Art as Moral Action: *Interdisciplinary Dunhuang*
WAC 100B • Summer 2016 (Session C)

**Peter Sellars**
Distinguished Professor, World Arts and Cultures/Dance

**Haines Hall 39**
Mondays 6:30 pm – 8:50 pm • Tuesdays 7:30 pm - 8:50 pm

**Sections:** Tuesdays 6:00 pm – 7:20 pm

For centuries, Dunhuang was the western frontier of China, the terminus of the Great Wall, and the gateway to the rest of the world - peoples, goods, cultures, and religions. Buddhism arrived in China through Dunhuang, and for one thousand years, pilgrims and grateful devotees created over 600 immersive art installations in sacred caves on the edge of the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts. These caves represent the evolution of Buddhist iconography and ritual as created by populations on the move. This course explores the multicultural and interdisciplinary implications of this astonishing body of work for contemporary culture, spiritual practice, geopolitics, environmental, and immigration issues.

Interdisciplinary Dunhuang will pay particular attention to the ongoing transformation of Buddhism itself in our lifetime, as populations forced to move across frontiers adopt newly imagined practices and vocabularies. Students will explore the Cave Temples of Dunhuang exhibition, concurrently on view at the Getty, and create projects that take them into Los Angeles' diverse international communities.

**Course Requirements:**
• Total engagement
• Presence is essential
• Participation in all in-class discussions
• Participation in discussion section each week
• Participation in small group project in discussion section
• Meeting with Professor Sellars
• Visit the Getty Center’s *Cave Temples of Dunhuang* exhibition
• Final Project: 8-10 page paper due in last class

**Office:** Kaufman Hall, Room 140I

**Office Hours:** by appointment (sign-up sheet in class on Mondays)

**Prof. Sellars email:** psellars@arts.ucla.edu
Required Texts:


Teaching Assistants:

Alex Anderson • MFA Ceramics
UCLA Department of Art
Email: alex@alexanderson.us

Andrew Martinez • PhD Culture and Performance
UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance
Email: a.mike.martinez@gmail.com

Class Advisor:

Susan Pertel Jain, PhD
Executive Director, UCLA Confucius Institute
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Boethius Initiative:

Julia Carnahan, Associate Director
Email: jcarnahan@arts.ucla.edu
The Nature of Buddhist Art

In order to understand the nature of the Buddha image and its meaning for a Buddhist, we must, to begin with, reconstruct its environment, trace its ancestry, and remodel our own personality. We must forget that we are looking at “art” in a museum, and see the image in its place in a Buddhist church or as part of a sculptured rock wall; and having seen it, receive it as an image of what we are ourselves potentially. Remember that we are pilgrims come from some great distance to see God; that what we see will depend upon ourselves. We are to see, not the likeness made by hands, but its transcendental archetype; we are to take part in a communion. We have heard the spoken Word, and remember that “He who sees the Word, sees Me”; we are to see this Word, not now in an audible but in a visible and tangible form. In the words of a Chinese inscription, “When we behold the precious characteristics, it is as though the whole and very person of the Buddha were present in majesty…”

-Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

*Traditional Art and Symbolism*
Week One: Generosity
Visual Art
The Human Eye

“The Human Eye is the eye we all have that can see flowers, the blue sky, and the white clouds.”

Sutra: The Lotus Sutra
Cultural Lens: Central Asia in Tang Dynasty China

Monday, August 1: Course introduction
Principles of Six
Images of Dunhuang
Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion
Wonderful Sound

Tuesday, August 2: Studio Visit
Class Guest: Gronk, visual artist, co-founder of Asco Chicano artist collective
Chicano artists take back the streets
Processions and performance art
Living with the dead
Painting on walls / graffiti
Instantaneous art / discipline of calligraphy
Covering every inch of the surface
Inter-penetrating cosmologies

Location: Gronk’s studio in downtown Los Angeles
(Illuminated caves of downtown LA)
Walk down Broadway
Dinner at Grand Central Market
(Dunhuang and Los Angeles as meeting points of cultures, commercial interests, food, and creative exchange)
Recommended Reading:

*The Six Perfections*: Chapter One, *Generosity*, pp. 13-25

*The Diamond Sutra*: Part One, *Dynamics of Prajnaparamita*, pp. 29-48
  - The Setting • Subhuti’s Question • The First Flash of Lightning •
  - The Greatest Gift • Signlessness

