly reminded people that the experience of truth comes from one's own mind.

—Joseph Goldstein, *The Experience of Insight*





*Past, present, future, unattainable,
Yet clear as the moteless sky.
Late at night the stool's cold as iron,
But the moonlit window smells of plum.*
—Zen Master Hakuin

Progress

And again my inmost life rushes louder,
as if it moved now between steeper banks.
Objects become ever more related to me,
and all pictures ever more perused.
I feel myself more trusting in the nameless:
with my senses, as with birds, I reach
into the windy heavens from the oak,
and into the small ponds' broken-off day
my feeling sinks, as if it stood on fishes.

—*Rainer Maria Rilke*
The Book of Images



Dharma & Art

A special edition of Dharma Life

Summer 2003

Published by the Missouri Zen Center

Editor: Will Holcomb (Genro)

Layout and design: Carol Corey

Production: Joe Welling

Page 13, Watercolor painting

Will Holcomb (Genro)

Page 16, “Mr. Saito ‘03”

Mary Novak

Page 19, Drawing

Carol Corey

Pages 20 and 21, Poems from

The World of Difference, Seido Ronci

Pressed Wafer, 2001

Page 26, Calligraphy

Rosan Yoshida

Page 27, Calligraphy

Tsugen Roshi

Pages 28 and 29, Photographs

Dr. Kongsak Tanphaichitr

Back cover, Photograph from Thailand

Carol Corey

