Spiral 2019

THE POWER ISSUE

within and between us

THE RUBIN

Quiet the mind, activate the spirit with Kate Johnson
Whip smart: Kasia Urbaniak on female empowerment
When magic and warfare met in Buddhism
Jeremy Heimans: New Power to the people
WHERE DOES TRUE POWER LIE?
Your answer likely depends on your definition of power and whether you feel you have it or not. At the Rubin we’ve come to see power as relational, as a potential within and between us. Throughout 2019, we’ll be exploring these themes through a Buddhist lens via exhibitions, public programming, and SPIRAL, our annual magazine.

The exhibition Faith and Empire shows how art, politics, and even magic came together over the centuries to shape Tibetan Buddhism and create an unexpected system of power. Though we often associate Buddhism with peaceful, meditative acts, the truth is more complicated. Wars were fought in Buddha’s name, secret rituals enacted. Incarnation was used to legitimate power (who would dare challenge a bodhi tree’s claim as holy?); and to empower the universal ruler. Even sorcery played an important role, and magical techniques were developed to destroy rival armies and their gods on the battlefield.

Today, we’re fighting a different kind of battle. We live in an age where the definition of truth is being questioned. Deep within Buddhism is the notion that power objects through the eyes of contemporary artists Marina Abramović and Sanford Biggers, among others. Join us at the Rubin this year—as well as online and in these pages—and discover what power means to you.

POWER UP
Spiral
THE POWER ISSUE 2019

LETTER
Power Up
JORRIT BRITSCHEGI.............. 01

PROFILE
Power Objects
ALIEN-NATION: And the Voice of Shahidul Alam
RAHAS ALLAMA................... 06

INTERVIEW
This is Your Brain on Power
SUKHINDER OBHI AND HOWARD KAPLAN.............. 10

FEATURE
Waking Up to Power
Is a Spiritual Practice
KATE JOHNSON

INSIGHT
Empowerments: Awakening the Buddha Within
SCOTT GLOBUS

ILLUSTRATION
The Liberation of Tara
JIA SUNG

WISDOM
Advice from a Mindfulness Teacher
AYMAN MUKERJI

INTERVIEW
Accidentally on Purpose: Conversations with Monika Bravo and Youdi Maharjan
ELENA PAKHOUTOVA.............. 26

PROFILE
Dao of the Dominatrix
KATY BRENNAN................... 20

INSIGHT
The Struggle Itself
GAVIN IRBY...................... 30

INTERVIEW
Out with the Old: New Power Is Here to Stay
JEREMY HEIMANS AND AIDAN YOUNG...................... 32

FEATURE
War Magic: The Wizarding World of Tibetan Sorcery
KARL DEBRECZENY

DEEPER DIVE
The Power of Truth
DONALD S. LOPEZ JR.............. 38

FOCUS
Creature Comforts
SHAMANESS CHOKBAR.............. 40

POETRY
Breath for Guan Yin
CHING-IN CHEN.................. 09

FEATURE
Accidentally on Purpose: Conversations with Monika Bravo and Youdi Maharjan
ELENA PAKHOUTOVA.............. 26

INTERVIEW
Hear Me Roar: What Buddhism Can Teach Us about #MeToo
LAMA TSULTRIM ALLIONE AND SARAH ZABRODSKI

INSIGHT
The Struggle Itself
GAVIN IRBY...................... 30

INTERVIEW
Out with the Old: New Power Is Here to Stay
JEREMY HEIMANS AND AIDAN YOUNG...................... 32

FEATURE
War Magic: The Wizarding World of Tibetan Sorcery
KARL DEBRECZENY

INSIGHT
The Struggle Itself
GAVIN IRBY...................... 30

FEATURE
War Magic: The Wizarding World of Tibetan Sorcery
KARL DEBRECZENY

FIND ADDITIONAL CONTENT AND EXPERIENCE MORE AT RUBINMUSEUM.ORG/SPIRAL
How meditation and activism can work together to quiet the mind in a loud, troubled world

Kate Johnson

How I HEAR MOST OFTEN in the voices of new meditators is a longing to feel really here for this life, to be 100% awake for it. They have a vague sense of sleepwalking through their days, not really feeling what’s happening while it’s happening, being mentally consumed with a past they can’t change and a future they can’t foresee. They express bewilderment in the face of the present moment, having somehow missed the subtle shifts that led up to the current state of affairs. They find themselves blinking in the glare of current reality, wondering. How did I get here? How did we collectively get here? And when “here” is a state of suffering, how do we get to a better place?

This longing—to be present, to be clear, to be fully awake in every moment and empowered to shape the future—is a kind of awakening in itself. We are awake to the fact that we are going through the motions of our life, we are awake to the fact that we don’t want to be, and we are aware that waking up is a critical juncture in the path that leads to happiness, wholeness, and freedom.

In contemporary interpretations of the Buddha’s teachings, the words awakening, enlightenment, and liberation are often used interchangeably to describe the goal of mindfulness and meditation practices. But more and more, I’m convinced that we have to wake up before we can be free. Awakening is the cause, and liberation is the natural effect of being awake in the world.

The difficult part about waking up is that when we awaken today, we wake up to a world that is full of suffering and inequity. That’s not all that there is, but it definitely exists. For those of us who live lives of relative privilege and comfort, being confronted with the reality can be jarring. It can make us want to close our ears and turn away.

This was exactly my path. I thought I was coming to meditation because politics hurt too much. Local, national, and global governments and their shady dealings in business and civil society seemed overwhelming in their disfunction. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism—all of the “isms” and the “obohias” that showed up on the world stage also showed up in my work relationships, friendships, and romantic partnerships.

I thought I needed a refuge from the troubles of the world. What I got was a refuge where I could process the troubles of the world, a place where I could cultivate enough well-being to reengage with it. Sitting in the quiet of the meditation hall, my mind got much, much louder before it ever got quiet.

Dynamics of internalized privilege and oppression often manifest as experiences we think of as intensely personal and unrelated to politics. A sense of separation. Restlessness, doubt, and fear. Craving for comfort, irritation when what little comfort we have is disturbed. But the longer we stay with what feels like our personal experience, the more we can see that these experiences are microcosmic manifestations of the greed, hatred, and delusion that underscores what Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the “three giant triplets” of “capitalism, materialism, and racism.”

Many Buddhist teachers and scholars describe disillusionment, and even disgust, as a stage of insight on the path to liberation. They often identify it as the outcome of awakening into the truth of impermanence, the soul-level realization that every conditioned phenomenon in this world, including our own bodies, are subject to death and decay. A natural response to this realization is to become disenchanted with the stuff of this world.

In my own practice and teaching, I’ve seen disillusionment occur as a stage of insight into the dynamics of privilege and oppression. If our mindfulness practice includes attention to the suffering of the world and an investigation of its causes, that exploration will inevitably lead us to question the systems that result in those conditions and the mental models that power them. If our mindfulness practice includes a patient awareness of our own thoughts, emotions, and body sensations that arise in relation to people we perceive as different from us, they will inevitably lead us face to face with the degree to which we have internalized those same systems. These awakenings are not just a side effect of spiritual practice—they are the very point of spiritual practice. For some of us, they are the way in to a liberating awareness of the truth of our interdependence and recognition that happiness and freedom are inherently collective endeavors.

We have to wake up before we can be liberated from the dynamics of privilege and oppression that live inside of us and before we can liberate ourselves from participating in the systems that perpetuate privilege and oppression in our world. The good news is that once we do the hard work of waking up—of noticing what is happening inside of us and around us—our hearts are clear enough to see and understand the suffering of the world and the bodies, are subject to death and decay. A natural response to this realization is to become disenchanted with the stuff of this world.

In the process of waking up to the truth of institutionalized power, we may fear that our hearts will break, and we will be right. They will break open, and we will be radically transformed. We will find that we have access to a power much greater than the power that systemic privilege affords us. It is a power that can drive us toward profound change.

Kate Johnson teaches meditation and yoga at schools and Buddhist retreat centers and is a featured speaker at the International Meditation Project and workshops for social change agents and communities. Johnson is a co-founder of the Khen King School and a co-founder of the Stuart Mindfulness Network. She is also a co-founder of the Jewish Social Justice Network and a board member of the Stuart Community Foundation. Her book, Friendship as Freedom: Mindful Practices for Resisting Oppression, will be published by Parallax Press in 2019.
In ancient folklore, an alien was a being from another place, unfamiliar with the customs of the inhabitants it encountered. An engagement with the otherworldly triggered the imagination of writers, thinkers, and statesmen to conceive of and possibly even prepare for what was beyond their borders. Ironically, the times now are not very different, as people and governments have turned against their neighbors. The story here is graver still—a situation wherein they turn against their own people.

See Shahidul Alam’s photographs at the Rubin Museum this fall.

In statecraft, one always questions the very nature of authority, but also its location. Who wields power? Is it the vigilant citizen, regimes, activists from the field? Are the voices of those who have been disenfranchised or those who strategically deploy their power able to cultivate change for the better?

Resounding across the globe, after being released on bail in late 2018 following a 107-day incarceration in Bangladesh, one voice certainly stands out from the fray: the deep, meditative inflection of Shahidul Alam. He once stated, “There is no government I know that does not champion democracy and human rights in its rhetoric but also actively suppress both in its practice. It’s best to recognize that reality and work within it rather than fantasize some ideal solution that has no relevance to everyday art practice.”

For Shahidul and other activists, the everyday is perhaps the place of power, and as we have learned, everyone who now has the means of communicating across the planet through mobile devices should ideally be the voice of real power: plural, shared, and dispersed.

As images flicker across the multiscreens of our everyday lives, and as data sharing and mining become possibly the most empowering tools of our democracy, do we realize how and when we become affiliated to a political will, as well as when power is wrested from us?

