Move your body with Jessamyn Stanley  p. 13
Can mindfulness be a tool against racism?  p. 14
Palden Weinreb invites us to breathe through light  p. 34
The women guiding the psychedelic renaissance  p. 38
We would like to thank the many people who have made this publication possible:


Published by the Rubin Museum of Art, March 2022:

Editorial
Editorial Director: Sarah Zabrodzki
Editorial Consultant: Howard Kaplan

Design
Creative Director: KJ Bowen
Assistant Designer: Dani de los Santos

Cover Artist
Gyempo Wangchuk uses locally sourced mineral colors on canvas to create traditional and contemporary paintings—a larger sense of interconnectedness. The Rubin offers a multisensory installation that uses Himalayan art and its underlying principles to aid people in turning affective emotions (known as kleshas) into wisdoms.

In this issue of Spiral we take a broad look at healing through the eyes of artists, Buddhist practitioners, medical professionals, a cartoonist, and more. You’ll discover how women are at the center of a renaissance in the use of psychedelics and meet abstract visionary artist Allyson Grey; hear from Ruth King on the intersection of mindfulness and race; travel with Sienna R. Craig as she helps a Nepalese immigrant find a new land; and learn how breath is the beating heart—if not the lungs—of the Mandala Lab, with untold benefits for individuals and groups alike.

As we navigate a period marked by environmental, health, and social justice crises, we invite you to take a deep breath and join us as we explore healing practices onsite, online, and on the printed pages of Spiral, hopefully inspiring you on your own journey of well-being.

ONE BRIGHT SPOT in the darkened times of the past couple years has been a larger sense of interconnectedness. At the Rubin it has enabled us to extend our reach and think beyond the Museum walls, connecting with new and familiar audiences all over the world to share the relevance of Himalayan art to our physical, mental, emotional well-being. This year we’re taking a closer look at individual and collective forms of repair as we explore modes of healing.

In addition to the medical issues we’re grappling with, there are mental health challenges as we live with the fallout of isolation and heightened emotions of fear and anger. Our healing journey continues in the Museum’s Mandala Lab, featuring interactivites and traditional and contemporary objects from our permanent collection. It shows how certain practices with a longstanding history are still relevant today, whether it’s a belief in talismans or—in a modern twist—downloading and sharing an image of the Medicine Buddha on your phone. This look into lived culture through art explores new rituals enacted for the current moment as we seek protection from illness, ways to ward off disease, and express wishes for longevity.

The exhibition Healing Practices: Himalayan American Stories, organized in collaboration with members of the Himalayan diaspora, features interactions between voices from local communities and traditional and contemporary artists, Buddhist practitioners, medical professionals, a cartoonist, and more. You’ll discover how women are at the center of a renaissance in the use of psychedelics and meet abstract visionary artist Allyson Grey; hear from Ruth King on the intersection of mindfulness and race; travel with Sienna R. Craig as she helps a Nepalese immigrant find a new land; and learn how breath is the beating heart—if not the lungs—of the Mandala Lab, with untold benefits for individuals and groups alike.

As we navigate a period marked by environmental, health, and social justice crises, we invite you to take a deep breath and join us as we explore healing practices onsite, online, and on the printed pages of Spiral, hopefully inspiring you on your own journey of well-being.

Jorrit Britschgi
Executive Director
Rubin Museum of Art

Mo Riza created the 3D-printed illustrations featured above and alongside the “Healing through . . . ” series in this issue.
Spiral

HEALING PRACTICES 2022

LETTER
Recovery and Repair
JORRIT BRITSCHGI............ 1

HUMOR
Healing Takes Many Forms
SIENNA R. CRAIG

INTERVIEW
On the Front Lines
DR. KUNGA WANGDUE AND PEMA DORJEE
INTERVIEWED BY MICHELLE BENNETT SIMORELLA

FEATURE
Place, Loss, Adaptation
10

FEATURE
Mindful of Race
14
RUTH KING

DEEPER DIVE
In the Forest of the Medicine Buddha’s Mandala
ELENA PAKHOUTOVA... 22

FOCUS
In the Presence of Art
SWOSTI RAJBHANDARI KAYASTHA .......... 14

INTERVIEW
Everything Is Life: How Conscious Dying Can Be a Form of Living
FATHER GUIDALBERTO BORMOLINI INTERVIEWED BY JON PEPPER AND PATRIZIA DE LIBERO .......... 26

PSYCHOLOGY
At the Center of a Messy, Beautiful Existence
INGRID CLAYTON

FOCUS
Breathing Is Fundamental
34
HOWARD KAPLAN

INTERVIEW
Finding the Divine in a Creative Life
ALLYSON GREY
INTERVIEWED BY TERESA TOMASSONI .. 42

HEALING
Through Movement
JESSAMY STANLEY............. 13

Through Food
EDWARD ESPE BROWN
............................ 17

Through Sound
PHOENIX SONG............ 21

Through Gathering
K SCARRY ............. 29

Through Plants
CHRISTOPHER GRIFFIN
AND PUNEET SABHARWAL
............................ 37

ABOUT THE MUSEUM... 43

READ ONLINE AT RUBINMUSEUM.ORG/ SPIRAL

2 SPIRAL / THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART / SPIRAL 3
The exhibition was developed in collaboration with an advisory group of artists, medical professionals, spiritual leaders, activists, educators, and art therapists interested in the intersection of art, healing, and activism. For Spiral magazine, two members of this group, Dr. Kunga Wangdue, a Tibetan medicine physician, and Pema Dorje, a nurse, shared how they infuse Buddhist ideas into their care for others, explained how the art in the exhibition inspires their own healing and those of their communities, and offered advice on everyday practices for well-being.

DR. KUNGA WANGDUE
was born in a remote village in Tibet and entered monastic life at age ten. After being briefly jailed with other young monks protesting for human rights, he studied Tibetan medicine, eventually becoming a physician in India before moving to the United States.

Michelle Bennett Simorella: What is one fundamental difference between Tibetan medicine and Western medicine?
Dr. Kunga Wangdue: Tibetan medicine is a holistic practice with an approach of focusing on the mind, body, and spirit. In Western medicine, they look at disorders as chemical or mechanical and neglect the subjective issue of the patients. In terms of treatment, Tibetan medicine focuses more on the individual and considers both subjective and objective aspects.

Could you expand on the holistic approach to wellness in Tibetan medicine?
Our bodies are made of what we eat. If we eat the wrong foods, they can accumulate in our body and manifest as illness. That’s why diet is the number one cause of imbalance in the body. Whenever I am treating patients, I always ask them to avoid the foods and drinks that are harmful for them and try to take those that are good for their condition. There are four different types of treatment in Tibetan medicine: diet, behavioral, medicine, and therapy. The dietary regimen is mentioned first. It not only helps treat disease but also prevents disorders from accumulating in the body.

Historically Tibetan artists have created exquisite works of arts with powerful images as practical guides for well-being. How do these types of artworks inform your medical practice?
We learn the many different illustrated medical thangkas in medical college. It is the visual explanation of Tibetan medical theories. In my practice, when patients come to see me and they don’t understand the concept of Tibetan medicine, I show them the illustrated thangkas. It helps them to understand their condition and how the treatment will help them.

Two medical professionals share how Himalayan art and practices helped during the pandemic

Healing Practices: Stories from Himalayan Americans

Healing Practices: Stories from Himalayan Americans highlights how Tibetan Buddhist practices for well-being have been a powerful source of support for individuals and communities throughout times of personal and societal crisis, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Featuring objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection alongside stories from Himalayan Americans, the exhibition reveals the complexities of what it means to heal and illuminates how people have adopted and adapted traditional Tibetan healing practices for today’s world.

DR. KUNGA WANGDUE was born in a remote village in Tibet and entered monastic life at age ten. After being briefly jailed with other young monks protesting for human rights, he studied Tibetan medicine, eventually becoming a physician in India before moving to the United States.

Michelle Bennett Simorella: What is one fundamental difference between Tibetan medicine and Western medicine?
Dr. Kunga Wangdue: Tibetan medicine is a holistic practice with an approach of focusing on the mind, body, and spirit. In Western medicine, they look at disorders as chemical or mechanical and neglect the subjective issue of the patients. In terms of treatment, Tibetan medicine focuses more on the individual and considers both subjective and objective aspects.

Could you expand on the holistic approach of treating obstacles to well-being?

There are many people who don’t have any physical illnesses, but if mental problems like sadness, depression, and stress are untreated they can slowly affect physical well-being. Unhealthy physical health can affect our mental health, and mental health can affect physical health. That clearly shows that there’s a bridge between the body and mind, which we call energy or duawa. To have a healthy life we need to take care of both mental and physical health.

How is diet incorporated in the holistic approach to wellness in Tibetan medicine?
Our bodies are made of what we eat. If we eat the wrong foods, they can accumulate in our body and manifest as illness. That’s why diet is the number one cause of imbalance in the body. Whenever I am treating patients, I always ask them to avoid the foods and drinks that are harmful for them and try to take those that are good for their condition. There are four different types of treatment in Tibetan medicine: diet, behavioral, medicine, and therapy. The dietary regimen is mentioned first. It not only helps treat disease but also prevents disorders from accumulating in the body.

Historically Tibetan artists have created exquisite works of arts with powerful images as practical guides for well-being. How do these types of artworks inform your medical practice?
We learn the many different illustrated medical thangkas in medical college. It is the visual explanation of Tibetan medical theories. In my practice, when patients come to see me and they don’t understand the concept of Tibetan medicine, I show them the illustrated thangkas. It helps them to understand their condition and how the treatment will help them.

Two medical professionals share how Himalayan art and practices helped during the pandemic

Healing Practices: Stories from Himalayan Americans highlights how Tibetan Buddhist practices for well-being have been a powerful source of support for individuals and communities throughout times of personal and societal crisis, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Featuring objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection alongside stories from Himalayan Americans, the exhibition reveals the complexities of what it means to heal and illuminates how people have adopted and adapted traditional Tibetan healing practices for today’s world.

DR. KUNGA WANGDUE was born in a remote village in Tibet and entered monastic life at age ten. After being briefly jailed with other young monks protesting for human rights, he studied Tibetan medicine, eventually becoming a physician in India before moving to the United States.

