

SQUARE ONE

A Journal of Art in Everyday Life

Winter 2019



Pacifying

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SHAMBHALA ART®

From the Shambhala Art Team

Welcome to our first issue on the energy of pacifying, also known as the Vajra family in Buddhism. With this issue we are now providing an opportunity to explore the Four Actions associated with Shambhala Art (and other Shambhala teachings). We are excited to see what we will learn together this year!

This January we held our biannual retreat for Shambhala Art teacher and graduates. It was the second time we incorporated a Zoom component into the program. Half of our participants joined remotely, creating an opportunity to see if this technology (among others) facilitated presence and community. Our experience was that it was indeed successful, allowing us to move forward with confidence into our upcoming endeavor: translating Shambhala Art Part 1 into an online course. We will be continuing to update you on our progress with this effort.

The Shambhala community continues to wrestle with the impact of our past harm, unkindnesses, and ignoring of basic goodness. Since our last issue of Square One, both the Interim Board and the Process Committee have fully emerged to lead the community in transformation. From the Shambhala Art viewpoint, this moment is ripe for the wisdom of pacifying. Pacifying is the exact opposite of ignoring or numbing ourselves. It is a brave, gentle, and peaceful energy that clears out what is blocking our vision.

Please enjoy these expressions of pacifying, and "jolly good luck" in your own explorations of this principle.

From the freshness of square one,

Steve Saitzyk, International Director
Anne Saitzyk, Int'l Assistant Director
Stuart Rice, Director of Communications



Cover photo courtesy of Pexels.

What is Pacifying?

The idea of "pacifying" comes from Trungpa Rinpoche's earliest teachings on the mandala principle. Buddhist mandalas have four directions, with the middle of the mandala considered the fifth direction. In his 1972 and 1974 lectures to students at Karmê Chöling, Trungpa Rinpoche described these five energies as part of our basic intelligence. The directions hold energy with two possible expressions. One expression leads toward confusion; the other, toward clarity. Trungpa Rinpoche used these five energies in many of his teachings, including those on dharma art.

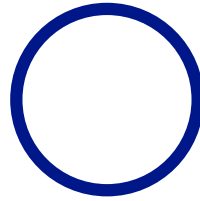
Pacifying (also referred to as "Vajra") is the energy of clarity. When this energy is confused we create situations that make us comfortable at the expense of our wakefulness or clarity. In art, this form of pacifying makes us comfortable but may numb our connection to reality. In contrast, the clear expression of this energy brings a sharpness to our perception, allowing us to see things as they are. Like all sane energies, pacifying promotes our wakefulness.

In Shambhala's symbolism, pacifying is associated with Tiger, the Dignity of Meek. The Tiger's meekness is connected to its self-confidence and modesty. The Tiger places its paws carefully, mindful of each step and is both friendly to itself and merciful to others.

In Shambhala Art, pacifying is used as a principle and as an action. Whatever

our endeavor, pacifying-as-action occurs when we clarify a situation or work of art, perhaps through simplifying. Trungpa Rinpoche described pacifying as having a peacefulness, presenting things and situations with gentleness and an absence of neurosis.

The shape associated with pacifying is a blue circle. As Trungpa Rinpoche explains in *True Perception*:



"The circle within the square is connected with the first karma, pacifying. It represents the cooling off of neurosis. It is pure, blue, cool. So the original manifestation, that of pacifying, is gentleness and freedom from neurosis. It is pure and cool."

In this issue, we have drawn together some different expressions of pacifying. We encourage you to explore your relationship to how this principle manifests in these offering and in the world around you. What gently but thoroughly cuts through your neurosis or confusion? How does it feel when the truth of a situation is revealed?

Happy exploring! ○

Our Contributors



Miriam Hall teaches of Shambhala Art, Nalanda Miksang Contemplative Photography, and Contemplative Writing. She is the co-author of two books on Nalanda Miksang: *Looking and Seeing* and *Heart of Photography*. Miriam makes her living teaching these practices in Madison, WI (where she lives), online and all over North America and Europe. More information can be found at her website.



r. fox (Robert Fox) is an award winning Bay Area filmmaker, sound composer and visual artist. His work reflects a curiosity of our world as explored through the creative process. fox's work draws upon material created, influenced by and collected from film, photography, music drawing and painting. Each of these mediums offer an insight into approaches and constraints that are an integral part of this process.