Shahidul Alam, renowned photographer, pedagogue, writer, and curator, has countered rote opinions, opposed covert and guided elisions of secular expression, and revealed marginalizations and atrocities within his community. On August 5, 2018, he was arrested and imprisoned for voicing his reactions to civil injustices being protested by students who mobilized in the thousands across Bangladesh some months prior.

His wrongful incarceration and conditional release bring to light constitutional loopholes those in power use to mobilize laws such as Section 57 of Bangladesh’s Information Communications Technology Act, under which several citizens and media practitioners have been incarcerated and tortured for expressing their so-called antinational opinions. They have been deemed trespassers and troublemakers.

After founding both the Drik Picture Library and the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute in 1998, Shahidul established Chobi Mela, South Asia’s most influential photography festival, as well as Banglarights, an independent media platform for human rights in Bangladesh. Which is to say, there is a

Profile

The Bangladeshi photographer and activist risks his freedom for protest

by Rahaab Allana

see Shahidul Alam’s photographs at the Rubin Museum this fall.


Top Image: An Alien

Phased by H. J. Allens

1969

The print for the article by Rahaab Allana is by H. J. Allen, a British photographer and illustrator known for his work in science fiction and fantasy. The image features an alien character in a futuristic setting.
dynamic, poetic, and prophetic power in this moment, as Shahidul, as one of the masters of image-making in the world, has over the years galvanized the passion- 
ate articulations of an entire generation to think 
critically; to see well beyond the surface of an image or 
circumstance; and to always question every event, inten- 
tion, context, and voice of the self and other. 
Having probed and exposed homogenizing tenden- 
cies across social spectrums by cross-examining cul- 
tures in conflict, he has championed the individual as 
an unswerving, energized force and personal disclo- 
sure as a profound political tool.
His pictures, like many of those now coming from 
the street, present an image of a world that seems to 
turning against itself and hence others too. As a consequence, nothing becomes more elusive than our 
association to place, and hence, nothing more contentious than the laws that seek to govern our actions therein. As controllers of our own image, are we 
strongly defined by them, covertly or by the view- 
ers who follow us? Can we ponder what the collec- 
tive will of the alteration of an image will be? At a time when fabricating situations and reimagining memories through staged images proliferate, the risks and eth- 
cratic implications of circulating images makes us also re-eval the claims of news-gathering processes. Who is to be trusted? Shahidul suggests that everyone can 
and must act ethically to set the barometer right. As political prognostics surrounding identity issues force the world into binaries yet again—as religion, caste, or class in coded and overt ways enfore 
ephaphic inappropriacies or induce a detached form of ritual cleansing—Shahidul’s life clearly denounces a growing social malaise by speaking to and of vi- 
brant lived testimonies that function as countergu- 
ment, making transparent rampant authoritative mo-
lives. His work activates a sense of multiculturalism that is carefully and prodigally deployed as a parallel 
revisit the claims of news-gathering processes. Who 
before turning against itself and hence others too. As 
the terror, genocide, civil unrest, and devastation 
and uprooting of entire communities continues to un-
fold. While many stories of suffering are simply never 
revisited, the iconography of activism, with the production of 
visible reminders and metaphors around appropriation 
and ownership of our own image, are now everywhere, 
and his institutions stand strong. Our thoughts remain 
always be remembered.
As bullets whiz by, as shrapnel shatters, as hate 
flows from bone to bone. At blue skies curse, the wounded I nurse, as spite 
attaches sister. When blue skies curse, the wounded I nurse, as spite 
attaches sister. I am a nurse, I am a nurse, as blue skies curse, the wounded I nurse, as spite 
attaches sister.
In 2017, Shahidul presented the exhibition Endering the 
Other, looking at ways we can recalibrate the de-
bate on radical Islam by considering the everyday life 
experiences in conflict, he has championed the individual as 
an unswerving, energized force and personal disclo- 
sure as a profound political tool.
Shahidul: in an interview at the Rubin Foundation for the 
Vidhi Centre in New Delhi, a Chopra Foundation in London, and an honorary fellow of King’s College, London. After completing his mas-
ters degree from SOAS in London, he was a curator at the National 
Gallery in London, where he also worked as an independent 
photographer and writer until 2005.
Shahidul: please no time
1. 10,000 steps a hum 
2. breath for Guan Yin 
3. friend said ‘all the sunshines chasting’ brought me green 
4. at lost and found, 
5. when street drains pressure in street
Howard Kaplan: How did you begin to study power and its effects on the brain?

Sukhvinder Obhi: One of the things we studied for quite a few years is the phenomenon of non-conscious mimicry, the tendency to copy what other people are doing in a social interaction. It led us to the mirror system and a process called mirror imaging, which involves the activation of structures in the brain of someone who is observing another person’s actions. It’s called mirroring because the activated structures overlap with the motor structures that would be active if the observer was performing the action themselves. We were researching the potential link between this kind of mirroring and the behavioral manifestation of non-conscious mimicry. In essence, we were wondering if non-conscious mimicry might be implemented by mirroring in the brain, as both phenomena involve taking an input from another person and then activating motor structures. Strangely, this line of research initially led us to power.

How does the mirror system relate to power and the brain?

As we were doing our research, we looked at the kinds of variables that are known to affect non-conscious mimicry and saw whether those same variables affected mirroring in the brain. For example, social psychologists have found that when you feel independent you mimic other people less. When you feel socially connected you mimic other people more. We wondered whether making someone feel interdependent would be associated with mirroring in the brain, as both phenomena involve taking an input from another person and then activating motor structures. Strangely, this line of research initially led us to power.

How did it influence your ideas about power?

We became very interested in the idea that power is such a ubiquitous social force. If you want to understand social behavior, you can’t really understand it without thinking about power, because power permeates virtually all interactions in the social world. We often use a Bertand Russell quote: “The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.” Russell’s perspective is insightful.

What do we know about the brains of people who feel powerful versus powerless?

From a cognitive neuroscience perspective, power has been understudied, but it’s very likely that power affects multiple brain systems. In terms of what we’ve studied, there are a couple of interesting brain systems that we think are linked to different power states.

One of these systems is called the behavioral activation system. It’s about our propensity to get up and do something, to act. The other is the behavioral inhibition system. It’s involved in inhibiting behavior and avoiding threats. In our research we’ve found that feeling powerless is associated with less activity in the behavioral activation system, which reflects lower approach orientation. Conversely, powerful people show more of this left frontal brain activity. In fact, neutral people show a bit of this left frontal activity as well. The difference seems to come from the low-power people. When you are feeling particularly low power, your brain seems to change in a way where you’re engaging the behavioral activation system less. This pattern of brain activity could explain why low-power people might display more tentativeness and be less prone to just getting up and acting in a situation. Of course, this affects how people might access opportunities in the world.

According to neuroscientist Sukhvinder Obhi, power is neither good nor bad—it’s all in the way you use it.

Howard Kaplan

The Rubin Museum of Art

Interview on power and its effects on the brain

Howard Kaplan: How did you begin to study power and its effects on the brain?

Sukhvinder Obhi: One of the things we studied for quite a few years is the phenomenon of non-conscious mimicry, the tendency to copy what other people are doing in a social interaction. It led us to the mirror system and a process called mirror imaging, which involves the activation of structures in the brain of someone who is observing another person’s actions. It’s called mirroring because the activation of structures overlap with the motor structures that would be active if the observer was performing the action themselves. We were researching the potential link between this kind of mirroring and the behavioral manifestation of non-conscious mimicry. In essence, we were wondering if non-conscious mimicry might be implemented by mirroring in the brain, as both phenomena involve taking an input from another person and then activating motor structures. Strangely, this line of research initially led us to power.

How does the mirror system relate to power and the brain?

As we were doing our research, we looked at the kinds of variables that are known to affect non-conscious mimicry and saw whether those same variables affected mirroring in the brain. For example, social psychologists have found that when you feel independent you mimic other people less. When you feel socially connected you mimic other people more. We wondered whether making someone feel interdependent would be associated with mirroring in the brain, as both phenomena involve taking an input from another person and then activating motor structures. Strangely, this line of research initially led us to power.

How did it influence your ideas about power?

We became very interested in the idea that power is such a ubiquitous social force. If you want to understand social behavior, you can’t really understand it without thinking about power, because power permeates virtually all interactions in the social world. We often use a Bertand Russell quote: “The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.” Russell’s perspective is insightful.

What do we know about the brains of people who feel powerful versus powerless?

From a cognitive neuroscience perspective, power has been understudied, but it’s very likely that power affects multiple brain systems. In terms of what we’ve studied, there are a couple of interesting brain systems that we think are linked to different power states.

One of these systems is called the behavioral activation system. It’s about our propensity to get up and do something, to act. The other is the behavioral inhibition system. It’s involved in inhibiting behavior and avoiding threats. In our research we’ve found that feeling powerless is associated with less activity in the behavioral activation system, which reflects lower approach orientation. Conversely, powerful people show more of this left frontal brain activity. In fact, neutral people show a bit of this left frontal activity as well. The difference seems to come from the low-power people. When you are feeling particularly low power, your brain seems to change in a way where you’re engaging the behavioral activation system less. This pattern of brain activity could explain why low-power people might display more tentativeness and be less prone to just getting up and acting in a situation. Of course, this affects how people might access opportunities in the world.

According to neuroscientist Sukhvinder Obhi, power is neither good nor bad—it’s all in the way you use it.

Howard Kaplan

The Rubin Museum of Art
Power is just your ability to influence the states of other people. The good or bad outcomes yield from how you use it.