Michelle Bennett Simorella: What is one fundamental difference between Tibetan medicine and Western medicine?
Dr. Kunga Wangdue: Tibetan medicine is a holistic practice with an approach of focusing on the mind, body, and spirit. In Western medicine, they look at disorders as chemical or mechanical and neglect the subjective issue of the patients. In terms of treatment, Tibetan medicine focuses more on the individual and considers both subjective and objective aspects.

Could you expand on the holistic approach of treating obstacles to well-being?

There are many people who don’t have any physical illnesses, but if mental problems like sadness, depression, and stress are untreated they can slowly affect physical well-being. Unhealthy physical health can affect our mental health, and mental health can affect physical health. That clearly shows that there’s a bridge between the body and mind, which we call energy or duawa. To have a healthy life we need to take care of both mental and physical health.

How is diet incorporated in the holistic approach to wellness in Tibetan medicine?
Our bodies are made of what we eat. If we eat the wrong foods, they can accumulate in our body and manifest as illness. That’s why diet is the number one cause of imbalance in the body. Whenever I am treating patients, I always ask them to avoid the foods and drinks that are harmful for them and try to take those that are good for their condition. There are four different types of treatment in Tibetan medicine: diet, behavioral, medicine, and therapy. The dietary regimen is mentioned first. It not only helps treat disease but also prevents disorders from accumulating in the body.

Historically Tibetan artists have created exquisite works of arts with powerful images as practical guides for well-being. How do these types of artworks inform your medical practice?
We learn the many different illustrated medical thangkas in medical college. It is the visual explanation of Tibetan medical theories. In my practice, when patients come to see me and they don’t understand the concept of Tibetan medicine, I show them the illustrated thangkas. It helps them to understand their condition and how the treatment will help them.

Two medical professionals share how Himalayan art and practices helped during the pandemic

Healing Practices: Stories from Himalayan Americans highlights how Tibetan Buddhist practices for well-being have been a powerful source of support for individuals and communities throughout times of personal and societal crisis, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Featuring objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection alongside stories from Himalayan Americans, the exhibition reveals the complexities of what it means to heal and illuminates how people have adopted and adapted traditional Tibetan healing practices for today’s world.

DR. KUNGA WANGDUE was born in a remote village in Tibet and entered monastic life at age ten. After being briefly jailed with other young monks protesting for human rights, he studied Tibetan medicine, eventually becoming a physician in India before moving to the United States.

Michelle Bennett Simorella: What is one fundamental difference between Tibetan medicine and Western medicine?
Dr. Kunga Wangdue: Tibetan medicine is a holistic practice with an approach of focusing on the mind, body, and spirit. In Western medicine, they look at disorders as chemical or mechanical and neglect the subjective issue of the patients. In terms of treatment, Tibetan medicine focuses more on the individual and considers both subjective and objective aspects.

Could you expand on the holistic approach of treating obstacles to well-being?

There are many people who don’t have any physical illnesses, but if mental problems like sadness, depression, and stress are untreated they can slowly affect physical well-being. Unhealthy physical health can affect our mental health, and mental health can affect physical health. That clearly shows that there’s a bridge between the body and mind, which we call energy or duawa. To have a healthy life we need to take care of both mental and physical health.

How is diet incorporated in the holistic approach to wellness in Tibetan medicine?
Our bodies are made of what we eat. If we eat the wrong foods, they can accumulate in our body and manifest as illness. That’s why diet is the number one cause of imbalance in the body. Whenever I am treating patients, I always ask them to avoid the foods and drinks that are harmful for them and try to take those that are good for their condition. There are four different types of treatment in Tibetan medicine: diet, behavioral, medicine, and therapy. The dietary regimen is mentioned first. It not only helps treat disease but also prevents disorders from accumulating in the body.

Historically Tibetan artists have created exquisite works of arts with powerful images as practical guides for well-being. How do these types of artworks inform your medical practice?
We learn the many different illustrated medical thangkas in medical college. It is the visual explanation of Tibetan medical theories. In my practice, when patients come to see me and they don’t understand the concept of Tibetan medicine, I show them the illustrated thangkas. It helps them to understand their condition and how the treatment will help them.

Two medical professionals share how Himalayan art and practices helped during the pandemic

Healing Practices: Stories from Himalayan Americans highlights how Tibetan Buddhist practices for well-being have been a powerful source of support for individuals and communities throughout times of personal and societal crisis, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Featuring objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection alongside stories from Himalayan Americans, the exhibition reveals the complexities of what it means to heal and illuminates how people have adopted and adapted traditional Tibetan healing practices for today’s world.

DR. KUNGA WANGDUE was born in a remote village in Tibet and entered monastic life at age ten. After being briefly jailed with other young monks protesting for human rights, he studied Tibetan medicine, eventually becoming a physician in India before moving to the United States.

Michelle Bennett Simorella: What is one fundamental difference between Tibetan medicine and Western medicine?
Dr. Kunga Wangdue: Tibetan medicine is a holistic practice with an approach of focusing on the mind, body, and spirit. In Western medicine, they look at disorders as chemical or mechanical and neglect the subjective issue of the patients. In terms of treatment, Tibetan medicine focuses more on the individual and considers both subjective and objective aspects.

Could you expand on the holistic approach of treating obstacles to well-being?

There are many people who don’t have any physical illnesses, but if mental problems like sadness, depression, and stress are untreated they can slowly affect physical well-being. Unhealthy physical health can affect our mental health, and mental health can affect physical health. That clearly shows that there’s a bridge between the body and mind, which we call energy or duawa. To have a healthy life we need to take care of both mental and physical health.

How is diet incorporated in the holistic approach to wellness in Tibetan medicine?
Our bodies are made of what we eat. If we eat the wrong foods, they can accumulate in our body and manifest as illness. That’s why diet is the number one cause of imbalance in the body. Whenever I am treating patients, I always ask them to avoid the foods and drinks that are harmful for them and try to take those that are good for their condition. There are four different types of treatment in Tibetan medicine: diet, behavioral, medicine, and therapy. The dietary regimen is mentioned first. It not only helps treat disease but also prevents disorders from accumulating in the body.

Historically Tibetan artists have created exquisite works of arts with powerful images as practical guides for well-being. How do these types of artworks inform your medical practice?
We learn the many different illustrated medical thangkas in medical college. It is the visual explanation of Tibetan medical theories. In my practice, when patients come to see me and they don’t understand the concept of Tibetan medicine, I show them the illustrated thangkas. It helps them to understand their condition and how the treatment will help them.
Is there a particular artwork in the exhibition that inspires you in your personal or professional life? When I have the Medicine Buddha thangka or statue in front of me, it reminds me that I am a follower of the Medicine Buddha who practices knowledge of medicine with love and compassion for all beings suffering from mental and physical illness. This reminds me that, as a Tibetan medical practitioner, I must follow the ethics and principles of Buddhism. There is a long chapter in Gyutshi, the primary Tibetan medical textbook, for physician ethics, morals, and responsibilities. So it’s a good reminder for me to be the best version of myself when treating patients.

Queens became the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and greatly impacted the Himalayan and Tibetan communities of New York City. What practices did you employ to deal with the gravity of the situation?

A lot of people in our community know me as a Tibetan doctor, so I was informing them about the disease through social media based on CDC information and my knowledge of Tibetan medicine. I have a friend who closed all the doors and windows. Many times, his kids asked him to open them, but he refused. He told his kids that the virus could come through the windows. People had irrational fears based on incorrect information. That’s why having the right information and the right source of information is the key thing.

Many people called me after I shared my own experience. They appreciated that I was living proof that I didn’t die. It gave a lot of people hope. Then I taught them how to use the precious pills. People misunderstood and thought the precious pills are for every disorder, but that’s not true. Every precious pill has its own designated treatment. Many people were also taking the wrong diet, so I gave them dietary advice according to Tibetan medicine, because not everyone can get herbs.

What is a simple tip you could give our readers for life longevity?

A lot of people hope. Then I taught them breathing exercise, let’s take a deep breath all the bad energies out. I also try to bring positive emotions to the patients.

PEMA DORJEE is a registered nurse and the current president of the Tibetan Nurses Association, which has over six hundred members in New York and New Jersey.

Did you need to change or adapt your methods of treating patients because of the unprecedented nature of the pandemic?

The number one thing I tried to educate them through online teachings, social networks, and phone calls. Online teaching is wonderful because we can reach a lot of people to talk about health and prevention.

What was the treatment that was most sought after and appreciated by patients during the pandemic?

This time the treatment was most sought after and appreciated by patients during the pandemic was the prayer, and with a relaxed mind many people became much more relaxed after meditation and healing into your work?

PEMA DORJEE: Patients coming to the hospital are very acute, very sick. I see not only they’re physically sick, but they also have huge anxiety. I try to get rid of these negative emotions. I try to bring positive emotions to the patients, so that it will not affect not only their mental well-being but also, indirectly, their physical care. When a patient is aggrieved or angry, I try to calm them. Let’s do some breathing exercise, let’s take a deep breath. Breathe all the good energies in, breathe all the bad energies out. I also try to make patients stay in the present instead of the future. They worry what’s going to happen to me? Will I have a surgery? Forget about everything—just try to stay in the present moment. That basically comes from a Buddhist perspective.

What toll has this taken on healthcare workers in your community?

The message sent by the administration and leaders in America started badly from the top down and made the Asian community feel vulnerable. I feel we can fight back through education, through having a better message, and having more compassionate, understanding leaders. We need to heal together, not in a segmented way.

I try to bring positive emotions to the patients, so that it will affect not only their mental well-being but also, indirectly, their physical care.
Queens was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City and greatly impacted the Himalayan and Tibetan communities. What support networks were most helpful in meeting community needs during that period? In the Himalayan community in Queens, there were a lot of people who didn’t know anything about the pandemic, especially elderly people. How is it spread? How can we avoid it? We created a hotline with a group of nurses who could answer those questions. We had ten or so experts on call at all times.

Then we realized a lot of people were already sick in the community and didn’t have access to medical facilities. They really needed was Tylenol and thermometer, but the stores were closed. We stepped in, got all the supplies from donors and sent close to eight nurses from North America to help.

Of all the support and care that healthcare workers in Queens received, what had the most powerful impact on you? Queens was very depressing during the pandemic. All the nurses were working— not just our regular jobs but also trying to help a community get better. When pandemics. All the nurses were working— not just our regular jobs but also trying to help a community get better. When pandemic was waking up at least thirty minutes early and straight away praying—all the mantras, especially for Green Tara and White Tara. I asked, please protect me, and that really reduced my stress level. Also in our WhatsApp group, we talked about how to reduce stress through various ways, including a medicine called thang. We were able to get a good collection of thang from Tibetan doctors around New York and distributed it to our healthcare workers at that time.