Roberta Pyx Sutherland is a visual artist living in Victoria and on Hornby Island, Canada. Her education includes a BFA (Hon.) from the University of Victoria, study at Emily Carr College of Art and Design, printmaking at the University of Sheffield UK, Ikebana Ohara School, and residencies at the Banff Centre, the Bau Institute, Studio Ginestrelle, and Shambhala Art teacher training.

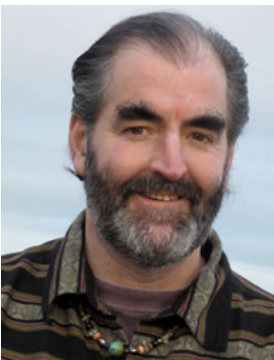




Sarah Lipton has been a meditation practitioner since 1996 and a student of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche since 2000. She has a degree from Naropa University entitled Embodied Systems. In 2015, she launched The Presence Point so that she could follow her passion of serving leaders in a more formal way. Sarah lives with her husband Scott Robbins and daughters in a beautiful home high on a hill in north-central Vermont.



Steve Saitzyk is the International Director for Shambhala Art. He has studied and worked directly with some of the leading contemporary artists of our time, as well as masters of Buddhist art, meditation, philosophy, and psychology, among them The Venerable Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Steve is an Adjunct Professor at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena where he teaches year round.



Gordon Wood lives in Seattle with his fourteen year old son, Niko, and as an Artist, Designer has completed more than 500 artworks, (mixed medium collages, installations, and digital art prints). Gordon's development and education in the arts includes a BA in Art History from the University of Washington, and study at the Pilchuck School of Glass and Mt. Royal School Graduate School of Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art.



Shambhala Art Teacher



Contributor Website



Email Contributor

Clarity of Viewing

(adapted from *Looking and Seeing*, by John McQuade and Miriam Hall)

This is an excerpt from a larger title on the practice of Nalanda Miksang *Contemplative Photography*. The Vajra family is associated not only with clarity, but with the sense organ of sight. So we focus on “viewing” with the eyes in this passage, but please know it could be through any sense – hearing, tasting, etc.

The process of viewing images in the practice of Nalanda Miksang is where most of the learning happens. We most often do this in a group. While Nalanda Miksang uses some basic principles in terms of forms and perception, the process of viewing – and getting clear on what we are viewing – can carry across to nearly any expression. It is in this spirit we shared these modified words here. We alternate the word image with experience and art; please understand what could be viewed here could be a performance, a painting, listening to someone speak – any form of creative expression made with perception in mind.

“Flash of perception” is a phrase used in Nalanda Miksang to express a direct perception. The “aha” or “something caught my eye” experience of a clear, precise moment of a simple form of perception – color, light, pattern, etc. While Flashes of perception can become quite complex – multiple layers, and even including experiences of instability – this passage comes from our first text, and emphasizes simplicity, spaciousness, and purity, which are also Vajra family hallmarks.

VIEWING IN A GROUP

Viewing in a group has several benefits. First, you can each help each other in truly seeing what is being presented. It provides more insight.

Second, it opens up the collective contemplative imagination. To see how others see is surprising and fresh. How amazingly different people can see – even when doing the same assignment, especially in the same setting.

To boot, it is a delight and celebration. To witness these fresh experiences of what seems a brand new world!

Finally, it is deeply contemplative. As a group, you mix eyes, minds and hearts. You enter the deep contemplative practice of viewing. You form a community with the intention to bring the goodness of the world to the world. So though it seems a small occurrence to get together and view art, you participate in a big event. The wave and the ocean all at once.

HOW TO REVIEW IMAGES

An image is projected or appears on a screen, and this gives the viewers a chance to experience synchronized seeing, or have a flash of perception all over again. Are you seeing the image in the same way the perception showed up for the photographer, or as the artist intended when making or performing?

How does the experience appear to your eye and mind? Do you experience a di-

rect, full sense of color? Or is the visual appearance mainly a sense of space, the presence of light, pattern, or what Nalanda Miksang calls “dot in space” – a form against a background? Or perhaps it is more what we call color plus – not just color, but a sense of energy, movement, graphic art? Just listen to your eyes and see what they are experiencing.

Viewing this way is much like viewing the phenomenal world: it is open, fresh and direct. Yet for the review, it’s time to add some of what Buddhism calls discernment. Use your own direct experience of shooting to sense, from your own

eyes, whether the image on the screen is color as color. If the image works, the image is an equivalent of that perception. Bang! Wow! Yes. No doubt. The image stops the eye and stops the mind.