Why do you think it’s important to study the relationship between power and the brain? We haven’t got a chance of understanding social behavior unless we can understand what power is doing, and to do this we have to understand what’s going on in the brain. We know to some extent how the brain processes the social world, but we haven’t got a chance of understanding social behavior unless we can understand what power is doing to you, you are under standing yourself and can potentially mitigate some of the bad effects of power. It’s very much about awareness. The research that we’re doing and that others are doing is showing what power can do to the brain and behavior, and the first step is just to appreciate that. Sit back and say, “Wow, I didn’t know that if I feel powerful I’m more likely to interrupt people.” Something like that may seem like it’s pretty benign; it’s a small thing. But if you think about powerful people interrupting people day in day out all the time, and then you think about the cumulative effects on those other people you can see how that can create negative social interactions. The first question to ask would be: How are you using the influence you have over others? If you understand what power is doing to you, you are understanding yourself and can potentially mitigate some of the negatives and harness some of the positives. One of the positives is that power makes you more goal-directed and more likely to act. Take advantage of that and focus on goals that are conducive to positive outcomes. My thesis is that a powerful person will be more effective when they are engaged in behavior that has positive outcomes for other people.

Power seems to be associated with a lot of what we perceive as negative outcomes, but what are some of the positives? How can we harness these positive outcomes? I consider power to be not good or bad. Power is just your ability to influence the states of other people. The good or bad outcomes yield from how you use it. A lot of the research on power looks at what I call the default effects of power. You make someone feel powerful and then you look at what it does to their behavior. If you look at the social psychology of this, you see when someone feels powerful they become worse at taking the perspective of other people. When I’m not taking your perspective, I mean I’m not taking you into account, which means I’m more likely to act in a way that damages you. We also see that powerful people are more likely to engage in any kind of action in any situation, regardless if the action is appropriate or not. That means you’re more impulsive. All of these are default effects of power. On average when you feel a group of people, these effects just happen when you make them feel powerful. I would guess that many of the negative effects of what I call everyday power—the kinds of dynamics that play out in the workplace or family life—are happening because we are not aware of how power is affecting the way we are doing things. We’re not aware that the power that we feel is making us worse at perspective-taking and perhaps less empathic. We’re not aware of the fact that power might be making us more impulsive.

The first step is to create an awareness of what power can do and then coach people in using power more mindfully. Power is not good or bad—it’s how you use it. Once you know that the default effects of power can produce negative tendencies, then it puts you in the driver’s seat to mindfully avoid them.

How can your research be applied to our day-to-day lives? It’s very much about awareness. The research that we’re doing and that others are doing is showing what power can do to the brain and behavior, and the first step is just to appreciate that. Sit back and say, “Wow, I didn’t know that if I feel powerful I’m more likely to interrupt people.” Something like that may seem like it’s pretty benign; it’s a small thing. But if you think about powerful people interrupting people day in day out all the time, and then you think about the cumulative effects on those other people you can see how that can create negative social interactions. The first question to ask would be: How are you using the influence you have over others? If you understand what power is doing to you, you are understanding yourself and can potentially mitigate some of the negatives and harness some of the positives. One of the positives is that power makes you more goal-directed and more likely to act. Take advantage of that and focus on goals that are conducive to positive outcomes. My thesis is that a powerful person will be more effective when they are engaged in behavior that has positive outcomes for other people.

Professor Sukhvinder Obhi is the director and principal investigator of the Social Brain Body and Action Lab at McMaster University, Canada. He completed his PhD in cognitive neuroscience at University College London. He is currently engaged in knowledge mobilization outside of the academy, and leadership in a complex social world. He is actively engaged in the social implications of science and technology, with a particular focus on how to connect the gaps of science and leadership in a complex social world. He is a leader in public engagement with science. He is actively engaged in the social implications of science and technology, with a particular focus on how to connect the gaps of science and leadership in a complex social world. He is a leader in public engagement with science. He is actively engaged in the social implications of science and technology, with a particular focus on how to connect the gaps of science and leadership in a complex social world. He is a leader in public engagement with science.
power comes through my feet as I pedal meeting the rising sun / no one is out by the water and I hear — “this morning is yours” / This black metal frame changes moods (shuts down depression / compels creative thinking as I whirl over bridges collecting city lights of the night) / These wheels whirl me through neighborhoods smelling foods, seeing people from lands innumerable: Lebanon, Italy, Ethiopia, China, Mexico, Ireland, Russia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Greece, and on / Heading home it gets me through Hell’s Gate unscathed up into the Bronx where time settles, suns set, and we brake to recharge.

Ben Venom

I acquired this machete in Bangkok, Thailand, many years ago and placed it on the mantle in my art studio immediately upon my return to San Francisco. Soon after, my good friend Bill McRight filled the blade with engraved drawings and text. These markings all relate to the imagery I work with in my textile pieces and helped transform the machete from a simple weapon to a personal relic. Over time, it has never lost its place on the mantle amid the clutter in my studio. Though the blade itself can be seen as intimidating or powerful, I find that its engraved surface wards off any invaders, real or imagined.

Sanford Biggers

The lotus rises magical and majestic from muck and mire / Its reflection at once talisman and portal through middle passage / "The lotus" is a Buddhist symbol of purity arising from contamination and I use it as an image to relate to the work I do in steel. The lotus rises from the muck of the universe and is a reminder of one’s potential for spiritual growth.

Kembra Pfahler

Only one object has been consistent in my life: the bowling ball I found walking home from school one afternoon in 1980 in New York City. Do I imbue my ball with power? Is it an object that I hold sacred? I’d have to say yes. So much so that at one point the ball felt alive, and I wanted to get a mate or a sibling for it. I walked into a bowling alley on 14th Street and walked out with one. I did many art projects with these bowling balls. My favorite was tying them to my feet and walking on them. They represented and reminded me of the black ball flags signaling dangerous waters on the Southern California beaches where I grew up. Standing on the balls was like surfing. One friend crocheted a doll of me in my The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black costume with bowling balls taped to my feet. Hans Balsung painted women being tortured by having balls strapped to their feet. I found these paintings later and they confirmed my obsession even more. This black sphere sent me through a liminal phase of powerful thoughts and actions. It formed the philosophies that I put into practice. The black ball was the trigger that set my life upon a certain course, and as much as I’d like to think this black ball is not so special, it is.

My Bicycle; image courtesy of Lisa Ross.

It sails me to the river’s edge when I need to understand the universe / takes me past buildings blocking sight and opens vistas that no one can own / incalculable views of Jersey, Brooklyn, Queens and Lady Liberty whispers, “You’re a millionaire.”

Lisa Ross

...
the process is a textile artist based in San Francisco. She said if ever we decided we didn’t want it to not give or throw it away but to give it back to her. Maria was the neighborhood oracle. She lived on the second floor of our five-story tenement walk-up on the Lower East Side. When people wanted a spell, dream interpretation, or prediction, they’d call from the street up to her window on the second floor. Maria rarely left her apartment except to go to church on Sundays. I guess she had a special oracle name, because there was rarely a day you didn’t hear someone calling “Pooka!” I never asked her about this name; I just assumed it was an oracle name, because anyone who didn’t want her magical services just called her Maria. We never asked but she always said an incantation whenever we had a court date with our evil landlord. Walter. Maria was afraid to cross him legally for fear of eviction and the immigration authorities—he kept her under constant threat. But boy could Maria cast a spell. In the forty years of housing court litigation we never lost a case. Maria passed away some years ago. The bat is still sitting on the scione in our kitchen. Sandieva (b./c. image courtesy of Jack Waters)

Marina Abramović is an artist and rock musician, the band NYOBS in New York City in 1973. She also created a cult within the band’s name; I just assumed it was an orisha name, because there was rarely a day you didn’t hear someone calling “Pooka!” I never asked her about this name; I just assumed it was an oracle name, because anyone who didn’t want her magical services just called her Maria. We never asked but she always said an incantation whenever we had a court date with our evil landlord. Walter. Maria was afraid to cross him legally for fear of eviction and the immigration authorities—he kept her under constant threat. But boy could Maria cast a spell. In the forty years of housing court litigation we never lost a case. Maria passed away some years ago. The bat is still sitting on the scione in our kitchen. Sandieva (b./c. image courtesy of Jack Waters)

The owner of the stone church is a certain emotion, to make a power center.

Example of Chewing Sugar cane, banana skin, etc. and dip this repeatedly in the largest hole until blood appears from the smallest hole, which is the sign that the victim is dead.

Test accepts from Marina Abramović, Public Body (Charta: Milan, 2001)


The lamas tell us that there will come a time when, through continued and consistent meditation practice, our experience of suffering will diminish and positive qualities will manifest.

Ritual ceremonies guide us on the path to enlightenment

by Scott Globus

EMPOWERMENTS: AWAKENING THE BUDDHA WITHIN

IN TIBETAN VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM the process of awakening begins when we receive an empowerment from a qualified meditation master. The empowerment ceremony is a ritual performed by the master to introduce us to our own innermost Buddha qualities, which are the most sophisticated philosophical tenets of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism called Buddha Nature. Within our individual, wild, untrained mind exists the inherent potential to awaken as a buddha, liberated from our sufferings and fully capable of helping all beings pacify their own sufferings and develop the great qualities of love, compassion, patience, equanimity, and immeasurable wisdom that we all have deep within. Buddha accomplished this awakening over 2,500 years ago under the Bodhi Tree, and his methods have been passed down from teacher to disciple in an unbroken lineage until the present. Great spiritual teachers still live among us, and we can connect with them.

To start this process, we should seek out a lama, a spiritual teacher, who holds the unbroken lineage and has manifested the signs and qualities of true spiritual realization. The lama should be firmly devoted to assisting disciples, not merely using them for self-centered, short-term goals. We have to do some research and look closely. The traditional texts always tell us to choose a teacher carefully—likewise, the teacher has to investigate the qualities of the student. Once we feel we can trust a lama, we can receive an empowerment.

During the empowerment ceremony, we take the vows of refuge and bodhicitta. When we “take refuge” we formally put our faith and trust in the Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha known as the Dharma, and the community of Buddhists called the sangha, and we pledge to practice meditation and live in accord with Buddhist principles. When we take the bodhisattva vows, we promise not to harm other living beings, and we vow to become enlightened so that we can help all beings become free of suffering and attain enlightenment.