What are some tips you would give our readers to improve their individual and collective well-being? New York is a very stressful, busy area. We need to calm down a little bit and focus more on mental well-being. I strongly feel it’s the mind that controls your body. If your mental well-being is good, your physical well-being will get better. Compassion is also important in that it generates more happiness. So if you’re able to generate all the good qualities of a compassionate heart, you will have a good mental well-being and indirectly have better physical well-being as well. We had a WhatsApp group of three to four hundred members who constantly talk about the issues and in that way we’re able to help each other. Nurses who were working in nursing homes were having a very rough time. We stepped in to help those nurses, providing them with living situations so they didn’t have to live with their families. They could live outside of the family in an apartment with other nurses. Or we provided daily food, so they didn’t have to worry about eating. At that time, nurses had to change their uniforms frequently, so we provided new uniforms. We had a donor from Arizona who donated close to three hundred uniforms to us.

Did members use any particular practices during the pandemic to counter anxiety? One thing I did that helped me during the peak of the pandemic was waking up at least thirty minutes early and straight away praying—all the mantras, especially for Green Tara and White Tara. I asked, please protect me, and that really reduced my stress level. Also in our WhatsApp group, we talked about how to reduce stress through various ways, including a medicine called thang. We were able to get a good collection of thang from Tibetan doctors around New York and distributed it to our healthcare workers at that time.

What are some tips you would give our readers to improve their individual and collective well-being? New York is a very stressful, busy area. We need to calm down a little bit and focus more on mental well-being. I strongly feel it’s the mind that controls your body. If your mental well-being is good, your physical well-being will get better. Compassion is also important in that it generates more happiness. So if you’re able to generate all the good qualities of a compassionate heart, you will have a good mental well-being and indirectly have better physical well-being as well.

Dr. Kunga Wangdu is a proud member of the Yakpo Collective and has exhibited her art in Seattle, New York, Toronto, and Lhasa. Tenzing Lhamo Dorjee is a cartoonist, illustrator, and designer who uses storytelling and humor to connect with Tibetans around the world. She has a BFA in design from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. Michelle Bennett Simorella is president of the NY & NJ Tibetan Nurses Association (TNA), a nonprofit organization founded by Tibetan nurses in the New York City area. The organization helps nurses with degrees from India and Nepal with credential evaluation services, licensing in different states, and job searches, as well as providing mentoring services to nursing students. It also offers health awareness programs to Tibetan, Nepalese, and other Himalayan communities. Dr. Wangdu is a former personal physician of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. From 1998 to 2002, he served as a clinical practitioner in Nepal. Dr. Wangdu is the vice president of the Traditional Tibetan Medical & Astro Association New York.
WE WIND OUR WAY ALONG Vermont State Route 113. The car is warm, even as the outside temperature gauge registers six degrees Fahrenheit. The sky is arctic, adamantine. Santosh* tells the story in Nepali. I listen and drive us up the mountain, toward the gonpa.

“They confirmed it was because of a girl. We told aama** today,” he says.

The young man beside me is twenty-four. Santosh has an electric smile and a sense of fashion that involves tapered pant legs and hair gel. There is swagger and deference in him, by turns. He has always worked hard. But he has also, always, been lucky. In 2019, this good fortune took the form of winning the diversity visa lottery. Even in the Trump era, he prevailed.

“My bhai had everything that he wanted and needed,” says Santosh, referring to his younger brother. “I had even just sent him 45,000 rupees for a new mobile phone.”

Santosh had arrived in Hanover, New Hampshire, on Halloween. I recall him talking with me about how he found the costumes amusing. He could not understand much of what was being said around him, but the sense of play and connections to the dead reminded him of Nepali festivals, Holi and Indra Jatra. In those late autumn days after his arrival, I found Santosh a host family. His skills in the kitchen, his fastidiousness, landed him a restaurant job with ease.

“It was messages on that mobile that confirmed it was about a girl . . . He was kind and trusting, a bit gullible and dim-witted,” says Santosh, describing his younger brother in Nepali terms—sojo, laato—that have contours of meaning lost in English. “He’d asked friends to explain to him what ‘break up’ meant.”

The pandemic has rankled Santosh, as it has all of us. Despite the almost instantaneous arrival of his green card (more good fortune), he was too new of an arrival to qualify for unemployment. Some savings and other forms of social support bore out until he could begin working again. Fear and adult children returning home to live with the family that had taken Santosh in led to the undoing of his first domestic arrangement, but we worked something else out.

“They found him hanging from a tree about a fifteen minute walk from our family house. In the week before, he seemed not well. Our didi tried to talk with him,” Santosh explains, speaking of his elder sister. “Even aama asked if we should go to the hospital. But he said he was fine and would not talk. He said maybe it was just gastric.” Santosh continues, referencing a stomach ailment common in Nepal, “but then his mobile was switch off and he didn’t come home.”

Now, deep into the COVID winter of early 2021, Santosh lives with a divorced dad and his daughter, East Asian Americans. They love his cooking. He loves his privacy and the trust they put in him—a departure from how he’d been treated by the previous household in which he’d lived.

“He didn’t know anything about anything, not about girls, not about responsibility, not about love . . . One of his friends did the same, about a year ago, over a girl. I think he must have thought a lot about that. If his friend found that his life was not worth keeping, then maybe my brother thought the same. Maybe he thought, ‘It doesn’t matter if I die.’

When I heard the news about Santosh’s younger brother, I thought about what I could do. Sure, I could slip him an envelope of cash and a kathag offering scarf, telling him to send this offering home for the ghewa, the Buddhist ceremony that marks the end of a deceased person’s journey through the bardo, the in-between realm between death and rebirth. But this did little to bridge the gap between home and away,
between a mother wracked with pain and a son making stir-fry and burgers for college students in New England. The dissonance was palpable, like the sting on a cheek after a slap. “We haven’t talked with the girl or her family. What good would that do? My father said that if he wanted to get married, this would be okay with him, even though aama said wait and finish your studies. But in the end I think it was that she broke up with him, and this was all he could think about... There have been three or four suicides in our village in the last six months. Not all of them have been young like my brother—some have been men in their thirties or forties—but it is becoming like my brother—some have been men in their thirties or forties—but it is becoming a trend.” Santosh may be a Tamang* kid from the middle hills of Nepal, but it occurred to me that he might find solace in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. It might be the closest thing to a kindred architecture of grief and belonging. I called up the American couple who are the caretakers for this gonpa, part of a Buddhist community with roots in Eastern Tibet and Bhutan but also in the French countryside and Vermont’s North Country. I asked if we could visit, offer incense and butter lamps, and just sit for a bit. We would wear masks. We would take care. They said yes.

“My parents have worked so hard. They got married when my mom was eleven. Both of her parents were dead by the time she was two. She had nothing. She was raised by relatives until she was married off. My mother and father are fifty-five now. Old for Nepal. Not so much for here. My father raises pumpkins. They have fields. It is not so developed even though we are close to Kathmandu.” We turn left at a general store, flanked by a fading Coca-Cola sign, and head up the mountain. Icicles cling to bare branches beside a frozen brook. I tell Santosh that it is probably very difficult to feel love and sadness and anger all at once. He nods. “Only a few people have gone out, gone far away. I am the only one in America. I worked all through school. Getting fodder. Milking cows. Stuff like that. But we managed. Once, when my mother was sick for six months, I had to do her milking too, in the mornings before school... I did well in school until Class 10, and then I became more focused on earning money for myself and my family. I started businesses. My other brother runs those now.”

“I didn’t know.” I am pleased by Santosh’s sense of surprise, the way he sucks in his breath and lets it go in the winter air. We have arrived at a temple that echoes the familiar at an unforgiving and disorienting time. We greet the caretakers, a husband and wife who have lived here for fifteen years. They have candles, ready and waiting. They bring incense, fruit, flowers, butter lamps, and just sit for a bit. We arrive at the gonpa and head up the snowpacked driveway slowly. Several buildings come into view. The main shrine room and accompanying domestic spaces are painted the color of corn. The eaves and roofline are a rusty red. Prayer flags flutter at the edges. The rainbow of the Buddhist flag hangs above the entrance.

The altars are made of cherry, but they slope like the sides of the Potala Palace. Bronze casts of Tara, Maitreya, and Padmasambhava tower over the room. Their faces are unadorned by color. The pale peach peonies on the altar mirror the inside of the conch shell, resting on its ridges. Pears and apples crown wooden bowls beside bottles of perfume and large, stately candles. There is an austere modernity to the sacred aesthetics in Vermont. Bright winter sun streams in the windows. I study the row of photographs of Tibetan teachers on one wall. I notice orientations to light and direction.

Santosh takes the packet of incense I’ve brought and splits it in half. He lights one bundle, I light the other, and we place them in the incense holder at the foot of the altar. The room is soon suffused in sandalwood smoke.

“What is more incense than we’ve had in here... ever?” The male caretaker remarks. I smile, explain that this is how they do it in Nepal. Then we just sit. When Santosh stirs, the husband of the caretaker pair asks for Santosh’s brother’s name, so that the sangha who will gather later this evening can hold him in their prayers. Santosh speaks the name slowly. The caretaker writes the name on a notebook he keeps in his front pocket.

“Let’s practice yoga together right now. Start by closing your eyes, relaxing your shoulders, and taking a deep breath. Fill air into the tips of your toes to the crown of your head. Feel how it relaxes that spot right in between your shoulders or the wrinkles in between your eyebrows? That’s yoga in action.

Yoga means union—it’s about bringing together all the pieces of yourself without judgment or critique. People will say you’ve gotta practice every day, or in the morning, or for a particular amount of time. But you really don’t need to sweat the details. Whether it’s five minutes or five hours, any time that you devote to finding stillness within yourself is time well spent. And honestly, the days you don’t practice yoga are the days that teach you the most about it. So be kind to yourself. Honor your body for what it brings to your journey, and don’t ever worry about what it looks like.

I hope you find a movement practice that works for you. It doesn’t have to be yoga. Really, anything will do. As long as you’re connecting to the breath within your mystical meat suit, you’re getting all the practice you need. Visit RubinMuseum.org/Spiral to practice yoga with Jessamyn Stanley in a class called “Back in 30.” It’s a great way to break up the day, get a little yoga in, and connect with yourself.”