If the image doesn’t quite work, two things remain to figure out: What was the original perception? Does the image/performance/painting deliver an experience of this perception?

Sometimes the image itself isn’t an equivalent of the perception, but you can see the original perception in it. Maybe too many other things are going on. If the



Photo courtesy of Miriam Hall.

images are yours, perhaps you remember. You can ask if it belongs to someone else.

Maybe it is an object that has color. Maybe it's a purple chair against a red background. Or perhaps the color is part of a design. Maybe it looks like a piece of abstract art, in a way, too interesting to be just color. These are two examples of color plus: more than the direct simplicity of color as color.

These are still depictions of direct perceptions. They have presence, simplicity, directness, space and purity. They are just expression of more complex direct perceptions. In the first case, the image is of color as a part of a larger perception of Ordinary World. In the second, it is color as abstract art – what we call Absolute Eye.

When we open to clear seeing and pure perception, the flash of perception opens perception itself. It does not know about assignments or artist agendas.

Finally, the images may not be direct perceptions at all. You may have fallen back into conventional, conceptual ways of seeing and making images. They may be documentary: representations of the thing world. They may be artistic constructions, heavy on photographic technique. Then, simply acknowledge this, and move on.

Photographs or paintings may have craft issues: they may be out of focus or not exposed properly, or not rendered as the artist experienced the perception.

Craft is important. Craft has a contemplative dimension. At the beginning, we do not emphasize craft. At this stage in the training, we emphasize the primacy of perception: the contact with direct perception through clear seeing.

Most craft issues self-correct through practice. You become frustrated by your inability to deliver an image of a beautiful perception. So you practice how to embody craft. It is not difficult to learn these basics, and it works better if you are motivated by your heart connection to the world and desire to express it.

Other contemplative issues with craft: sometimes you try to make your camera do something it can't do. Maybe you



Photo courtesy of Miriam Hall.

shoot something too up close or too far away, or at an angle you can't capture with your lens. If so, then let go and move on. Forcing an expression of a direct perception doesn't work in any media.

A single best perception or piece of art doesn't exist. Letting go and moving on is part of contemplative practice. We can recognize and appreciate the endless feast available to us.

You can ask yourself or each other where the flash of perception is. We always ask the photographer what she perceived.

Note that this is not the same as what she saw – what we see is often a combination of many perceptions. This puts the emphasis on synchronization of body, mind, and camera, versus just taking nice pictures.

Try simplifying the image back to the flash – crop out the extraneous infor-

When we open to clear seeing and pure perception, the flash of perception opens perception itself. **It does not know about assignments or artist agendas.**

PERCEPTUAL FOCUS

Sometimes an image or piece of art reveals clear and direct perception, but the perception it shows is not a single one.

This often happens when you first practice expressing direct perception. Such images bear a trace of the flash of perception that was the focus of the clear seeing. However, the resulting image includes too much other information. The simplicity of the direct perception becomes lost in the complicated image. Direct perceptions are simple, spacious and pure, it doesn't take much for us to notice when they have gotten too complex.

mation (via hands or a large board for a TV or small board for a projector).

Using perceptual framing – appropriate to the original perception - you discover the equivalent image. Simple, direct and strong. Looking freshly again at the cropped image will reveal the definite and composed feeling of the original flash, or opening. Cropping is used to deliver, afresh, with no distractions, the actual image the person perceived. However, this only works if the framing helps reveal it. If it doesn't match the photographer's perception – even if it makes a nice or interesting photo – then we've left the practice of contemplative viewing behind.

In the image review, we learn to discern Flashes of Perception. This also helps us, just through experience, learn to compose our own images towards their equivalents. That focal singularity. Just that, just so. Cropping helps us experience when it works and when it doesn't. This is a direct way to improve our shooting when we go back out again. No need to memorize rules.

Finally there is the 10% issue. This is a physical property of most cameras. Digital images usually include 10% more content along the outside edges than what is in the viewfinder or LCD screen. So the image contains more information than the original Flash of Perception. The result is at minimum a distraction. But perceptual impact is decreased.

Recall that the way of Nalanda Miksang is to stop the mind by stopping the eye. This unintended extra content can pull viewers' eyes away from the Flash. It is as if the image is like a balloon that has a pinprick hole, and is deflating. Instead of a taut, buoyant manifestation, it loses air. In simple images like these, a tiny distraction magnifies.