In an empowerment ritual, as the lama introduces us to our pure Buddha qualities, we promise to see the world and living beings as sacred. Due to our self-cringing and deeply emmeshed habits, seeing the world and all beings in this way is hard to do, so we promise to embark on the path of meditation, which the empowerment from the lama has authorized us to practice. Even when times are tough, we remember that we have a sacred commitment, called amaya, with the teacher, so we must not give up. In this way, the lama has empowered us with a skilful meditation method to combat our usual tendency for indolence, ignorance, and self-loathing. Furthermore, through continued and consistent meditation practice, our experience of suffering will diminish and positive qualities will manifest.

The lamas tell us that there will be a time when, due to our effort in meditation, our sacred outlook will become stable and unshakable. We will effortlessly see the world as a pure land and all beings as perfect buddhas, and our mind will be filled with love and compassion for all. At that moment the empowerment we initially received from the external lama will have come to fruition, and our inner power will expand, making us self-empowered and capable of providing refuge and inspiration to others. It is possible for this awakening to happen very quickly, but for most of us it takes diligent effort applied over a long time, combined with continued guidance from our spiritual teachers.

Having had the good fortune to receive hundreds of empowerments from scores of authentic lamas, I feel confident that if one sincerely follows this path, it will yield a meaningful use of one’s precious human life.

There are many powerful meditation methods that can completely unravel and pacify our neurotic minds and fill us with love and compassion for all. This possibility should give us a sense of hope.
Ayman Mukerji Househam's mindfulness practice changes our immune system, gut, and even our genes. www.ayman-mukerji.com

Recent scientific publications and TEDx talk unravel how mindfulness practice changes our immune system, gut, and even our genes.
Female empowerment guru Kasia Urbaniak is in a position to know—and what she knows is helping women expand their power and find their voice.

What do a Daoist nun and a dominatrix have in common?

For more from Kasia Urbaniak visit KasiaUrbaniak.org

JUST OVER FIVE YEARS AGO, Kasia Urbaniak founded the Academy, a school that teaches wom-

en the foundations of power and influence. Today, her teachings are more popular than ever. Her unique curriculum represents a total paradigm shift for both women and men.

In Academy lexicon, the word “you” is dominant and the word “I” is submissive. Neither is inher-

ently superior. “If I’m in control of you, my attention is outward, so precisely fixed on the other person that I almost forget I exist,” Kasia explains, “if you’re sub-

missive, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on yourself and your feelings.”

This exchange of self for other is common to many Eastern spiritual traditions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Contrary to what Western culture teaches us about the primacy of the self, a shift in focus towards the other can be surprisingly liberating, expansive, and empowering as well as compassion-

ate. When we focus on the other, we let go of our lim-

ited, perhaps somewhat fearful and defensive sense of self. In essence, forgetting we exist in this way allows us to realize our fullest potential and to become much more beneficial and effective.

“I believe that the most compassionate thing a teacher can offer is the most practical thing,” Kasia says. Her highly practical and timely teachings de-

signed to help women expand their power are born out of two seemingly opposite but surprisingly sym-

pathetic, your attention is focused inward, on your-
Jia Sung is a Singaporean Chinese artist and educator, born in Minnesota, bred in Singapore, and now based in Brooklyn. She is an art director at Guernica, a 2018–2019 Smack Mellon Studio Artist, and a recipient of the Van Lier Fellowship.

THE LIBERATION OF TARA
WHAT BUDDHISM CAN TEACH US ABOUT #METOO

Lama Tsultrim Allione shares how embracing the sacred feminine can help bring our world into healthy balance.

by Sarah Zarborski

Sarah Zarborski: When did the sacred feminine in Buddhism emerge? Lama Tsultrim Allione: In the Tantric period from 700 to 1200, during the Pala Dynasty in India, there was a shift from the earlier Buddhist focus on renunciation to the path of transformation using the energy of the emotions to transform them into the five poisons. Historically this was a paradigm shift, and at this time, the presence of the feminine asserted itself in Buddhism, and with it came the concept of embodiment as sacred. The attitude to the body shifted from focusing on it being purified, cleansing, and impermanent—in order to facilitate renunciation—into the body as a sacred mandala. Practices of the subtle body, such as yoga, breath control, and sexual sexuality were key in the Tantric Buddhist path. This shift was important in terms of female empowerment, and you begin to see female gurus, female deities, and female buddhas in the Tantric period. Historically all over the world, whenever embodiment rather than transcendence is honored in religion, so is the feminine.

What are the parallels between the Tantric period and our world today? The Tantric period allowed the feminine to come forward. In the story of Naropa, he is outside reading a book on logic and epistemology, and the shadow of an old hag falls across the book. She tells him that he doesn’t understand the meaning; he just understands the words. So there’s a more intuitive relationship being called for—a more direct, nonconceptual relationship with the world. The hag is old and ugly in this story; Naropa actually analyzes her thirty-seven uglinesses, looking at the yellow hair growing from her chin and her drooping mouth. She symbolizes the neglected feminine, and the way he analyzes her demonstrates his obsession with logic.

I see our world in a similar situation. As the feminine rises, as she is now, she might appear to be ugly or angry. That’s because she has been neglected and repressed. Naropa goes through the process of shifting into and accepting a more direct, intuitive part of himself when he leaves the monastery to find his guru. His story relates to ours in the sense that Naropa actually analyzes her thirty-seven uglinesses, looking at the yellow hair growing from her chin and her drooping mouth. She symbolizes the neglected feminine, and the way he analyzes her demonstrates his obsession with logic.

We worship science. Perhaps there is another way of approaching his guru. His story relates to ours in the sense that Naropa actually analyzes her thirty-seven uglinesses, looking at the yellow hair growing from her chin and her drooping mouth. She symbolizes the neglected feminine, and the way he analyzes her demonstrates his obsession with logic.

Some have the belief that feminism is dualistic, that if you really are an advanced practitioner, you cannot possibly be a feminist. But that is a mis-understanding of relative and absolute truth. Gandhi said that anyone who thinks that politics are not spiritual doesn’t understand spirituality. Our political or sociological values are directly imprinted by and associated with our spiritual values. If we look at the situation of women today, so much of the oppression of women comes through religious values. Those attitudes are also dualistic—the split between spirit and matter with women needing to be controlled and dominated to reach transcendence. That’s the split—not understanding the difference between the absolute and the relative truth—because at the absolute level gender is absolutely irrelevant. And at the relative level it is absolutely relevant.

How has your experience of the sacred feminine shifted over time? I hadn’t really thought that much about the sacred feminine until I lost my daughter to SIDS, and her death was a wake-up call because afterwards I really re-read the stories of women. I wondered how did other women in Buddhism deal with this kind of experience? Certainly it would be different than men. The story of the Buddha wasn’t helping me. He left his wife and son in the middle of the night. It would be great to move out of male hierarchy in Buddhism (and in the world) and into a more inclusive power structure and have women be fully trained to lead. This is beginning to happen in Asia and in America. If there were more women teachers perhaps there would be less sexual abuse and less of a “power over” relationship and more of a “power with” approach.

We need to go back to the Tantric period. Any final words? Women have a harder time accepting their bodies. The spirit and body is part of spirituality for men too, though I was a wife and a mother. I always felt a wildness in me that I didn’t want to lose. Though I was a wife and a mother. I always felt a wildness in me that I didn’t want to lose.

SPIRIT-The Rubin Museum of Art

Sarah Zarborski is the senior editor and publications manager at the Rubin Museum of Art.
WE MAY NOT THINK that intentions have power, but in Buddhist culture they define the quality of any action. Commitment and belief are key mental attitudes needed to harness the power of intentions, embodied quite literally in Tibetan prayer wheels. The clockwise rotation of such wheels is believed to propel the thousands of written prayers and mantras contained within these ritual objects into the world.

The works of Youdhi Maharjan and Monika Bravo are as different as the artists’ personalities yet exemplify these ideas, and the two share strong connections in their approaches to creativity and the meaning of art. Together with the other artists featured in the exhibition The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel, which brings together select examples of traditional and contemporary art, they take the Tibetan prayer wheel on a conceptual spin. Maharjan creates intricate collages out of reclaimed book pages through a meticulous process that demonstrates incredible commitment, a state of being that is central to the Buddhist understanding of intention and practice. Although he is not a Buddhist, his familiarity with the philosophical, literary, and intellectual wealth of Indic cultural traditions shines through in his work and conversations.

Bravo explores questions of human perception and the decoding of information through a range of media. She draws from her creative experiences in fields from fashion design to photography, as well as from her practice in her native Bogotá and in the United States. Bravo actively works with and manifests emotional states in her work, specifically the powerful notion of belief, which is essential to empowering intention.

Both artists find joy in creating art, working with text, and transforming it into something new, and they find this process empowering. They believe that text can restrict us by delivering its meaning too easily and taking over the reader’s mind. The artists’ creative manipulation of text allows new meanings to be revealed. Each person who sees the text encounters it anew and makes it their own.

Two artists featured in The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel put commitment and belief at the heart of their practices.

by Elena Pakhoutova

INTERVIEW

ON PURPOSE

YOU DHI MAHARJAN AND THE POWER OF COMMITMENT

Elena Pakhoutova: Your work is a perfect example of the power of commitment. It takes determination and patience to work each page in a very precise manner. How does it help you realize the finished piece? Do you have an image of what the piece will look like?