* Tamangs are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nepal.

Sienna R. Craig is a professor of anthropology at dartmouth college, where she has taught since 2006. A cultural and medical anthropologist, Craig employs writing across genres, from narrative ethnography to poetry, fiction, and children’s literature. She is the author of *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives between Nepal and New York* (University of Washington Press, 2020) and *Healing Ecologies: Efficacy and the Social Ecologies of Tibetan Medicine* (University of California Press, 2013), among other works.

Jessemyn Stanley is an internationally acclaimed voice in wellness, highly sought after for her insights on twenty-first-century yoga and intersectional identity. As a successful award-winning yoga instructor and entrepreneur, she is the founder of The Unlikely, co-founder of the Reel, and co-founder of Yoga to the Goat. She is also the author of three My Year of Yorga: Self-Acceptance and Every Body Yoga: Let Go of Unfit, Get on the Mat, Love Your Body.
MINDFUL OF RACE

SPIRAL / THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

How wise awareness can help us meet the rough edges of racial distress

by Ruth King

RACISM REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST ROOTED and painful impasses of our time. The traumatic scars and history of racism impacts all of us, without exception. It most profoundly impacts our capacity to genuinely love, and it blinds us to our humanity.

Racism is fed through unawareness, oppressive systems, and the misuse of power, and deepening our understanding of how we have been conditioned to think and react is at the root of racial harm and racial healing.

Those of us who dare to turn inward to this examination will often feel the soreness, tenderness, and vulnerability from the habitual ways we have met the rough edges of racial distress, and it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Although these feelings may be difficult to metabolize, it is possible to do so. Our thoughts and feelings are not permanent states; rather, they are crucial experiences to attend to, and it begins with understanding our minds. This is the role of mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness has its roots in the 2,600-year-old tradition of Buddhism. The practice of mindfulness meditation supports us in experiencing more mental ease and harmony. It does not help us get rid of racial ignorance or ill will, nor will it erase anger or despair. Rather, it offers a way for us to slow down and investigate our experiences with care and wise attention. It supports us in bearing witness to our racial distress and conditioning without distortion, elaboration, or judgment. We can notice, for example, how racial perceptions live, what thoughts we are giving birth to, and how we feel thinking about them. We can acknowledge where we get stuck and discover what supports letting go.

Simply stated, mindfulness is the practice of present-moment awareness, with an understanding that what we are aware of has a nature, or what is known as the three characteristics of existence:

1. The nature of impermanence: Change is constant, and all phenomena arise and pass away.
2. The nature of selflessness: There is no enduring or reliable self; we are a series of ever-changing elemental processes, all arising and passing away.
3. The nature of unreliability and dissatisfaction: "Shit happens," and we are not in control of having things our way.

These natural laws, core to the nature of our existence, can offer insight into how we relate to racial distress—specifically, what supports more distress and what supports release from distress. Despite the painful truth that racial injury, ignorance, and injustice have spread virally through-out the world, the three characteristics of existence stand.

I have a simple mantra for remembering these three characteristics: “Life is not personal, permanent, or perfect.” These natural laws are true to all existence. They are like gravity. Gravity has a nature—it’s not personal. Once you understand gravity, you do not drop a glass and expect space to catch it. Seasons also have a nature—they are not perfect or permanent. Once you understand the seasons, you know how to dress and go out into the world. As the story goes, everybody is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid. Fish have a nature. Fish exist in water. Fish do not climb trees. Relatively, race is not who we are. Race is a social construct that points out the nature of diversity. In and of itself, race is not personal, nor is it a problem. The problem is how we perceive race, socially project onto race, and relate to race as if it were personal (all about our individual or racial group experience), permanent (the idea that race cannot change), or perfect (the idea that whatever is happening should be to my liking or meet my standard of what’s right). We are all imperfect in our imperfection, which is always changing. In Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind, Shunryu Suzuki put it this way, “What we call ‘I’ is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale.” When we don’t recognize or comprehend the true nature of all existence, racial distress proliferates.

Over the years, reminding myself that life is not personal, permanent, or perfect has kept me from falling into sinkholes of despair and destroying rooms with rage. It invites me to pause and turn inward. It gives me a chance to ask myself, “What’s happening?” Where are you gripped right
We are shaped by our conditioning, but we are also shaped by wise understanding and the quality of our awareness.

Food is not just matter—the proverbial “fuel for the body”—but human endeavor, our blood, sweat, and tears brought to table in a form that nourishes all our other goings-on.

Roasted Potatoes

In this recipe, the humble potato is roasted to sweet nuttiness. Add garlic cloves or fresh rosemary as you wish. Makes four modest servings.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound potatoes (red, Yukon gold, fingerlings), cut into fork-sized pieces
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ teaspoon salt
Fresh ground pepper, to taste
12 cloves garlic, unpeeled (optional)

A few sprigs of rosemary, half-inch segments (optional)

Heat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

1. Spread the potatoes on parchment paper on a baking sheet and roast for 30 to 45 minutes until soft and perhaps slightly browned.

2. Heat olive oil in a skillet and add garlic cloves. Toss potatoes with oil to coat, and sprinkle on salt and pepper.

3. Spread the potatoes in the pan. Add a few sprigs of rosemary, and toss again to coat.

4. Cover with lid and heat all to a simmer. Reduce heat to a gentle simmer.

5. Let it simmer until the potatoes are tender and the sauce is thick enough to coat the potatoes.

6. Bon appétit!
How artists in Nepal help foster healing and bring a sense of inner peace

BY Swosti Rajbhandari Kayastha

ART HAS BEEN LINKED WITH CULTIVATING WELL-BEING since ancient times. In an age-old Nepali practice, healers would draw lions on rashes. The lions—made from varied colors with different chemical properties—would engulf the offending shingles and alleviate this skin ailment. People are more dependent on allopathic practices nowadays, but the concept of healing through contemporary art is becoming increasingly prevalent in Nepal, particularly in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake.

I myself experienced the power of art to change one’s outlook and restore emotional balance in 2018 when I visited the group exhibition Sight and Sound at Gallery MCube in Patan. Salil Subedi’s sound installation looked like an alien object—a wire-mesh disc suspended in the air with several small speakers broadcasting various radio FM channels and emitting a jarring cacophony of noise. On the ground below the suspended disc, on a round patch of organic red mud, was a huge singing bowl of the same size, representing our direct connection to the earth.

The artist invited me to step into the bowl and asked me to relax despite the noisy ambience, which I found quite disturbing. I had to resist the urge to step out. Just then he swirled the pestle around the outside edge of the bowl and struck it hard. The vibrations of the bowl swept over me, instantly calming and grounding me, and I was enveloped by a sublime connection with the earth. The radio noise vanished, and there was absolute stillness in and around my body and my mind. With tranquility seeping in, I experienced how art can connect us to a sense of inner peace and foster healing despite the chaos around us.

I first met Salil when he was working as a journalist at the turn of the century. Learning of the healing potential of the didgeridoo, a wind instrument developed...
After the fatal earthquake of April 2015, Salil felt a call to go to Barpark, the epicenter of the natural disaster. He organized a performance, circumambulating the debris from the quake. With much excitement and noise, they then lifted the cloth in the air and made a joyful procession around the village filled with debris from the quake.

A few months later Salil collaborated with Kathmandu University’s Center for Art and Design on a rehabilitation project for the ancient heritage settlement of Bungamati. The earthquake had mostly destroyed the old houses and beautiful wooden architectural elements. The students helped build temporary shelters and painted murals to enliven the environment. Salil organized a performance, circumbalating the settlement with his didgeridoo while the students followed, picking up interesting objects from the rubble to arouse a feeling of revival through preservation, conservation, and reuse.

“The body matters, and it is key and a vital part in healing trauma,” says Salil. “We are connected to the earth, and this connection is necessary to keep us rooted and stand upright.” Salil also believes art helps amplify our connections with each other and that every human deserves healing. In our capitalist world, access to healing practices often comes with a high price tag attached; Salil feels it is his responsibility to bring healing to the public through art, especially through the effects of sound.

Other artists in Nepal share Salil’s commitment to healing through art, Manas Lal Shrestha, an artist, curator, and director of Gallery MCube, believes that sharing is at the root of connection with one another and that every human deserves healing. In our capitalist world, access to healing practices often comes with a high price tag attached; Salil feels it is his responsibility to bring healing to the public through art, especially through the effects of sound.

In January 2021, several visual artists—including Erina Tamrakar, Manish Lal Shrestha, Jupiter Pradhan, Sauronga Darshandhari, and Kapil Mani Dixit, among others—participated in an exhibition of works created during the pandemic. At the opening, Salil collaborated with them on a musical performance. Following the disconnection of the pandemic, Salil wanted to restore a sense of coherence than one another and with nature. He emulated nature sounds with the didgeridoo, which attracted nearby birds, and then joined the audience, inspiring awe and serving as a reminder of the importance of being in harmony with the environment. Believing that calamities like the pandemic happen because of our inability to acknowledge nature as a living, breathing entity, Salil views the soothing melodies as a form of compassion that heals us and our surroundings. “I believe we are all spiritual beings on a spir- itual quest, and art is a wonderful vehicle to help us come closer to that experience,” he says.

Two other recent events in the Kathmandu art scene helped uplift the minds and hearts of a community eager to finally emerge from the confines of the pandemic lockdowns. The E-Arts Nepal showcase Himalayan Art Exhibition 2021 drew a particularly high number of young people, and the recently opened Museum of Nepali Art inaugurated a one-day Art Fair with live painting and music.

As I walked through the fair, I saw the value of such events in invigorating and energizing people distressed by global troubles. In the presence of art, we experience wonder and a beam of hope opening our internal awareness. Verbal expressions are not easy for everyone, but visual and auditory expressions are outlets of communication that can surprise ourselves with sound and play our unique songs. The sounds do not need to be “happy.” If you are experiencing grief or rage, it can be very satisfying to wail or growl or scream. Stay in the present moment with each breath and release pleasurable sounds that will help ground, center, and nourish you.

Express your music: Take seven conscious breaths, and this time on the exhalations, let out the music that lives inside you. This could be a long tone or intricate melodies and rhythms depending on your mood. This practice allows you to listen deeply to your body and play the music living inside you. With these exhalations, you sing your improvisational heart/soul song.