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, pp. 31-52
  - Chapter One, *Excellence of Bodhichitta*
  - Chapter Two, *Confession*
  - Chapter Three, *Taking Hold of Bodhichitta*

Recommended Pilgrimages:

Saturday • August 6 • 1:00pm

Craft and Folk Art Museum, Free, rsvp@cafam.org

*A Conversation with Peter Sellars and Gronk*
Week Two: Ethical Discipline, Moral Action
Poetry, Literature, Sutras
The Divine Eye

“The Divine Eye is the eye of the gods that sees very near and very far and also sees through darkness and through obstacles.”

Sutra: The Vimalakirti Sutra

Cultural Lens: Tibet in Tang Dynasty China

Tang Dynasty Poet: Wang Wei

Monday, August 8 – Cultural Mapping and Food

Class Guest: Jonathan M. Hall, Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Pomona College

Project: Intersecting Westwood Geographies: the World in Los Angeles

Location: Qin West Chinese Cuisine at the corner of Westwood & Santa Monica Blvds. (Western Chinese pulled noodles in Westwood)

Tuesday, August 9 – Tibetan Culture On the Road

Class Guest: Robert Thurman, Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Columbia University

Tibetan Buddhism arrives in America
Visionary businessmen
Sickness and Buddhist practice
The equality of women
The perfumed universe
Inconceivability
Silence – the lion’s roar

Recommended Reading:

*The Six Perfections*: Chapter Two, *Ethical Discipline*, pp. 27-41
*The Diamond Sutra*: Part Two, *Language of Non-Attachment*, pp. 49-64

A Rose Is Not a Rose • Entering the Ocean of Reality • Non-Attachment

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, pp. 53-76

Chapter Four, *Carefulness*
Chapter Five, *Vigilant Introspection*
Recommended Pilgrimages:
Sunday • August 7 • 11:00 am • Free
Hammer Museum Screening: Cave of the Yellow Dog

Sunday • August 7 • 7:00 pm • Free
Grand Performances: Sanubar Tursan- The Diva of West China’s Uyghurs

Wednesday • August 10 • 7:00 pm
Getty Center • Harold Williams Auditorium • Free, Advanced Tickets Required
Hidden Illumination in Dark Times and the Secret Ambrosia of Great Compassion
A Conversation with Peter Sellars and Robert Thurman

Thursday • August 11 • 4:00 pm
Arts in Society Conference • UCLA Broad Art Center • Free
Climbing the Razor-Path Mountain and Leaping Into the Fire: Next Steps in Charged Times — The Humanities and the Aesthetics of Delight Shape and Awaken Political Consciousness

Week Three: Patience
Dance
The Eye of Insight

“The Eye of Insight is the eye that can see the true nature of non-self in living beings and the impermanent nature of all objects of mind.”

Sutra: The Flower Ornament Sutra

Cultural Lens: India in Tang Dynasty China

Tang Dynasty Poet: Du Fu

Monday, August 15 – Movement, Mudras, Miracles

Class Guests:
Hua Wenyi, Kunqu Opera master artist, NEA National Heritage Fellow
Michael Schumacher, choreographer, dancer, teacher
Tuesday, August 16 – Body of the Buddha: Art of the Dunhuang Temples

Class Guest: D. Neil Schmid, Guest Professor, Department of Art History, University of Vienna

Location/Time: Hammer Museum, 7:30 pm

Recommended Reading:
*The Six Perfections: Chapter Three, Patience*, pp. 43-62
- Dwelling in Peace • Creating a Formless Pure Land • The Sand in the Ganges •
- Every Land Is a Holy Land • The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion •
- Abiding in Non-Abiding • Great Determination • The Last Epoch
*The Way of the Bodhisattva: Chapter Six, Patience*, pp. 77-96

**Week Four:** Enthusiastic Effort
Music
The Eye of Transcendent Wisdom

“A bodhisattva with the Eye of Transcendent Wisdom sees that he or she and all beings share the same nature of emptiness, and therefore his or her liberation is one with the liberation of all beings.”