Youdhi Maharjan: The end result is not determined but the process is. I decide in the beginning what to do with the book, what steps or formula to use, whether to cut all around the letter O and connect the Os with straight lines or organic lines. It is based on the title of the book which inspires the visual work, and the work interprets and gives a new meaning to the title. The process is very monotonous, doing the same thing over and over. In Turning the Wheel (2018), I pierced the book pages with needles in repeating circles, cut individual letters, and then glued them together.
The Power of Intentions: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel

Monika Bravo and the Power of Belief

Elena Pakhotitova: What can you tell me about your artistic practice and process? Monika Bravo: It depends on the project. Sometimes things come to me as ideas, sometimes as concepts. I do have a process of my own lifetime: I get insights and then I have to materialize them. I have been practicing meditation for a long time, so I can observe my essence and transform it into something else. I have a method of doing this. The Spiral of Belief (2012) came from a moment when I was not feeling very good. At the time I had an idea that I had to do certain things to achieve something, but it was not happening, and I was taking this personally, thinking of me at a time—gave me the encouragement, the power to keep me going. This is a multidisciplinary artist born in Bogotá, Colombia, who is a curator of Himalayan art at the Rubin Museum of Art. She curated several exhibitions at the Rubin, most recently Landscape of Belief (2018). On September 10, 2001, Uno Nunca Muere La Vispera, curated by Monika Bravo, opened at the Rubin Museum. It was also a text, maybe a cityscape. It’s very important. I was feeling that the work was not famous. At the opening dinner, this woman I sort of knew it yet.” So I took these feelings and decided to do something with them. I took the title of the show, Invisibles, Landscape, and I said to myself, I’m going to create the most amazing piece. I closed my eyes and started imagining the piece—it was a landscape but it was also a text, maybe a cityscape. I started imagining a building, making drawings, taking images from Google that fit my feeling—lightness, lightness, lightness, transparency, no color—this is unusual because my work is very colorful. I don’t really know how I would do this, and I asked a friend to help me hire a professional for animation. It’s always about what I feel when perceiving my reality. This is the process. This work took three years to make. I had an assistant each year.

My first idea was to make this on the wall, but I needed to express a sense of freedom and wanted to put myself away from the wall and into the center. I also felt that I was being very vulnerable, and working with glass is vulnerable. A lot of materials I use are about manifestation of the body. Very often when people think of the spiritual they forget about the body, or they are so engrossed in their bodies they don’t understand what is going on. So understanding the body is the vehicle of our spirit has been a text for me. And between them is a little lapse of two seconds. There are seven animations of cities that continuously appear, and between them is a little lapse of two seconds that is most important to me. It’s this moment where there is nothing. It refers to the moment when your mind is open and you allow anything to come through. Things like architecture or literature restrict you, draw you along. You are not yourself; they define you, and you lose yourself in them, and when you lose yourself, you lose your identity. Those seconds when there is nothing, the moment when we can still our mind and we are open, that’s when we become aware, and when we are aware, we can make an intention that is so strong that it actually happens.

What you do every day is changing reality. This is the only thing that I have power over. I don’t want the text to be dogmatic. When you talk about a book, it already has an identity, like cities. The text came after meditation. I was working with numbers until then and needed a text. One day, about a year and a half into the project, I heard about Isaac Galván’s Invisible Cities, and I went online and bought it. I opened it, and the book was this: It is like downloading something into my head.

How does Landscape of Belief relate to the exhibition The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel? There are seven animations of cities that continuously appear, and between them is a little lapse of two seconds that is most important to me. It’s this moment where there is nothing. It refers to the moment when your mind is open and you allow anything to come through.
Game designers build power progression into video games because it is incredibly effective at hooking the player. We know there is an undeniable satisfaction in seeing progress bar ("YOU ARE NOW AT LEVEL 2") appear on your screen. It exploits the brain’s dopamine reward system: the game asks the player to perform a series of actions and then rewards them with positive sensory feedback, in turn eliciting a dopamine response. This system is so effective that some people have acquired popular games of fostering a kind of chemical dependency in their players. 

This leveraging of the brain’s reward system has also led to a cynical comparison between video games and a Skinner box: an enclosed apparatus used to study animal behavior. Players take on the role of the lab rat, repeatedly pressing a button to generate a reward. I think this is an unfair comparison, as no behavioral scientist has ever sought to enrich the intellectual life of a lab rat. The pursuit of power in games affords an incredible variety of experiences beyond the reward response—enjoying a story, managing a challenge, making a friend, or participating in a community, just to name a few.

**POWER PROGRESSIONS**

But what is power in a video game? Typically it takes one of two forms. The first is an object essential to the player’s character, for example a magic sword or a piece of the Triforce. The second is an intrinsic quality of the player’s character, represented with concepts like levels or stats like strength or intelligence. These representations of power are meaningful because they allow the player to overcome progressively greater obstacles. 

Game designers have a unique, strange relationship with power. We are responsible for creating both the obstacle and the means to overcome it. Our job is to establish an emotionally satisfying friction to the player’s inevitable progress. A common expression of this idea is that the player overcome an obstacle and is rewarded with the means to overcome the next obstacle. So players slay gobins until they attain a sufficient level to slay giants; then they slay giants until they attain a sufficient level to slay dragons; and on and on.

**THE GRIND**

The cyclical form of this structure is not lost on players, who often describe it as a kind of treadmill or hamster wheel. The term “grinding” emerged with the rise of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG), such as Ultima Online, Everquest, Dark Age of Camelot, and World of Warcraft. It refers to repetitive activity intended to increase one’s power. These games are notorious for demanding hundreds of hours to reach the pinnacle levels. It’s a flippant analogy, but I think of grinding as a kind of asceticism. Players frequently compare stories about the hardships of their “grind” as a metric of their dedication to the game and an expression of the power they have achieved within it. 

But what is power in a video game? Typically it takes one of two forms. The first is an object essential to the player’s character, for example a magic sword or a piece of the Triforce. The second is an intrinsic quality of the player’s character, represented with concepts like levels or stats like strength or intelligence. These representations of power are meaningful because they allow the player to overcome progressively greater obstacles.

Game designers have a unique, strange relationship with power. We are responsible for creating both the obstacle and the means to overcome it. Our job is to establish an emotionally satisfying friction to the player’s inevitable progress. A common expression of this idea is that the player overcome an obstacle and is rewarded with the means to overcome the next obstacle. So players slay gobins until they attain a sufficient level to slay giants; then they slay giants until they attain a sufficient level to slay dragons; and on and on.

**PROGRESS QUEST**

When I consider these questions, I often think about the game Progress Quest. First released in 2002, it was a text-based role-playing game in the vein of Dungeons & Dragons that sat in the corner of your computer. Beyond creating a character, the player did not have to play the game. They could simply click on an option to buy a level up, and the game would proceed. It’s tempting to view these games with condemnation, as a game that plays itself can’t be considered much of a game. But I think this perspective is misguided and passes over the reason behind the popularity of auto-play games. Rather than missing the point, auto-play games might actually reveal the point: humans derive an intrinsic satisfaction from observing progress.

Progress in video games is a means of quantifying a need and representing that need visually. We feel satisfaction when we observe that need fulfilled. Our participation is no more a requirement for that satisfaction than the requirement that we actually hold the sword of the ultimate slayer. It’s enough to see your character wield it. Power is progress, and progress is satisfying. Work is getting done. Things are getting better.

---

*Gavin Ibay* is a video game developer and designer. He was a designer on the Descent franchise (the series that helped kickstart the modern PC action game genre). He has also worked on popular games like Tap Tap Revenge, Clash of Clans, Final Fantasy, World of Warcraft, and World of Warcraft II. He currently lives in Chicago with a cat named Milo. For more information, visit <http://gavinibay.com>.
Jeremy Heimans discusses social connections and dynamics in our brave, new hyperconnected world

By Aidan Young

The power of the crowd gives us unprece- dented opportunities to shift the status quo. Social movements like #MeToo and the gun violence preven- tion movement March For Our Lives suggest that we have power, but not necessarily control, over the actions of others. Jeremy Heimans, the founder and CEO of Purpose, an organization that helps build human-centered movements, is also the co-author of New Power, which outlines the fall of Old Power values like competition and top-down authority to the New Power values of collaboration, transparency, and self-governance. All of us can harness New Power, according to Heimans, but its impact depends on how we use it.

Aidan Young: What can everyday people—or people as global citizens—do to thrive in a New Power environment?

Jeremy Heimans: Old Power and New Power are two different mindsets and different sets of skills. Most people who have succeeded and gotten to positions of authority in institutions have learned the Old Power skillset. You’re learned to hoard stuff that you have, that you know, and that you control that others don’t. You’ve learned to rely on dynamics that are closed. If you want to thrive on a New Power level, you need to learn how to use power not as currency but as current, harnessing this energy that you cannot hoard or control but that nonetheless can be incredibly powerful.

The book New Power starts with a comparison between Harvey Weinstein’s Old Power and the New Power of #MeToo. People are not running #MeToo, they are not controlling that energy, but they are finding ways to use it in constructive ways to make change and to achieve their goal. With New Power, it’s about creating models in which the energy comes not from what is suppressed but from what is uplifted, from systems that are open and not closed, from models that are peer-driven and not leader-driven.

More and more people are turning away from or- ganized religion and embracing more open-end- ed terms like spiritual and practices like medita- tion. How does this shift relate to New Power? I think you could argue that with more personal meditative practices there’s a macro objective, which is partly about moving people away from the traditional conceptions of power: insecurity, hoarding power out of that insecurity, guarding it, seeing the world as a zero-sum game. The underlying philosophy that informs mindfulness meditative practices is about a noncom- petitive orientation to the world, not seeing life as zero-sum. This mode is about sharing and a deeper trans- parentness and honesty in the way you approach the world. I think the argument is that everybody meditated, you would probably have different power dynamics. Does that have implications for who emerges to be a major artist when you don’t have the same gatekeeper model? How does art get commodified? Can more people break through? Do you get art that is, itself, more participatory? What would a world look like in which art is being produced collaboratively by many people? This is a form that is not easy to see now appear in different ways.

Jeremy Heimans: Old Power and New Power are two different mindsets and different sets of skills. Most people who have succeeded and gotten to positions of authority in institutions have learned the Old Power skillset. You’ve learned to hoard stuff that you have, that you know, and that you control that others don’t. You’ve learned to rely on dynamics that are closed. If you want to thrive on a New Power level, you need to learn how to use power not as currency but as current, harnessing this energy that you cannot hoard or control but that nonetheless can be incredibly powerful.