Enjoy the silence: Feel the effects of these vibrations in your body. You have been giving voice to your ever-changing inner landscape. Thank yourself for the gift of your presence, curiosity, and expression.

Phoenix Song is a queer, non-binary, Korean American adoptive performer, teacher, and sound healer. He is featured in San Francisco Magazine’s Best of the Bay for yoga music. They studied Western and Indian classical music and are a Tamalpa Associate Teacher of expression arts. Phoenix helps people free their voice and rhythm in private and group classes to sing, sound, and speak their truths. They also lead sound baths, grief rituals, ancestral healing, and diversity/solidarity trainings. www.phoenixsong.com
IN THE FOREST OF THE
MEDICINE BUDDHA’S MANDALA
Every plant, mineral, and natural source can be used for healing

by Elena Pakhoutova

**Abode of the Northern Snowy Mountain**
The Northern Snowy Mountain, endowed with the power of the moon, encompasses a medicinal forest of plants that are bitter, sour, and astringent in taste with cool, blunt potencies that cure hot disorders, such as bile ailments.

1: White sandalwood
2: Hare
3: Campfire
4: Bamboo
5: Elephant
6: Chinaberry
7: Gentian
8: Licorice
9: Civamcivaka
10: Collae leaves

56: Nutmeg
37: Cinnamon
38: Bamboo
39: Saffron
40: Cardamom
41: Olive
42: "Gil" (tamarind)
43: "Tea" (tamarind)
44: Pepper
45: Gold
46: Five kinds of hot spings

67: "Boy" (mace)
68: "Male" (mace)
69: "Female" (mace)
70: Dark lead bitumen
71: Fine kinds of hot spings
72: Copper bitumen
73: Tibetan silk
74: Silver bitumen
75: Deer
76: Gold bitumen
77: Peacock

**Abode of the Western Garfield Mountain**
The Western Garfield Mountain, endowed with the power of the sun and moon, encompasses a medicinal forest of plants that are hot, sour, and salty in taste with hot, sharp potencies that cure cold disorders, such as phlegm ailments.

11: White aconite
12: Saiga antelope
13: Red sandalwood
14: Rhinoceros
15: Bithpean [branch]
16: Spineyroot [leaf]
17: Kaspik aleurites
18: "Fearless" [branch]
19: "Enriching" [branch]
20: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
21: "Beak-shaped" myrobalan
22: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
23: "Black-colored" myrobalan
24: "Dry" myrobalan
25: Leopard
26: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
27: "Nectar" myrobalan
28: Peacock
29: "Pearlescent" myrobalan
30: "Victorious" myrobalan
31: Sparrow
32: Saiga antelope
33: Tiger

34: Bomhussola fruit
35: Cichorium
[beings with bird legs and 2D Maheus black bear]

36: Buttercup [flower]
37: Spleenwort [leaf]
38: Birthwort [branch]
39: Rhinoceros
40: Spleenwort [leaf]
41: "Enriching" myrobalan
42: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
43: Saiga antelope
44: Cichorium
45: "Nectar" myrobalan
46: Sumach
47: Musk deer
48: Asphaltila
49: Elephant
50: Capsicum
51: Long pepper
52: Bithpean [branch]
53: Black pepper
54: Peacock
55: Pomegranate

C: Fags who initiated the dialogue about the knowledge of healing with the Medicine Buddha

**Abode of the Eastern Fragrant Mountain**
The Eastern Fragrant Mountain, endowed with the power of the sun and moon, encompasses a medicinal forest of trees that are hot, sour, and salty in taste with hot, sharp potencies that cure cold disorders, such as phlegm ailments.

5: Elephant
6: Hare
7: Gentian
8: Licorice
9: Civamcivaka
10: Collae leaves

36: Nutmeg
37: Cinnamon
38: Bamboo
39: Saffron
40: Cardamom
41: Olive
42: "Gil" (tamarind)
43: "Tea" (tamarind)
44: Pepper
45: Gold
46: Five kinds of hot spings

67: "Boy" (mace)
68: "Male" (mace)
69: "Female" (mace)
70: Dark lead bitumen
71: Fine kinds of hot spings
72: Copper bitumen
73: Tibetan silk
74: Silver bitumen
75: Deer
76: Gold bitumen
77: Peacock

**Abode of the Southern Finley Mountain**
The Southern Finley Mountain, endowed with the power of the sun and moon, encompasses a medicinal forest of plants that are hot, sour, and salty in taste with hot, sharp potencies that cure cold disorders, such as phlegm ailments.

11: White aconite
12: Saiga antelope
13: Red sandalwood
14: Rhinoceros
15: Bithpean [branch]
16: Spineyroot [leaf]
17: Kaspik aleurites
18: "Fearless" [branch]
19: "Enriching" [branch]
20: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
21: "Beak-shaped" myrobalan
22: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
23: "Black-colored" myrobalan
24: "Dry" myrobalan
25: Leopard
26: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
27: "Nectar" myrobalan
28: Peacock
29: "Pearlescent" myrobalan
30: "Victorious" myrobalan
31: Sparrow
32: Saiga antelope
33: Tiger

34: Bomhussola fruit
35: Cichorium
[beings with bird legs and 2D Maheus black bear]

36: Buttercup [flower]
37: Spleenwort [leaf]
38: Birthwort [branch]
39: Rhinoceros
40: Spleenwort [leaf]
41: "Enriching" myrobalan
42: "Golden-colored" myrobalan
43: Saiga antelope
44: Cichorium
45: "Nectar" myrobalan
46: Sumach
47: Musk deer
48: Asphaltila
49: Elephant
50: Capsicum
51: Long pepper
52: Bithpean [branch]
53: Black pepper
54: Peacock
55: Pomegranate

*Translation of the caption at the bottom of the painting:

“From the Blue Sky’s Trends, The Ornament of the Fragmentation of Births and Aggravations, Master of Remedies, explaining the Four Medicine Tantras, this painting illustrates the beginning of the fragmenting of the Hecku scape. At the center of an abstract sphere adorned with the medicinal forest called Establishmentwears, on the summit of a mountain endowed with potent and powerful remedies, within a celestial palace with four gates, the Teacher of Remedies (Births and Aggravations) explains the science of medicine to many assembled gods, hermit sages, Hindu deities, and Buddhists. The teaching is given in the form of a dialogue between the hermit sages who are the natural brilliance of the five types of pristine cognition—the mirror-like pristine cognition which purifies delusion, the pristine cognition of emptiness which purifies hatred, the pristine cognition of sameness which purifies pride, the pristine cognition of discernment which purifies desire, and the pristine cognition of sameness which purifies envy.”
Father Guidalberto Bormolini has devoted his life to supporting those seeking knowledge about conscious dying—and living—whether for themselves or in service of others. Well-versed in both Western and Eastern traditions, his Everything Is Life institute in Prato, Italy, is a vibrant center of healing and instruction.

This interview was conducted in Italian and translated to English. It has been edited for length and, where needed, for clarity.

Jon Pepper and Patrizia De Libero: What is conscious dying and how can being present in the moment of death be a form of healing?

Father Guidalberto Bormolini: Death is considered by many philosophical doctrines to be a source of healing. Because according to many philosophies, including Christianity, life can be seen as a prison. It is like an exile—being far away from the motherland. So death is considered the supreme liberation. Saint Carlo Borromeo asked an artist to draw a gold key in a painting, where the grim reaper was represented. The painter was surprised and asked why—isn’t the reaper death? The saint answered, yes, but death is the key that opens the door of life.

Dying consciously is a way of healing, but dying unconsciously is not. If we remember the healer during life or especially at our last breath, then death can be the meeting with the supreme healer—the divine therapist, as it were.
The impossibility of a physical healing can bring a greater possibility of a psychological and spiritual curing.  

Can the practice of conscious dying help us in day-to-day life? Having death in front of us generates many precious gifts, but it would summate them in two ways. The first is carpe diem—if I know that I will die, then life becomes precious. Therefore I live it fully and in depth until the very end.

The other is that by contemplating death I become aware that the invisible is more important than the visible. The meeting with the spirit, with the divine, becomes relevant here and now, in this world. While I know that my life is moving toward death, my life from now on must also be filled with what is important after death, which is the invisible world, the spirit. If I immerse myself in the spirit, it is more likely that I will live a “life of the spirit” to the point that it might be possible to meet god in this life. So by contemplating death I can anticipate this meeting, because it is truly what matters most.

How could this practice help in repairing the past? For instance, by helping the ancestors who came before us? In Christian mysticism we say we belong to one unique mystic body. Many traditions over the whole earth say we are all interconnected—a microcosmos united with the macrocosmos. Therefore there is clearly a need of being liberated for many, if not for everybody. In the Christian tradition the liberator is Jesus Christ, who with his death and resurrection liberated the dead.

In our small world, in my opinion, we can do the same. Our own personal liberation can also be the liberation of many. This is the gift we can give. Salvation is not something that is individual. It is always something that is communal. I heal myself because in this way I also heal others. Individual healing is the way to heal the community.

Is there a practice that can help a loved one as they die? Something that offers healing as they move from this world to whatever comes next?

There are many things that can be done on the human plane. They are mainly listening, being present, nourishing with love, and reassuring the person. But the most precious of all is being able to help this soul orient toward a great aim after death.

If we can help a person begin to visualize the world in which he or she will reside after death, then they will recognize this place after death. Because even the Tibetans say the greatest risk after death is not being able to recognize the divine light, the vital light that is coming toward us after death. The habit of anchoring toward possessions, material things, and so on makes our encounter with the invisible world unfamiliar. For this reason, we might not only miss the opportunity to recognize the divine light, but also end up traveling disserted into this new life.

We are speaking about practice, preparation, and healing now, before we die. What about the idea of healing after death? There are many different approaches in the spiritual paths to this fundamental question. Because the anguish of death is based on two main pillars: first, death as an annulment, and second, death as a goliottine—an absolute end.

Once I “go over”—however it went—it is over. This is unbearable for human beings, and therefore since ancient times there have been different perspectives on death. One is that death is not the conclusion or annulment, but rather a passage to a true life, maybe a life fuller than this life.

Another idea is the possibility of progression, evolution, and healing after death. Eastern religions have answered this enigma through the theory of transmigration of souls, or reincarnation, according to which I am given a new life after death.