Here's how to crop out the extra 10% while you are shooting: simply move a half step closer, then refocus. This can feel awkward at first. Soon becomes second nature. And you deliver your actual Flash of Perception.

Pay relaxed attention to what happens. Gently hold the final image in mind while you are composing with the camera. Immediately the image becomes strong visually and perceptually: it stops the eye and stops the mind. It becomes an equivalent image. ○

Stability in Chaos

by Sarah Lipton

There is incredible value to finding stability in the midst of chaos. Stability is not an externally procured item. It is not something we can fake. We can't pretend we are stable if in actuality our lives are falling apart all around us. To ourselves, at least, we are exposed for what we are—naked, vulnerable, confused and sad. Do you think the trees who lose their leaves at this time of year feel otherwise? ○

Ed. note. This is our first podcast submission! This item will play automatically when opened in Adobe Acrobat. If the audio file is not appearing or playing, you may need to update to a newer version of Adobe Acrobat.

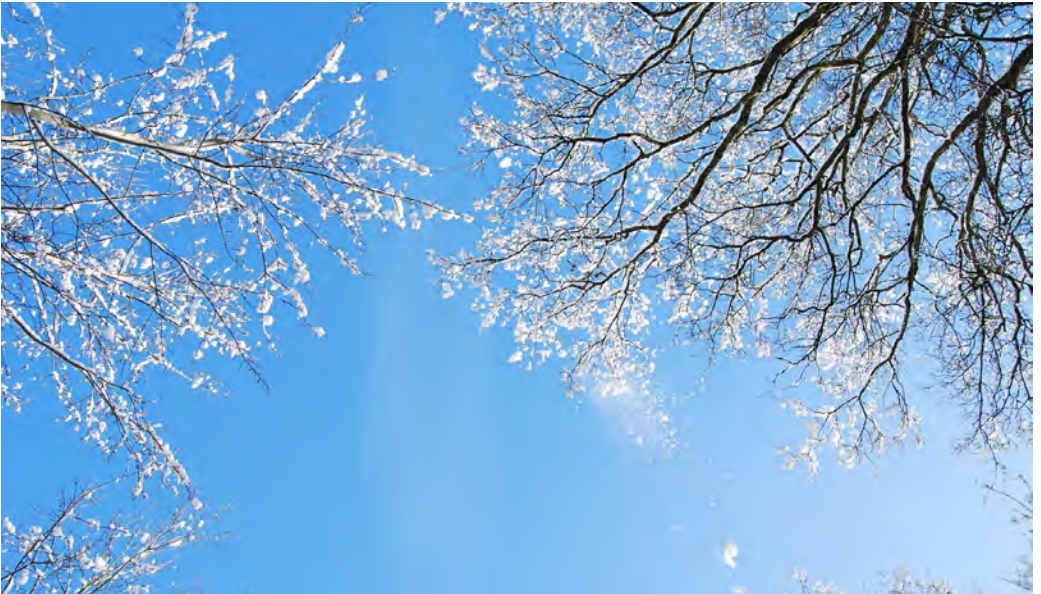


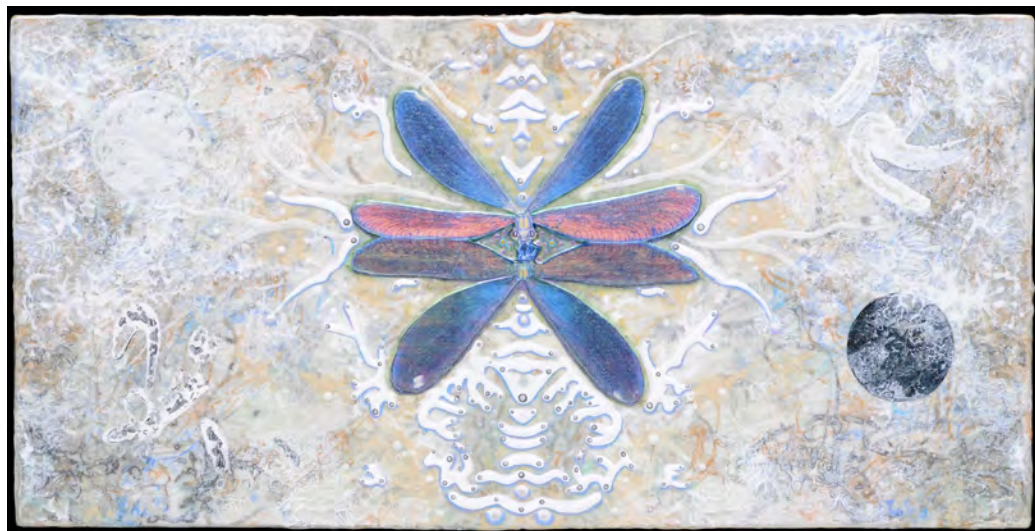
Photo courtesy of Pexels.