The book New Power starts with a comparison between Harvey Weinstein’s Old Power and the New Power of #MeToo. People are not running #MeToo, they are not controlling that energy, but they are finding ways to use it in constructive ways to make change and to achieve their goal. With New Power, it’s about creating models in which the energy comes not from what is suppressed but from what is uplifted, from systems that are open and not closed, from models that are peer-driven and not leader-driven.

More and more people are turning away from or- ganized religion and embracing more open-end- ed terms like spiritual and practices like medita- tion. How does this shift relate to New Power? I think you could argue that with more personal meditative practices there’s a macro objective, which is partly about moving people away from the traditional conceptions of power: insecurity, hoarding power out of that insecurity, guarding it, seeing the world as a zero-sum game. The underlying philosophy that informs mindfulness meditative practices is about a noncompetitive orientation to the world, not seeing life as zero-sum. This mode is about sharing and a deeper transparency and honesty in the way you approach the world. I think the argument is that everybody meditated you would probably have different power dynamics. Does that have implications for who emerges to be a major artist when you don’t have the same gatekeeper model? How does art get commodified? Can more people break through? Do you get art that is, itself, more participatory? What would a world look like in which art is being produced collaboratively by many people? This is a form that is not easy to see now appear in different ways.

Jeremy Heimans: Old Power and New Power are two different mindsets and different sets of skills. Most people who have succeeded and gotten to positions of authority in institutions have learned the Old Power skillset. You’ve learned to hoard stuff that you have, that you know, and that you control that others don’t. You’ve learned to rely on dynamics that are closed. If you want to thrive on a New Power level, you need to learn how to use power not as currency but as current, harnessing this energy that you cannot hoard or control but that nonetheless can be incredibly powerful.

The book New Power starts with a comparison between Harvey Weinstein’s Old Power and the New Power of #MeToo. People are not running #MeToo, they are not controlling that energy, but they are finding ways to use it in constructive ways to make change and to achieve their goal. With New Power, it’s about creating models in which the energy comes not from what is suppressed but from what is uplifted, from systems that are open and not closed, from models that are peer-driven and not leader-driven.

More and more people are turning away from or- ganized religion and embracing more open-end- ed terms like spiritual and practices like medita- tion. How does this shift relate to New Power? I think you could argue that with more personal meditative practices there’s a macro objective, which is partly about moving people away from the traditional conceptions of power: insecurity, hoarding power out of that insecurity, guarding it, seeing the world as a zero-sum game. The underlying philosophy that informs mindfulness meditative practices is about a noncompetitive orientation to the world, not seeing life as zero-sum. This mode is about sharing and a deeper transparency and honesty in the way you approach the world. I think the argument is that everybody meditated you would probably have different power dynamics. Does that have implications for who emerges to be a major artist when you don’t have the same gatekeeper model? How does art get commodified? Can more people break through? Do you get art that is, itself, more participatory? What would a world look like in which art is being produced collaboratively by many people? This is a form that is not easy to see now appear in different ways.

Jeremy Heimans: Old Power and New Power are two different mindsets and different sets of skills. Most people who have succeeded and gotten to positions of authority in institutions have learned the Old Power skillset. You’ve learned to hoard stuff that you have, that you know, and that you control that others don’t. You’ve learned to rely on dynamics that are closed. If you want to thrive on a New Power level, you need to learn how to use power not as currency but as current, harnessing this energy that you cannot hoard or control but that nonetheless can be incredibly powerful.

The book New Power starts with a comparison between Harvey Weinstein’s Old Power and the New Power of #MeToo. People are not running #MeToo, they are not controlling that energy, but they are finding ways to use it in constructive ways to make change and to achieve their goal. With New Power, it’s about creating models in which the energy comes not from what is suppressed but from what is uplifted, from systems that are open and not closed, from models that are peer-driven and not leader-driven.

More and more people are turning away from or- ganized religion and embracing more open-end- ed terms like spiritual and practices like medita- tion. How does this shift relate to New Power? I think you could argue that with more personal meditative practices there’s a macro objective, which is partly about moving people away from the traditional conceptions of power: insecurity, hoarding power out of that insecurity, guarding it, seeing the world as a zero-sum game. The underlying philosophy that informs mindfulness meditative practices is about a noncompetitive orientation to the world, not seeing life as zero-sum. This mode is about sharing and a deeper transparency and honesty in the way you approach the world. I think the argument is that everybody meditated you would probably have different power dynamics. Does that have implications for who emerges to be a major artist when you don’t have the same gatekeeper model? How does art get commodified? Can more people break through? Do you get art that is, itself, more participatory? What would a world look like in which art is being produced collaboratively by many people? This is a form that is not easy to see now appear in different ways.

Jeremy Heimans: Old Power and New Power are two different mindsets and different sets of skills. Most people who have succeeded and gotten to positions of authority in institutions have learned the Old Power skillset. You’ve learned to hoard stuff that you have, that you know, and that you control that others don’t. You’ve learned to rely on dynamics that are closed. If you want to thrive on a New Power level, you need to learn how to use power not as currency but as current, harnessing this energy that you cannot hoard or control but that nonetheless can be incredibly powerful.

The book New Power starts with a comparison between Harvey Weinstein’s Old Power and the New Power of #MeToo. People are not running #MeToo, they are not controlling that energy, but they are finding ways to use it in constructive ways to make change and to achieve their goal. With New Power, it’s about creating models in which the energy comes not from what is suppressed but from what is uplifted, from systems that are open and not closed, from models that are peer-driven and not leader-driven.

More and more people are turning away from or- ganized religion and embracing more open-end- ed terms like spiritual and practices like medita- tion. How does this shift relate to New Power? I think you could argue that with more personal meditative practices there’s a macro objective, which is partly about moving people away from the traditional conceptions of power: insecurity, hoarding power out of that insecurity, guarding it, seeing the world as a zero-sum game. The underlying philosophy that informs mindfulness meditative practices is about a noncompetitive orientation to the world, not seeing life as zero-sum. This mode is about sharing and a deeper transparency and honesty in the way you approach the world. I think the argument is that everybody meditated you would probably have different power dynamics. Does that have implications for who emerges to be a major artist when you don’t have the same gatekeeper model? How does art get commodified? Can more people break through? Do you get art that is, itself, more participatory? What would a world look like in which art is being produced collaboratively by many people? This is a form that is not easy to see now appear in different ways.
Tantric ritual technologies involving mantras, charms, paintings, and sculptures enabled rulers to conquer their enemies and harness power.

Earl Debreceny

"Non-humans who conceal [themselves] by magi- cal emanation, of such high and low [places] as Jing (Jing) of the (Monogol) empire which comprises anything under the sun, listen [to my command]! It is absolutely forbidden to harm those who hold my [decree] by such means as the harmful eight classes of gods and demons, curses, invocation rit- uals to destroy enemies, malevolent spirits, poster- ghosts, and oath-breakers. [All] must heed this de- cree by Ga Aryan Dampa! However, if there are those who disobey, [I now] by the Three Jewels that, having unleashed the fierce punishment of the Dharmar protectors, their heads will split into one hundred pieces!"

SO READS A DECREES by Dampa, a thirteenth-cen- tury ritual specialist of the wrathful deity Mahakala at Qubileil’s court. The decree, which doubles as a protective charm for those who carry it, demonstrates Dampa’s willingness to mix political authority with tantric power, the human realm with the spirit world.

The force of religion to claim political power is the focus of the exhibition and publication Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism offered Inner Asian empires a symbol of their claim to political power and legitimacy in the Tibetan Buddhist world. Lama Zhang is mastered it, became an important part of political legitimation as well as a literal means to achieving physical power: a ritual technology that we would characterize today as magic.

The image of a monk meditating in a remote cave is a Western romantic stereotype that limits our un- derstanding of the wide range of Tibetan religious activity. In reality, many religious figures have played much more active, engaged roles in history, acting as court chaplains who served their ruler-patron’s needs. Monk-rulers also rose to power, conflating their interests with those of religion and the state. For the imper- al courts of Asia, one of the great appeals of Esoteric Tantra was seen as a potent technology to control both the internal and external worlds, with four main goals: pacification, enrichment, subjugation, and destruction. Tibets viewed the legendary eight-century wizard Padmasambhava—who is said to have engaged in magical battles with local gods and demons to tame the region—as a source of the most potent forms of such magical power. A wide array of images, such as human effigies like this painted ver- sion on the left or more abstract ritual dough-offering sculptures (torma), were employed to both ward off danger and subdue or destroy one’s enemies.

Magical warfare, and the charisma of those who mastered it, became an important part of political leg- itimacy in the Tibetan Buddhist world. Lama Zhang is a fascinating study in the political and martial employ- ment of Tantric Buddhism in the twelfth century. He engaged in political and military affairs, ruled territory, and enforced secular law. He even sent his own stu- dents into battle as part of their religious practice. In addition to conventional weapons, Lama Zhang em- ployed a ritualized warfare of magic spells, purport- edly aided by powerful protector deities such as Shri Devi and Mahakala.

Tibetan Buddhism, known for the efficacy of their ritual magic, also served imperial courts to the east, such as the Tangut kingdom of Xixia (1038–1227). The Mongols adopted the Tangut practice of em- ploying Tibetans as their preceptors, and the wrath- ful deity Mahakala became the state protector and focus of the imperial cult. Mahakala (“The Great Black One”), represented in the sculpture below,
The Mongolian helmet at right is a striking example of the deployment of magic on the battlefield. The interlocking letters of the Kalachakra mantra, known as “The Ten Syllables of Power,” are the central iconographic feature over the brow. Above looms the wrathful deity Vajrabhairava, one of the principle deities in the Gelukpa Order’s arsenal of destructive magical practices. The emperors of the Mongol Qing dynasty (1644–1011) adopted Tibetan Buddhism as a means of political legitimacy and used war magic as one means to establish their authority. In the eighteenth century, the Qianlong Emperor, who positioned himself as an emanation of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Marpa, had a strong affinity with Marpa’s wrathful emanation Vajrabhairava. Qianlong’s state chaplain Changkya Rolpai Dorje also intervened in battles on behalf of the Qing state. Rituals performed in the capital are said to have resulted in flames falling on the battlefield in Gyelrong (Jinchuan), one of the most costly, protracted wars of the Qing. This aspect of the Tibetan tradition might come as a surprise—and even run counter to popular perceptions of Buddhism—but the employment of ritual magic was integral to the power of Tibetan Buddhism in politics. In a tradition where religion and politics were inseparably intertwined, it was only natural that rulers sought religious answers to tackle real world problems, if it extending their lifespan or overcoming adversaries.