Do you see a difference between healing and curing? Sometimes in the physical plane there are illnesses you can’t heal—cancers or diseases that deteriorate one progressively. Here we can’t heal the body. But we can still cure the inner person. The impossibility of a physical healing can bring a greater possibility of a psychological and spiritual curing, because sometimes the sickness that devours the body obliges us to ponder deeply.

Do I want to correspond with the dying body? Or do I want to totally heal myself, which means to set myself free from this sick body? Because if I identify only with the body, the sickness will devour me and everything that I am completely. But if for me the body is like a suit of clothing that has served its purpose, then I can let it go and wear a new body of light.

What is the role of meditation in healing? The supreme healing resides in meditation—in the prayer of the heart. Why? Because according to some cosmological myths, the universe has been created from music, from sound. So when we practice our own prayer of the heart, our mantra or invocation has more power if it is sung, not as a melody but rather in the attitude of the recitation. A dry or mechanical recitation of the prayer can concentrate the mind, but that is not enough. It must be a song of love that unites with the song of the whole universe.

The leaves, the flowers, the rivers, the stars, the dawn, the sunset—everything sings. The oak trees, the animals, the wind—everything that exists sings a secret song. If we sing our own song of the heart, we become part of this symphony.

In the bible it is said that after the departure from Eden, suffering and pain were created. Meditating with the prayer of the heart can heal this suffering to reunite us with the original oneness. In order to heal we need to find death, but Eden is not a mythological place. It is a concrete place. The bible describes it as a place with four rivers. This place with four rivers is within us; the heart is the place where four rivers are.

The divine heart is the only one that can give life unceasingly. There is life and healing when we receive love from the divine—from the cosmos, from the people around us, from the river which is permeated with divine love. Once we receive all this love in this way, we can give it back. If we are part of this dynamic, we will heal completely once and for all.

The impossibility of a physical healing can bring a greater possibility of a psychological and spiritual curing.

Father Guidortaldo Bernoldi began as a violinist, but soon after receiving his diplomas he fat her Gianfranco Capellini, who introduced him to deep meditation. This set him on a path in study philosophy and theology and eventually became a consecrated priest. He founded and directed Tutte A Vela (Everything Is Life) in Prato, Italy, a center that offers palliative care and teaches end-of-life providers.

Jon Pepper is a former musician, book designer, and entrepreneur who has almost fifty years of experience with meditation and spiritual practice. He is currently a trustee of the Guruyat Foundation of New York.

Patricia De Libero is a native of Rome, Italy, who has studied many spiritual traditions and embraced the Gestalt Work since her college days. She runs Karios Pilgrimage, an organization connecting people to sacred places. Patricia is a yoga teacher and certified death doula, and she runs the Everything Is Life school of conscious dying and living in North America.

K Scarry is an attorney who has engaged the table and currently works as the director of The People’s Supper, which uses shared meals to build trust and connection among people of different identities and perspectives. The People’s Supper is a sister project to The Dinner Party, a community of mostly twenty-thirtys, and early fortys, working together to transform our most isolating experiences into sources of meaningful connection and forward movement.
At the Center of a Messy, Beautiful Existence

A psychologist reckons with how spiritual practices can distract us from the real work of healing.

By Ingrid Clayton
I stopped searching for something to help me override the human condition and started to drop down into it.

I had to look at my underlying motivations for meditation and affirmations. Was I using them to check “out” from my life altogether? Many years later, I was looking to check in. I was feeling a little lost and restless. At the time, I was working with a client in my psychotherapy practice who had called a psychic. Hearing about their conversations, I thought, I want to call this guy. So I did. I was looking for guidance when the psychic pulled the High Priestess tarot card several times. “The probability of receiving the same card, in the same upright position, this many times is extremely unlikely,” he said. In his view, I needed to become the High Priestess—an embodiment of the divine feminine, inner knowledge, and intuition.

“You have a voice you want to share, but it’s inverted, and you can’t let it out. But you will put yourself out there, like the Fool who steps off a cliff and risks everything,” he said. I felt inspired, but I had no idea where to begin.

A few days later, essays started walking me in the middle of the night. I was flooded with story after story while my literal defenses were down, usually at 3:00 a.m. My eyes would pop open, and I’d have to get out of bed, tiptoeing to my computer. I started to recognize this was the voice I’d been sitting on for thirty years. Beginning from the outer edges of my personal experiences, the essays started to be circling around my pain, moving closer and closer to the heart of it. My first marriage and divorce, my alcoholism and sobriety, all the ways I didn’t trust or know myself. I’d kept these experiences compartmentalized for so long; it was like huge parts of me were totally walled off. I’d spent decades stuffing my reality under layers of bad choices and attempts at healing in private spaces—therapy and self-help groups—where childhood secrets were bound to flourish without reaching their familial foundation. I had tried to drink my painful past away, and then I tried to “fix” it with sobriety, therapy, spirituality, and anything that held a promise of overcoming.

It is said when the High Priestess appears in a reading, she is calling you to follow her into your own depths. To search within yourself for answers, often with the aid of undiscovered or repressed creativity. I definitely received the call. I stopped searching for something to help me override the human condition and started to drop down into it. Even if the High Priestess was make-believe, it didn’t matter. The writing felt like a calling and I fiercely trusted it.

I’d spent so many years hoping the people who had hurt me would finally help me. I thought they could. But as I reclaimed my story, I saw how I was doing the work I’d always wanted them to do and saving myself. Rather than waiting for anyone else to believe what happened to me, for the first time in a very long time, I believed me.
Breathing. We all do it, but are any of us doing it well? From the first breath we take till our last, our minds and bodies run on fuel supplied by a combination of oxygen, nitrogen, and other assorted gases. And since breathing comes automatically (though with more difficulty if you have asthma or a lung disease), what would happen if breathing became more mindful, more purposeful? Breath is at the heart of the Rubin’s Mandala Lab, a reinvented space on the Museum’s third floor, where visitors see, touch, feel, and yes, breathe their way toward self-understanding. This interactive installation draws on Tibetan Buddhist teachings and neuroscience to provide sensorial experiences that help us gain deeper knowledge of ourselves and others, inspiring connection and empathy. In turn, this helps us overcome the afflictive emotions of pride, attachment, envy, anger, and ignorance—known as kleshas in Buddhism—that interfere in our understanding of the world and cause suffering.

Every Breath You/We Take

When you enter the north quadrant of the Mandala Lab—which is associated with the air element—you’re invited to sit in front of Untitled (Coalescence), a sculpture by Palden Weinreb, a New York–based artist who draws from Buddhist teachings and combines the ancient and the contemporary in his art practice. A pulsing white light brightens and dims to echo our breathing patterns, encouraging deeper, more thoughtful, slower breaths. Can these regulated breaths have physical, psychological, and emotional benefits? The sculpture seems to function as a mandala within a mandala, as the light sits in the center of a series of nested spheres, much as a deity is represented in the middle of sacred diagrams. At once you begin to inhale as the light increases, then exhale as the light dims. One cycle lasts about eleven seconds (10.73 seconds to be precise), with approximately five seconds in and six seconds out, the most effective mind-body rhythm.

The piece invites a meditative experience that encourages viewers to delve into their own thoughts,” Weinreb explains. “While this sets the stage for a multitude of interpretations that align with the concept of a mandala, the pulsating light acts in a continuous cycle to draw viewers into contemplation and separate themselves from their surroundings,” he adds. “Much like a mandala, the light flowing through the sculpture could be seen as an instrument for meditation, setting the stage to invite the pursuit of enlightenment.”

This section of the Mandala Lab invites you to think about envy and how it affects your treatment of others. Being covetous of somebody else’s success or material gains will not do much for you. Buddhist practitioners work to replace envy with positive actions that contribute collectively to a greater good. According to psychologist and neuroscientist Richard J. Davidson, founder of the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, connection is one of the pillars of a healthy

Can breathing in sync with others help us learn more about ourselves and the world around us?

by Howard Kaplan
mind. What if we used our breath purposefully to elicit a feeling of connection with others? When multiple people participate in this section of the Mandala Lab, you get to see this idea in action. Inevitably, there comes a moment when everyone in the installation is breathing rhythmically to the same light pattern, the same amount of seconds in, the same amount of seconds out—a synchronized union among disparate strangers. When everyone is doing the same thing, you recognize that you’re no different than the person beside you or across the room. And if we’re all the same, how can anyone be jealous of or superior to another? We’re all breathing in, the same amount of seconds out—a pattern, the same amount of seconds in, the same amount of seconds out—a synchronized union among disparate Buddha monks.

In Tummo, a practice named after the goddess of heat and passion, practitioners raise their body temperature significantly using breath and visualization techniques. About a century ago, explorer Alexandra David-Néel visited Tibet—and is believed to be the first Western woman to have done so—and described her firsthand accounts of witnessing monks melt frozen sheets of cloth from their bodies while practicing Tummo.

The Mandala Lab

Catching Your Breath

James Nestor’s book Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art could be considered the bible on breathing. His journey to discovering the benefits of nose breathing and the hazards of mouth breathing (snorers, take note) takes him to Stanford University for observation, and it even involves sleeping with his mouth taped shut to prevent him from using his mouth to breathe. Breathing through the nose allows air to be warmed while also removing impurities. As a bonus, nose breathing activates nitric oxide, which releases oxygen, which is beneficial for our bodies. Mouth breathing does not.

Nestor wasn’t the first to discover the positive effects of nose breathing and its offshoots including alternative nostril breathing. In fact, the lost art he references in the book’s subtitle has a long history: breath has been a part of yogic practices and world religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity for millennia. Tummo breathing, for example, is an ancient meditation technique developed by Tibetan Buddhist monks.

In Tummo, a practice named after the goddess of heat and passion, practitioners raise their body temperature significantly using breath and visualization techniques. About a century ago, explorer Alexandra David-Néel visited Tibet—and is believed to be the first Western woman to have done so—and described her firsthand accounts of witnessing monks melt frozen sheets of cloth from their bodies while practicing Tummo.

What the Lama Said

In many languages, the words for breathing and spirit are the same or closely related. In yoga, breath is the tool for energy and transformational experiences, and a mindful breath is essential to Buddhist practice. I was reminded of the importance of breath in a spiritual context when taking mindful meditation classes with Lama Aria Drolma, a formally authorized Buddhist teacher and lineage holder in the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. During sessions Lama Drolma would frequently tell us to focus on our breathing when we get distracted or lose focus. “The breath,” she said, “will bring you back.”