Selected Pieces

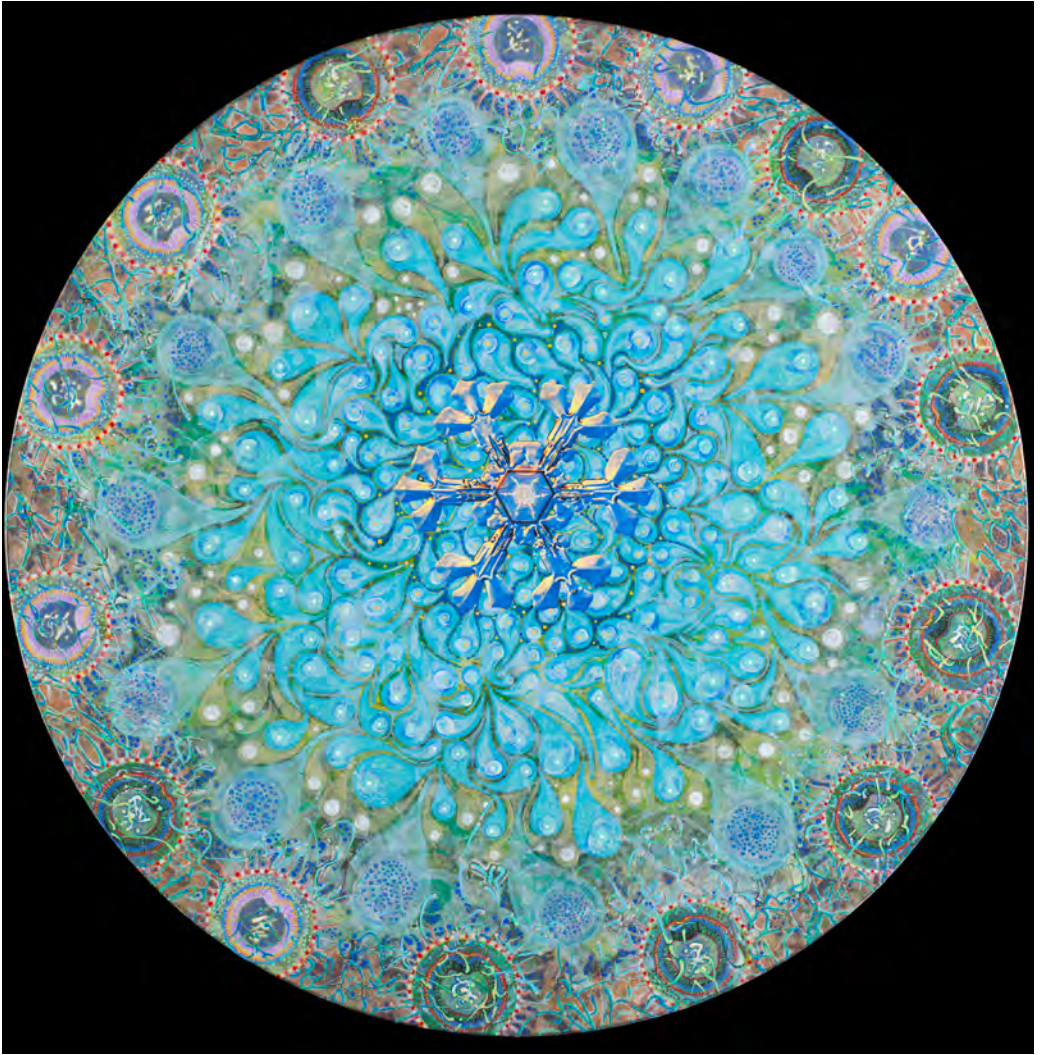
by Gordon Wood

Beauty equals, retains, and emphasizes truth, and connection to subtlety and the sublime through its presence. Beauty expands the relationship of the soul to spirit and beyond through increased awareness, openness, and perception. Beauty embodies the very drive, creative and evolutionary of the Kosmos toward greater depth and expanding consciousness in the witness, beholder and through empathic capacities. Beauty embraces us in the timeless now by suspending the other chatter in our brains, creating space to be present in the moment. The freedom of non-duality sustains beauty and truth. Beauty nurtures growth, inspires, and confirms all the potential in the Kosmos. Beauty has meaning. Decay - entropy is inevitable, unavoidable, and regenerative. One can't have beauty without decay; they go hand in hand, the Yin and the Yang, the *Wabi*