5. See these artworks and learn more in the exhibition Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism at the Rubin Museum.

DEEPER DIVE

Keeping the Faith: Religion and Politics Today

by William Dewey

Throughout history, rulers have recalled past imperial glories by reclaiming past faiths. The Mongol Yuan dynasty created a model for patronizing Tibetan Buddhism and its lamas, which succeeding dynasties imitated to legitimize their conquests. Today the atheist Communist Chinese government claims authority over Tibet’s reincarnating lamas, and President Xi Jinping has suggested that nomads consider him a living bodhisattva. Outside of Asia, President Vladimir Putin has allied with the Russian Orthodox Church to claim the former glories of the Tsars. Leaders of the United States often invoke its own religious-historical mythology, such as the City on a Hill, a biblical metaphor of the ideal community originally affirmed by Puritan settlers, and Manifest Destiny, a belief in the divine sanction to conquer in the name of democracy.
A simple statement of the truth, rather than a prayer or a magic spell, can have transformative power.

Donald S. Lopez Jr.

In Buddhist lore, telling it like it is can be transformative…and a bit magical

by Donald S. Lopez Jr.

IN Sanskrit, satya (is the word) typically translated as “truth.” It is derived from the verb “to be.” The word itself means “being, existing.” Adding the suf- fix -ya yields satya, which might be translated as “the state of being.” The “state of existing” is not a long leap to translate it as “reality” or “truth.” It is this satya that appears in such famous Buddhist terms as the four noble truths, the two truths, ultimate truth, and conventional truth. Each of these terms is the subject of extensive commentary and exegesis by the vari-
ous philosophical schools of Buddhism. But a less famous term provides insights into not just truth but also its inherent power.

Satyavacana combines the word for “truth” with vacana, meaning “speech” or “statement.” The noun vaca is a cognate of the Latin vox and the English voice. When we speak of “the word of the Buddha,” vacana is translated as “word.” Thus we might translate satyavacana as “words of truth” or “truth state-
mant.” In one sense, it simply means a statement of fact. In Buddhism, however, the statement of the truth has a particular power—indeed a magical power.

Many stories illustrate this power. On the night that Prince Siddhartha left his palace in search of a state of being, existing beyond birth and death, he had to dispense with his royal names and long locks. Drawing his sword, he cut off his hair with a single stroke and threw it into the air, saying, “If I am to become a buddha, let it remain in the sky.” The prince threw his locks high into the air, saying, “If I am to become a buddha, let it remain in the sky.”

The future Buddha’s words are an example of truth in Buddhism. One such definition suggests the importance of truth in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

IN SANSKRIT, SATYA IS THE WORD typically translated as “truth.” It is derived from the verb “to be.” The word itself means “being, existing.” Adding the suffix -ya yields satya, which might be translated as “the state of being.” The “state of existing” is not a long leap to translate it as “reality” or “truth.” It is this satya that appears in such famous Buddhist terms as the four noble truths, the two truths, ultimate truth, and conventional truth. Each of these terms is the subject of extensive commentary and exegesis by the various philosophical schools of Buddhism. But a less famous term provides insights into not just truth but also its inherent power.

Satyavacana combines the word for “truth” with vacana, meaning “speech” or “statement.” The noun vaca is a cognate of the Latin vox and the English voice. When we speak of “the word of the Buddha,” vacana is translated as “word.” Thus we might translate satyavacana as “words of truth” or “truth statement.” In one sense, it simply means a statement of fact. In Buddhism, however, the statement of the truth has a particular power—indeed a magical power.

Many stories illustrate this power. On the night that Prince Siddhartha left his palace in search of a state of being, existing beyond birth and death, he had to dispense with his royal names and longlocks. Drawing his sword, he cut off his hair with a single stroke and threw it into the air, saying, “If I am to become a buddha, let it remain in the sky.” The prince threw his locks high into the air, saying, “If I am to become a buddha, let it remain in the sky.”

The future Buddha’s words are an example of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.

In one such definition states the importance of truth in Buddhism. Such statements abound in Buddhist literature. They not only predict the future—as in this story—but they are also its inherent power.
Awaken your power animal and discover a new spiritual strength

By Shumanski ChokBar

POWER ANIMALS

A Power Animal is a real, wise, all-knowing friend who accepts or even verbally— it feels like connecting to a real, wise, all-knowing friend who accepts you, loves you, and knows what you need to do and when you need to do it in order to become your fullest self. It’s possible to find your Power Animal through shamanic meditation with a drum and rattling, shamanic dancing meditation, or classic motionless meditation, as well as in a dream state or through lucid dreaming.

The ability to connect verbally or visually with a Power Animal depends on your extrasensory perceptions. Even if you are not in the process of developing your extrasensory perceptions or meditative skills, just knowing that Power Animals exist and understanding their role is extremely beneficial. I like to think of them as our coach, cheerleaders who give us subtle, kind nudges toward our highest potential.

Our Power Animals are always there, whether you recognize them or not, but once you know them your spiritual development progresses faster. Power Animals can be fully awake, half-awake, or sleeping when you discover them. If a Power Animal is sleeping, you will be lethargic and possibly depressed. One of the roles of a shaman is to awaken these sleeping Power Animals.

When you are able to grasp your Power Animal’s presence in any shape, form, or form—for instance by engaging in Power Animal dancing meditation—it is a very special moment, as it shows you that there is more to yourself and different parts of yourself than you once thought. Connecting with your Power Animal reveals the interconnectedness of all life, filling you with joy and awe. You overcome our limited human perceptions, which is how the spiritual Dragon version of myself, but as the deeper Dragon

Raw Chinese Dragon do in this situation? How would she behave? What would she say? Then do your best to follow those answers, not as the fearful, resistant version of yourself, but as the deeper Dragon version, which is noble, clear, and fearless. When you are able to grasp your Power Animal’s presence in any shape, form, or form, you know them your spiritual development progresses faster. Power Animals can be fully awake, half-awake, or sleeping when you discover them. If a Power Animal is sleeping, you will be lethargic and possibly depressed. One of the roles of a shaman is to awaken these sleeping Power Animals. The more you follow the path of your trust self, the more your Power Animal will awaken.

In the words of my nonphysical Spiritual Teacher K., “The concept and knowledge of Power Animals helps greatly to understand the idea of being one with another, where you are that animal and he/she is you. Not sometimes, but always. At some point the question of a credit comes in, for example, who gets the credit for some amazing thing you’ve accomplished? It doesn’t worry for the ego. It helps you accept another just the way they are. It helps you accept just the way you are, knowing that even though they are different, they are still you—a part of you—helps with the total acceptance of self and others.”

Shumanski ChokBar is a shaman and author of four books. She is a certified power animal practitioner and author of the best-selling book “The Power Animal Handbook.”

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Rubin Museum of Art is a space for mindful cultural exchange, where you’ll experience how art and ideas from the Himalayas intersect with our contemporary lives. Boundaries dissolve as we traverse art forms, time, cultures, and geography to incite your curiosity and spark new ways of seeing the world. Thought-provoking exhibitions, immersive events, talks, films, concerts, and community gatherings make the Rubin a destination for discovery. Explore infinite inner and outer worlds and the ways we are all connected at our vibrant space in New York City’s Chelsea neighborhood.

MUSEUM HOURS

Monday 11:00 AM–5:00 PM
Tuesday CLOSED
Wednesday 11:00 AM–9:00 PM
Thursday 11:00 AM–5:00 PM
Friday 11:00 AM–10:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM–6:00 PM
Sunday 11:00 AM–8:00 PM

VISIT

The Rubin Museum of Art | 150 West 17th Street | New York, NY

CONNECT WITH US

• Follow us on social media @rubinmuseum
• Download the free Rubin app and access many works from our collection in the palm of your hand.

Within and Between Us: A Year of Power at the Rubin

Power begins within and between us. How can we tap into this potential? At the Rubin in 2019, we’re bringing together a full year of exhibitions, talks, programs, and events that speak new ways of thinking about power, from an intention to action. Drawing on a diverse range of sources and perspectives, including Tibetan prayer wheels, neuroscience, historical documents, community organizers, contemporary artists, and spiritual leaders, we will explore systems of power and our own personal and collective agency. Join us at the Rubin Museum as we forge new pathways to empowerment and positive change in the power structures that build our world.
Exhibitions

Through the lens of Himalayan art, we journey with all who are curious to explore our shared human experience and consciously and insightfully navigate the complexities of our world today.

Gateway to Himalayan Art
Start here for an introduction to the rich artistic traditions of the region, illuminating the primary figures, symbols, materials, and techniques presented throughout the Museum.

Masterworks of Himalayan Art
Journey across geography and more than a thousand years of history, tracing artistically and historically significant works from the Rubin’s collection, as well as new acquisitions and gifts.

The Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room
Step into the Shrine Room for a moment of contemplation, beauty, or wonder. An ongoing focal point of the Rubin Museum and a visitor favorite, this immersive installation features art from the collection and is inspired by traditional shrines.

Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism
February 1, 2019–July 15, 2019
Experience how Tibetan Buddhism once offered divine means to claim political power. More than sixty exquisite objects from the eighth to the nineteenth century place Himalayan art in a larger global context, at the historical intersection of politics and religion.