Lama Drolma described in a bit more depth the importance of breath in meditation. “When Buddha became enlightened, he saw that we were all interconnected, and that was the nature of all beings,” she said. “In meditation practice the breath is used as an anchor to still the mind and acts as a bridge between the mind and the body. Mindfulness meditation helps to bring our attention to the present moment by focusing on the breath and seeing what arises in the mind without judgment. When the attention wanders off, bring the mind’s attention back to the breath. When we’re living in the present moment, our future becomes very stressful. Our breath always gives us the opportunity to connect with what is happening right now.” Her words sound even more prescient when experiencing the Mandala Lab, focusing on Palden Weinreb’s light sculpture. Breath can bring us in contact with ourselves as well as others. I realize now how important the simple phrase “Take a deep breath” can be, whether it’s gaining focus in meditation class, navigating everyday stresses in life, comforting a friend in need, or simply returning to the present moment.

Breathing can help.

Experience the power of breathing in the Mandala Lab, located on the third floor of the Rubin Museum.

Healing Through Plants

To bring a plant home is to embark on a partnership that transcends soil, water, and sunlight. Plant care is about more than keeping a plant alive—it is a way to facilitate curiosity about our vast, interdependent ecosystem. When you develop new rituals and plant-centered traditions that recognize your place within nature, you honor your responsibility to nurture your surroundings.

The rituals of tending to houseplants look a little different for everyone. Some forms of plant care involve steamy weekend showers, gentle daily misting, or meticulous pruning; while others might incorporate regular propagation and sharing cuttings with friends. You might talk to your plants over morning tea, meditate on their growth, or share them off to visitors and internet strangers. Whatever routines you develop, you will soon find that creating space for plant care does as much for your own well-being as it does for your plants.

Here are two possible rituals for your plant journey:

NAME YOUR PLANT

Modern buying culture is designed around disposability, and too often houseplants are treated like expendable tokens of sympathy or celebration that are lucky to survive a few weeks in a new home before suffering a neglectful demise. Giving your plant a name transcends this relationship by honoring its existence as a living creature.

MINDFUL GARDENING

Tending to your garden as a means of meditation can lead to lovely botanical explorations. Ground yourself and be fully present in the moment; play your favorite music and let it fill the room; put on an outfit that makes you feel fabulous; pour yourself a delicious cocktail; and begin your viridescent adventure of nurturing the nature you have brought into your home. Don’t rush the process of caring for your garden; enjoy it and make something you look forward to.

Christopher Griffin is the assistant director of the NYU LGBTQ+ Center and cares for over two hundred green gui si xin shel i lin phy to noma d apart ment. A self-identified Queer, Christopher started their Instagram account, @plantkween, in 2016 as a way to share the many lessons, lush adventures, and simple joys that come with being a plant parent. Christopher recently released their first book, You Grow, Gurl: Plant Parent’s Lush Guide to Growing Your Garden.

Puneet Sabharwal is the CEO and co-founder of Home, a plant subscription company. Raised in North India, Puneet spent his childhood living in a religious commune with his family and is currently training to become a psychedelic therapist. The care for more than seventy houseplants in his Brooklyn apartment, where he lives to host talks for chat time. Puneet recently released his first book, Happy Plant: A Beginner’s Guide to Building Healthy Plant Care Habits.
THE HEAT WAS STIFLING. As the steam rose from water being poured over the fire-heated stones in the center of the sweat lodge, Maria Farfan laid down for a reprieve from the heat. It was the Colombian native’s first time participating in an indigenous ceremony in the highlands of her homeland, and the first time she consumed ayahuasca, a psychoactive tea derived from several plants endemic to the Amazon rainforest.

As her body melded with the earthy floor, she was suddenly overwhelmed with sadness as she remembered how she’d polluted or wasted precious natural resources throughout her life. “I recognized all the damage that I had done to the earth,” she said. But in that moment of realization she also had a vision. She became a part of the earth. The flowers began speaking to her. The mountains were breathing with her. And as Mother Earth forgave her, a pink rose bloomed from the center of her heart. “I felt that my apologies were well received by Mother Earth.”

Since that first psychedelic journey more than ten years ago, Farfan has dedicated her life to learning how indigenous peoples use sacred entheogenic plant medicines in North and South America and how to facilitate these types of experiences for others looking to heal or expand their consciousness and deepen their spiritual practice.

Farfan is part of a burgeoning global psychedelic movement, commonly referred to as the psychedelic renaissance, that is infiltrating mainstream culture. After decades of criminalization, states across the United States are now decriminalizing or legalizing the use of magic mushrooms and ayahuasca. Major research institutions, including Johns Hopkins Medicine and the University of California, San Francisco, are conducting clinical trials researching the potential for psychedelics like MDMA and psilocybin to treat people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, addiction, and other mental illnesses, with promising results. And financial investors are ready to pounce on what is expected to develop into a profitable new psychedelic pharmaceutical industry.

But looming over the excitement around psychedelics and their potential to heal are overarching concerns shared by Farfan and other female doctors, historians, and psychedelic advocates, who have been largely underrepresented thus far in what they describe as a male-dominated field. As psychedelic medicine is increasingly commercialized, they worry about the potential for harm if used without the proper guidance and oversight.

“We have to be very careful in delineating how it’s used,” says Sara Garcia Velasquez, a physician from Mexico and associate medical director at MAPS Public Benefit Corporation, which promotes the research and development of psychedelic pharmaceuticals.

In recent years, multiple deaths have been reported among people who have participated in ayahuasca retreats in South America. Sexual assault of women in these types of psychedelic plant medicine ceremonies and in clinical psychedelic-assisted therapy sessions settings is an ongoing issue. And for people with a predisposition for psychotic disorders, using psychedelics can increase the risk of psychosis. This is why it’s critical to conduct a diligent screening process...

The women spreading cautious optimism about ancient rituals and sacred plant medicines

by Teresa Tomassoni
before selecting people to participate in the many current psychedelic drug trials being conducted globally, says Katrin Preller, a neuroscientist researching the efficacy of psilocybin as a treatment for alcoholism at the Psychiatric University Hospital Zurich in Switzerland. Putting a price on psychedelic medicines may also prevent some populations who could really benefit from their use from having access to them, exacerbating existing inequities in healthcare for the uninsured and other marginalized groups. Existing inequities in healthcare for these medicines is vital, says Buch.

Traditionally, these medicines were rarely used in isolation from other spiritual practices. They were combined with other disciplines including meditation and prayer, or breathwork, says Buch. Even currently, when indigenous peoples from South America partake in ayahuasca ceremonies, for example, they are encouraged to abstain from certain foods or behaviors before and after they ingest the medicine so as to prepare the body and maximize its potential for healing, says Farfan. In Native North American Peyote ceremonies, she says, the medicine is just one part of a very structured and communal ceremony that involves singing, feasting, and calling upon the natural elements for guidance. “The ritual itself is a healing practice.”

And it’s working. Study results, thus far, have shown a significant percentage of people with PTSD showing substantial improvement after participating in MDMA-assisted therapy sessions. “They were no longer subjected to this repetition of pain and trauma they’d been subjected to for so many years,” says Velasquez. Much credit is due to the indigenous peoples who helped pave the way for this breakthrough science, she said.

“We wouldn’t have gotten to where we are without incorporating ancestral traditions of ritual.”

Teresa Tomassoni is a journalist reporting on social and environmental issues, particularly as they pertain to indigenous peoples. She has lived, studied, and reported in Latin America, Asia, and Australia, and holds degrees in journalism from the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and international health and social work from UCL Global, a program of King’s College London.

Allyson Grey: In 1969, I began experimenting with psychedelics, primarily LSD. At that time, I saw myself as an aagnostic Jew and art student activist, committed to ending the draft and Vietnam War, supporting civil rights and the women’s movement. In 1971, I read the book *Be Here Now* by Ram Dass and his Life-Source Foundation. It provided me with a path that contributed to the mind’s focus and wellness. As a part of our spiritual life, Alex and I practice a seated meditation every morning and a painting meditation for several hours every evening before bed. Meditation practices such as walking, chanting, mantra, prayer, or making art with a spiritually focused intention all encourage us to experience consecutive moments of NOW.

How can art liberate us? Buddhists teach a principle called liberation through seeing. Art can serve as a meditation tool. For example, someone who meditates on a mandala drawing or painting, which represents a cinctic image that evokes wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and unity. Or they may meditate on a Tibetan Buddhist thangka painting of the deity Vajrabhairava, who greatly influenced our lives.

Allyson Grey’s creative life and secret writing

**INTERVIEW**

How has the act of making art become a healthy spiritual practice for you? Connoting while making art, especially when the practice is labor intensive, can be a personal meditation to calm the soul. Enlightenment is the royal road that contributes to the mind’s focus and wellness. As a part of our spiritual life, Alex and I practice a seated meditation every morning and a painting meditation for several hours every evening before bed. Meditation practices such as walking, chanting, mantra, prayer, or making art with a spiritually focused intention all encourage us to experience consecutive moments of NOW.

How can art liberate us? Buddhists teach a principle called liberation through seeing. Art can serve as a meditation tool. For example, someone who meditates on a mandala drawing or painting, which represents a cinctic image that evokes wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and unity. Or they may meditate on a Tibetan Buddhist thangka painting of the deity Vajrabhairava, who greatly influenced our lives.

Allyson Grey’s creative life and secret writing

**INTERVIEW**

How has the act of making art become a healthy spiritual practice for you? Connoting while making art, especially when the practice is labor intensive, can be a personal meditation to calm the soul. Enlightenment is the royal road that contributes to the mind’s focus and wellness. As a part of our spiritual life, Alex and I practice a seated meditation every morning and a painting meditation for several hours every evening before bed. Meditation practices such as walking, chanting, mantra, prayer, or making art with a spiritually focused intention all encourage us to experience consecutive moments of NOW.

How can art liberate us? Buddhists teach a principle called liberation through seeing. Art can serve as a meditation tool. For example, someone who meditates on a mandala drawing or painting, which represents a cinctic image that evokes wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and unity. Or they may meditate on a Tibetan Buddhist thangka painting of the deity Vajrabhairava, who greatly influenced our lives.