Sutra: The Amitabha Sutra

Cultural Lens: Africa in Tang Dynasty China

Tang Dynasty Poet: Li Po

Monday, August 22 – Celestial Music, Improvisation, and the Rain of Flowers

Class Guest: Vijay Iyer, Composer; Pianist; Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts, Department of Music, Harvard University
Tuesday, August 23 – Performing the Silk Road

Class Guest: Chuen-Fung Wong, Associate Professor, Department of Ethnomusicology, Hong Kong Baptist University

Location/Time: Hammer Museum, 7:30 pm

Recommended Reading:
The Six Perfections: Chapter Four, Enthusiastic Effort, pp. 63-79
The Diamond Sutra: Part Four, Mountains and Rivers Are Our Body, pp. 91-115
   Reality Is a Steadily Flowing Stream • Great Happiness • Thirty-Two Marks •
   Insight – Life • The Sunflower • The Moon Is Just the Moon •
   The Most Virtuous Act • Organic Love • A Basket Filled With Words •
   Not Cut Off From Life • Virtue and Happiness • Neither Coming Nor Going •
   The Indescribable Nature of All Things • Tortoise Hair and Rabbit’s Horns •
   Teaching the Dharma
The Way of the Bodhisattva: Chapter Seven, Diligence, pp. 97-108

Recommended Pilgrimages:
Sunday • August 21 • 7:00 pm
Hollywood Bowl • Ticketed event
Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma

Wednesday • August 24 • 7:30 pm
The Getty Center • Free, reservation recommended
Screening – Cave of the Silken Web with Silk Road Ensemble

Week Five: Meditative Concentration
Architecture & Textiles
The Buddha Eye

“The Buddha Eye is the eye that can see clearly the past, the present, and the future, as well as the minds of all living beings in the past, the present, and the future.”

Sutra: The Diamond Sutra

Cultural Lens: Persia in Tang Dynasty China

Tang Dynasty Poet: Du Fu
Monday, August 29 – Textiles on the Spirit Road

Class Guest: Elena Phipps, Lecturer, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures; Senior Museum Scholar, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Tuesday, August 30 – Imaginary Architecture

Class Guest: Greg Lynn, Studio Professor, UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design; Greg Lynn Form

Recommended Reading:
The Six Perfections: Chapter Five, Concentration, pp. 81-94
The Way of the Bodhisattva: Chapter Eight, Meditative Concentration, pp. 109-136

Recommended Pilgrimages:
Sunday • August 28 • 4:00 pm
The Getty Center • Free, reservation recommended
Neville Agnew: The Care of Time and the Dimensions of Conservation at the Mogao Grottoes

Wednesday • August 31 • 7:30 pm
Hammer Museum Screening: Cave of the Silken Web with DJ Discostan

Week Six: Wisdom
Film and Media, Awareness and Insight
The Buddha Eye

Sutra: The Heart Sutra

Cultural Lens: Japan and Korea in Tang Dynasty China

Sung Dynasty Poet: Wang An-shih

Video Installation Art: Bill Viola
Monday, September 5
NO CLASS – Labor Day

Tuesday, September 6 - FINAL CLASS

Class Guest: Hirokazu Kosaka, Artist; Artistic Director, Japanese American Cultural & Community Center

Event: Zen Tea Ceremony

Location: Japanese Cultural Room, JACCC

Recommended Reading:
The Six Perfections: Chapter Six, Wisdom, pp. 95-130
The Way of the Bodhisattva: Chapter Nine, Wisdom, pp. 137-161

FINAL PROJECT DUE IN CLASS
Office of Students with Disabilities –
It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of any disability that would require accommodation in class.

If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform your instructor and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, 310.825.1501, 310.206-6083 (telephone device for the deaf). Website: www.osd.ucla.edu

UCLA policy on absences

According to university policy, there are extenuating circumstances that define excused absences in cases such as severe injury, loss of a family member, religious holidays, etc. If the student feels that she/he has missed/will miss a class that falls into this category, the student should immediately meet with the instructor to arrange completion of missed assignments. Students can review university absence policy. Additionally, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor in a timely manner of any missed class due to the observance of a major religious holiday and arrange completion of missed assignments.

UCLA policy on Plagiarism

*Students must conform to the UCLA’s rules on Academic Integrity and will be held responsible for transgressions of the policy. Please familiarize yourself with the Student Guide to Academic Integrity on the Dean of Students’ website at: http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hạnh, Thích Nhất. *The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion: Commentaries on the*