The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel
March 1, 2019–October 14, 2019
Get inspired by key ideas related to prayer wheels—ritual objects containing thousands of written mantras—and experience how we can empower ourselves to create positive change in and around us. Traditional and contemporary art come together to illuminate the relationship between our intentions, commitments, and actions.

The Power of Non-Conformity
August 9, 2019–January 6, 2020
Concepts from punk to pacifism converging in an exhibition that reflects on the subjects of transgression and subversion. Presented through the lens of diverse local and global artists, this timely exhibition invites us to look beyond the surface and consider art’s transformative power on society and culture.

HIMALAYAN HERITAGE
Intrigued by the culture, art, history, and sacred traditions of the Himalayan region? Join the Rubin Museum’s Himalayan Heritage, an informal group that meets on the first Wednesday of the month. Events are hosted by Tashi Cholton, a Museum educator and expert on the region who works at the Rubin and other organizations for the preservation of Tibetan culture.

Shahidul Alam
November 8, 2019–May 4, 2020
See a nuanced representation of contemporary South Asia in this solo exhibition highlighting one of the most influential photographers living in the region today. More than thirty of Shahidul Alam’s photographs, many never shown in the United States, illuminate his ongoing commitment to empowered self-representation and political activism in Bangladesh.

Public tours are offered daily and are free with admission.

Programs & Experiences

As a space for mindful, cultural exchange, the Rubin is driven by the desire to challenge, surprise, and provoke— we want to bring you into the fold to expand the limits of what an art museum can be.

The Rubin presents onstage conversations, workshops, concerts, film screenings, and other innovative public events to expand on the themes in the galleries. For current listings, visit RubinMuseum.org.

PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES

The Wheel of Intentions
Empower your own intentions with this interactive installation in the lobby created by data artist Ilan Rubin, Potion Design, and the Rubin Museum. Your intentions will join those of other visitors as they travel up the spiral staircase.

Sharing Power at the Long Table
Community groups are invited to initiate conversations on sharing power as part of Lois Weaver’s participatory art project The Long Table. Have a seat, read the menu, and take part in a unique conversation structured by etiquette.

TALKS

Brainwave
Our longest running series is all about understanding the mind and what makes us who we are. This talk series brings together neuroscientists and notable personalities for engaging conversations, as well as related films and workshops.

Compassionate Action
Find the tools to commit to intentions and enact change in your life. In these workshops, experts and facilitators will walk you through the course, helping you realize your goals, stay committed, and find community along the way.

BREATHE: CONNECT MIND & BODY

Explore the connections between the wisdom tradition expressed in Himalayan art and contemporary mind/body practices in a variety of programs and workshops.

Mindfulness Meditation
INTERDISCIPLINARY, 10 AM
Beginners, dabblers, and skilled meditators can join expert teachers weekly to practice the art of attention. Each season is inspired by a different work of art from the Rubin Museum’s collection. A free postcard of each program is also available online.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Family Sundays
All ages! Families can drop into the Museum on Sundays between 1:00 to 4:00 PM for casual art making and free family-friendly activities. Designed for children ages three and up with accompanying adults, the art activities change monthly and connect with the art and ideas of the Himalayas.

All programs subject to change.

MUSIC & PERFORMANCE

Naked Soul
 Hear performances from some of the country’s top singers/concerts without microphones or amplifiers, as if the music were, acoustically speaking, naked. The musicians in the series draw on the universal themes inherent in Himalayan art—spirituality, peace, tolerance, wisdom, compassion—on select Friday evenings.

Rhythms of India
Performers explore the varied traditions of Indian music, from timeless ragas to contemporary fusion.

The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel
See a nuanced representation of contemporary South Asia in this solo exhibition highlighting one of the most influential photographers living in the region today. More than thirty of Shahidul Alam’s photographs, many never shown in the United States, illuminate his ongoing commitment to empowered self-representation and political activism in Bangladesh.

The Power of Non-Conformity
Counter-cultural practices upset normative systems and ways of thinking, sometimes leading to a form of liberation. Artists are invited to engage in onstage conversations, subversive suppers, and radical takeovers of the Museum, all designed to spend our accustomed behaviors.

Explore the connections between the wisdom tradition expressed in Himalayan art and contemporary mind/body practices in a variety of programs and workshops.

Mindfulness Meditation
INTERDISCIPLINARY, 10 AM
Beginners, dabblers, and skilled meditators can join expert teachers weekly to practice the art of attention. Each season is inspired by a different work of art from the Rubin Museum’s collection. A free postcard of each program is also available online.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Family Sundays
All ages! Families can drop into the Museum on Sundays between 1:00 to 4:00 PM for casual art making and free family-friendly activities. Designed for children ages three and up with accompanying adults, the art activities change monthly and connect with the art and ideas of the Himalayas.
More Than a Museum

WE MIX ART AND CULTURE WITH A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE. IN ADDITION TO SIX GALLERIES, JOIN FRIENDS IN THE CAFÉ AND SHOP, OR MAKE THE RUBIN THE LIVELY VENUE FOR YOUR NEXT PRIVATE EVENT.

CAFE SERAI

ENJOY THE AROMAS AND FAVORS OF THE HIMALAYAS AT CAFFE SERAI, AN INVITING SPOT FOR YOUR NEXT MEAL. THE CAFÉ IS OPEN TO ANYONE DURING MUSEUM HOURS AND DOES NOT REQUIRE AN ADMISSION TICKET.

EVENING HOURS

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

MUSEUM OPEN LATE 6:00–9:00 PM

CAFE SERAI OFFERS A HIMALAYAN HAPPY HOUR WITH SPECIAL DISCOUNTS ON DRINKS, SHARED PLATES, AND MORE.

K2 FRIDAY NIGHTS

FREE MUSEUM ADMISSION 6:00–10:00 PM

DURING K2 FRIDAY NIGHTS, CAFFE SERAI BECOMES THE K2 LOUNGE, OFFERING A SPECIAL PAN-ASIAN MENU TO ACCOMPANY THE EVENING’S DJ AND PROGRAMS. HAPPY HOUR RUNS FROM 6:00 TO 7:00 PM WITH A TWO-FOR-ONE SPECIAL ON BEER, WINE, AND MALTBEERS.

THE SHOP

TAKE A MEMORY OF THE MUSEUM HOME WITH YOU, OR GIVE A GIFT FROM THE RUBIN. THE SHOP IS A SELECTION OF JEWELRY, ARTISAN ITEMS, BOOKS, AND OTHER TREASURES FEATURED IN AN ARRAY OF UNIQUE ITEMS, MANY UNAVAILABLE ANYWHERE ELSE. ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SHOP SUPPORT THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART, AND ITEMS CAN BE PURCHASED IN STORE OR ONLINE AT RUBINMUSEUM.ORG. MEMBERS RECEIVE A 10% DISCOUNT ON ALL PURCHASES.

SPACE RENTALS AND CORPORATE RETREATS

IF YOU’RE PLANNING AN EVENT OR NEED TO MAKE A PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE MORE INSPIRING, CONSIDER THE RUBIN. IT’S A MEMORABLE PLACE FOR GUESTS, AND WE MAKE IT EASY TO PLAN—WITH A RANGE OF WELLNESS EXPERIENCES, EDUCATIONAL TOURS, AND CATERING MENUS AVAILABLE.

BECOME A MEMBER OR GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERS GET MORE! BENEFITS INCLUDE INVITATIONS TO EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS AND TOURS, FREE ADMISSION TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION, PROGRAM DISCOUNTS, UNLIMITED ENTRY TO THE GALLERIES, AND MUCH MORE. MEMBERSHIP TO THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART IS ALSO A SPECIAL GIFT THAT FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF ALL AGES CAN ENJOY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

MAKE A DONATION

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS MAKE ART AND TIMELESS WISDOM COME ALIVE FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE EACH YEAR, BRINGING INSPIRATION AND MEANING INTO OUR VISITORS’ LIVES.

VOLUNTEER OR BECOME A DOCENT

SEE THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE MUSEUM AND CONTRIBUTE YOUR VALUABLE TIME AND SERVICES. DOCENTS CONNECT NEW VISITORS WITH OUR ART AND PROGRAMS AS THEY PRESENT THEMATIC TOURS, GALLERY TALKS, AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES. APPLY TO BE A VOLUNTEER OR DOCENT ONLINE.

THANK YOU TO OUR DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS!

ORGANIZATIONS IN NEW YORK CITY AND BEYOND HELP MAKE SPIRAL POSSIBLE. FIND THE FULL LIST OF OUR PARTNERS, AS WELL AS EXCLUSIVE CONTENT AND DISTRIBUTION LOCATIONS, AT RUBINMUSEUM.ORG/SPRAL.

Visit RubinMuseum.org/Spiral for exclusive online-only content, including:

- How solar power arrives in suitcases in Nepal from Howard Kaplan
- Empowering men and women from the inside out from Kasia Urbaniak
- The power of monuments in New York City from Anna Cahn
- More advice and tips for diffusing power struggles from Ayman Mukerji Househam
- The extended story of Kembra Pfahler’s power object
- Expanded interviews from Lama Tsultrim Allione, artists Monika Bravo and Youdhi Maharjan, Sukhvinder Obhi, and Jeremy Heimans

General operating support of the Rubin Museum of Art is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, as well as by generous donations from the Museum’s Board of Trustees, individual donors, and members. A huge Rubin thank you to all of the generous supporters who are enabling the Year of Power. It is because of you that the Rubin Museum makes art and ideas come alive.
A YEARLONG EXPLORATION AND A MAGAZINE TO GUIDE YOU

Power begins within and between us. How can we tap into this potential? At the Rubin in 2019, we’re bringing together a full year of exhibitions, talks, programs, and experiences that spark new ways of thinking about power, from intention to action. Join us as we forge new pathways to empowerment and positive change in the power structures that build our world.

RubinMuseum.org
Visit RubinMuseum.org/news to stay up to date with exhibitions, programming, and more.