Allyson Grey’s creative life and secret writing

**INTERVIEW**

How has the act of making art become a healthy spiritual practice for you? Connoting while making art, especially when the practice is labor intensive, can be a personal meditation to calm the soul. Enlightenment is the royal road that contributes to the mind’s focus and wellness. As a part of our spiritual life, Alex and I practice a seated meditation every morning and a painting meditation for several hours every evening before bed. Meditation practices such as walking, chanting, mantra, prayer, or making art with a spiritually focused intention all encourage us to experience consecutive moments of NOW.

How can art liberate us? Buddhists teach a principle called liberation through seeing. Art can serve as a meditation tool. For example, someone who meditates on a mandala drawing or painting, which represents a cinctic image that evokes wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and unity. Or they may meditate on a Tibetan Buddhist thangka painting of the deity Vajrabhairava, who greatly influenced our lives.

Allyson Grey’s creative life and secret writing

**INTERVIEW**

How has the act of making art become a healthy spiritual practice for you? Connoting while making art, especially when the practice is labor intensive, can be a personal meditation to calm the soul. Enlightenment is the royal road that contributes to the mind’s focus and wellness. As a part of our spiritual life, Alex and I practice a seated meditation every morning and a painting meditation for several hours every evening before bed. Meditation practices such as walking, chanting, mantra, prayer, or making art with a spiritually focused intention all encourage us to experience consecutive moments of NOW.

How can art liberate us? Buddhists teach a principle called liberation through seeing. Art can serve as a meditation tool. For example, someone who meditates on a mandala drawing or painting, which represents a cinctic image that evokes wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and unity. Or they may meditate on a Tibetan Buddhist thangka painting of the deity Vajrabhairava, who greatly influenced our lives.

Allyson Grey’s creative life and secret writing

**INTERVIEW**

How has the act of making art become a healthy spiritual practice for you? Connoting while making art, especially when the practice is labor intensive, can be a personal meditation to calm the soul. Enlightenment is the royal road that contributes to the mind’s focus and wellness. As a part of our spiritual life, Alex and I practice a seated meditation every morning and a painting meditation for several hours every evening before bed. Meditation practices such as walking, chanting, mantra, prayer, or making art with a spiritually focused intention all encourage us to experience consecutive moments of NOW.

How can art liberate us? Buddhists teach a principle called liberation through seeing. Art can serve as a meditation tool. For example, someone who meditates on a mandala drawing or painting, which represents a cinctic image that evokes wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and unity. Or they may meditate on a Tibetan Buddhist thangka painting of the deity Vajrabhairava, who greatly influenced our lives.
conqueror of the Lord of Death, to vanquish a fear of death or loss. In studying this painting, viewers may see the deity breathing in rainbow ribbons and exhaling grey smoke. They are encouraged to follow the lead of the pictorial representation as they breathe through their meditation with the intention of liberating the mind. Any object, and especially art created for this purpose, has this capacity to bring enlightenment to the practitioner. Buddha is said to have held up a lotus flower during a meditation that resulted in one inspired student experiencing spontaneous liberation.

How can one who does not necessarily identify as an artist cultivate a creative healing practice?

Everyone was once an artist, a dancer, a singer. That creativity is a healing force is well known to practitioners of art therapy. By taking a subjective thought and turning it into an objective “thing” outside of our mind, we can study and release a negative thought or positive intention. Those who have had trauma—and who hasn’t?—can feel that benefit and uplift in every creative act.

How can artists heal others by sharing their work?

How do you foster collective healing through art?

Because Alex and I characterize art as a spiritual practice, we hold Art Church on each new moon, a time of intention setting. In Art Church, CoSM members make art together in silence with a music playlist relevant or conducive to a chosen theme. An upcoming theme, for example, is Creating a Life You Love. After the meditation we show our results and share our experience of the art meditation. Places like the Rubin Museum or CoSM offer an environment conducive to meditation and healing through the observation of art.

How do artists heal others by sharing their work?

Is this an intention of your work?

Any act with the intention to benefit others offers healing. Embedded with positive intentions, art may plant a seed of liberation in the mindstream of the viewer.

Most of what we know of the world’s religions comes from art, including the written word. Our art can pictorialize or objectify a difficult past and be a healing force. Art can envision a positive future and can aid in vanquishing negative thoughts and emotions. It is a spiritual practice to let love infuse our creative life and let the past die behind us. To enhance the benefits of creativity, play spiritual music, listen to a spiritual teacher, pray or recite mantras while creating art. To infuse your art practice with spirit, allow focus and concentration to guide your creative time.

How do artists heal others by sharing their work?

Is this an intention of your work?

Any act with the intention to benefit others offers healing. Embedded with positive intentions, art may plant a seed of liberation in the mindstream of the viewer.

About the Museum

The Rubin Museum of Art

WHERE CONTEMPORARY MINDS MEET THE ART AND WISDOM OF THE HIMALAYAS

Through Himalayan art, cultures, and ideas, the Rubin Museum of Art examines big questions about what it means to be human today, with the intent of creating a more compassionate, resilient world. With its globally renowned collection, largely centered around art from the Tibetan Plateau, the Rubin fosters understanding and appreciation of this region by relating its art and ideas to our shared human experience today. Inspired by the philosophical traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism and aligned with ongoing research into learning, behavior, and the brain, the Rubin offers innovative exhibitions and programs that examine provocative ideas across the arts and explore the mind. Through this work, the Museum serves as a space for reflection and personal transformation, opening windows to inner worlds so visitors can better navigate outer ones.
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.

Masterworks: A Journey through 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.

Shrine Room Projects: Rohini Devasher/Palden Weinreb

In dialogue with the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room at the center of the gallery, contemporary artists reinterpret traditional religious iconography and practices through sculptural installations, painting, and video.

Healing Practices: Stories from Himalayan Americans

March 18, 2022–January 16, 2023

Explore the diverse ways that Tibetan Buddhist artworks and practices have served as road maps to well-being with objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection set alongside stories from Himalayan Americans. The exhibition highlights the many ways these living traditions are transformed and adopted for today’s world.

Gateway to Himalayan Art

Start here for an introduction to the rich artistic traditions of the region, illuminating key figures, symbols, ideas, practices, materials, and techniques presented throughout the Museum.

Mandala Lab: Where Emotions Can Turn to Wisdom

Consider the power of transforming complex emotions in the Museum’s newest interactive space, featuring five thought-provoking installations inspired by Buddhist principles.

Programs online and in-person

The Rubin presents an array of thematic public programs, from dialogues on mind science to art-making workshops for families that delve deeper into the art and ideas of Himalayan art.

Brainwave

Fall 2022

Our longest running talk series investigates how our minds shape our everyday experiences by combining the most compelling advances in science with wisdom rooted in Himalayan traditions.

Mindful Connections

For visitors with dementia and their caregivers

Every month trained guides facilitate an online experience designed to promote engagement with works of art and other participants.

Himalayan Heritage

Rubin Museum educator and Himalayan region expert Tashi Chodron hosts a recurring program that explores the culture, art, history, and sacred traditions of the Himalayan region through discussions, performances, and meetings with guest speakers.

More Than a Museum

We mix arts and culture with a social experience. In addition to our exhibitions and programs, discover unique items from our shop, or make the Rubin the lively venue for your next private in-person or online event.

The Shop

Take a memory of the Museum home with you or give a gift from the Rubin! The shop’s selection of jewelry, textiles, books, and other treasures includes an array of unique items, many unavailable anywhere else.

Private Events and Rentals

Whether you’re planning a virtual event or need to make a professional conference more inspiring, consider the Rubin Museum for your private event or rental needs. Our expert events team makes it easy to plan, with a range of wellness experiences, happy hour packages, art workshops, and family-friendly experiences that can be customized for an in-person, virtual, or hybrid event. Learn more at RubinMuseum.org/events.

You Make It Possible

The Rubin Museum is only as strong as our supporters. You help us create a space for learning, contemplation, inspiration, and art. Join us! Visit RubinMuseum.org/support to learn more.

Blessing Rituals with 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.

consisting of one dialogue, other treasures includes an array of unique items, many unavailable anywhere else.

Family Sundays

Sundays, 1:00–3:00 PM

in the Mandala Lab

Join the Rubin Museum every Sunday in the Mandala Lab for an afternoon of activities both kids and grown-ups will enjoy. Recommended for ages 3 and older with accompanying adults.

Embracing Caregivers

Designed specifically for caregivers, this program invites participants to examine the power dynamics in their lives and open their minds to a different understanding of their own agency.

Mindfulness Meditation

Practice the art of attention in this weekly forty-five-minute program for beginners and skilled meditators alike. Each session is inspired by a different work of art from the Rubin Museum’s collection and includes an opening talk, a twenty-minute sitting session led by an expert teacher, and a closing discussion. A podcast of each recorded program is also available online.

For current listings, visit RubinMuseum.org/events.

All programs subject to change.

Family Sundays

Sundays, 1:00–3:00 PM

in the Mandala Lab

Join the Rubin Museum every Sunday in the Mandala Lab for an afternoon of activities both kids and grown-ups will enjoy. Recommended for ages 3 and older with accompanying adults.

Empowering Caregivers

Designed specifically for caregivers, this program invites participants to examine the power dynamics in their lives and open their minds to a different understanding of their own agency.

Mindfulness Meditation

Practice the art of attention in this weekly forty-five-minute program for beginners and skilled meditators alike. Each session is inspired by a different work of art from the Rubin Museum’s collection and includes an opening talk, a twenty-minute sitting session led by an expert teacher, and a closing discussion. A podcast of each recorded program is also available online.

For current listings, visit RubinMuseum.org/events.

All programs subject to change.

Mindfulness Meditation

Practice the art of attention in this weekly forty-five-minute program for beginners and skilled meditators alike. Each session is inspired by a different work of art from the Rubin Museum’s collection and includes an opening talk, a twenty-minute sitting session led by an expert teacher, and a closing discussion. A podcast of each recorded program is also available online.

For current listings, visit RubinMuseum.org/events.

All programs subject to change.
A MAGAZINE AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART, SCIENCE, AND HIMALAYAN CULTURES

*Spiral* asks big questions at the center of our shared human experience: life and death, connection to one another and our world, identity, states of consciousness, the cosmos, and the nature of existence. The Healing Practices issue offers insights into individual and collective modes of repair and recovery, exploring how we seek solace and undergo transformation.

#HEALINGPRACTICES

RubinMuseum.org

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