Sabi. My vision and objective is to be a warrior for sustainable beauty, transcendence, and transformation via translation of all that this wondrous Kosmos provides through my actions and art. ○



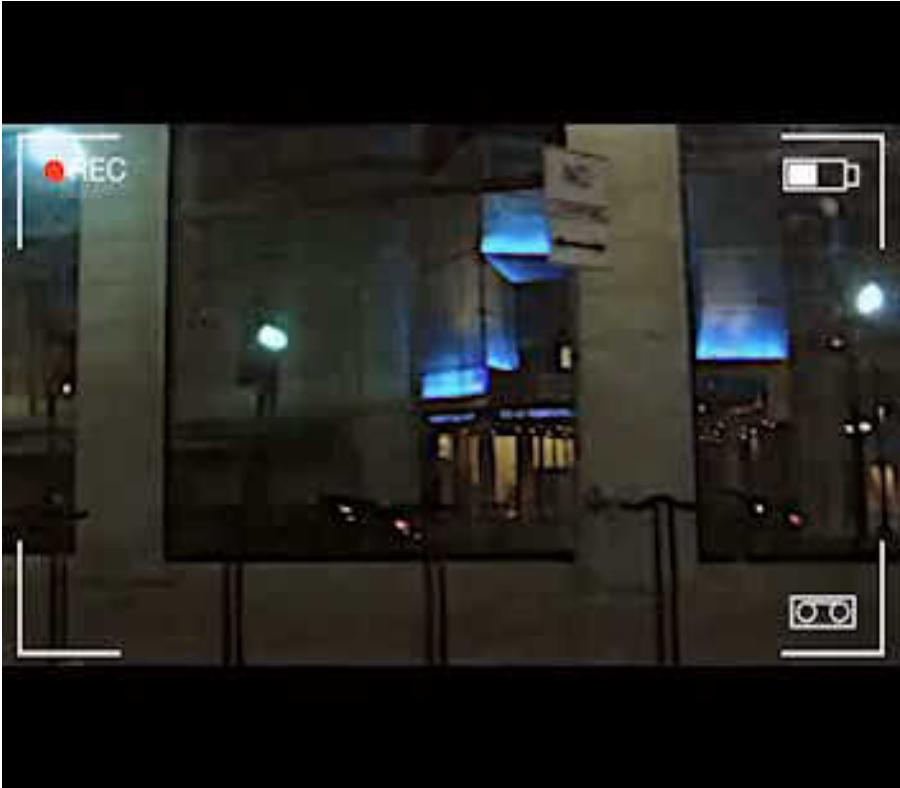
Fathoming Reflection.



Transpersonal Correspondence.

Vajra

by r. fox



Midwinter in Minneapolis reflects back the indestructible diamond-like quality of vajra energy that encompasses the frozen city nightscape.

Mahamudra and Shambhala Art

by Steve Saitzyk

The Shambhala Art teachings are based in large part on the Buddhist teachings called *Mahamudra*. “Maha” means great, and “mudra” means symbol, together it means “great symbol.” In the Mahamudra teachings, there are what is known as the two truths: relative truth and absolute truth, *kundzop* and *dondam*. We experience the two truths in the Shambhala Art program through relative and absolute symbol.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche said, “a (absolute) symbol is a symbol of itself.” The reality of the narrowing of the road is a symbol of itself. We can also understand a relative symbol as knowledge and absolute symbol as experience, intellect and intuition, or the thought sense of things and the felt sense of them. Mahamudra is the “great symbol” because it embodies the unity and interdependence of the relative and absolute in all things.

These teachings on symbolism are woven into all parts of the Shambhala Art curriculum. Shambhala Art explicitly presents teachings on symbolism in Shambhala Art Part 2: Seeing Things as They Are. For more teachings on symbolism, the following chapters in *True Perception* are helpful: “Ordinary Truth,” “Empty Gap of Mind,” “Coloring Our World,” “New Sight,” “Lost Horizons,” and “Giving.” ○

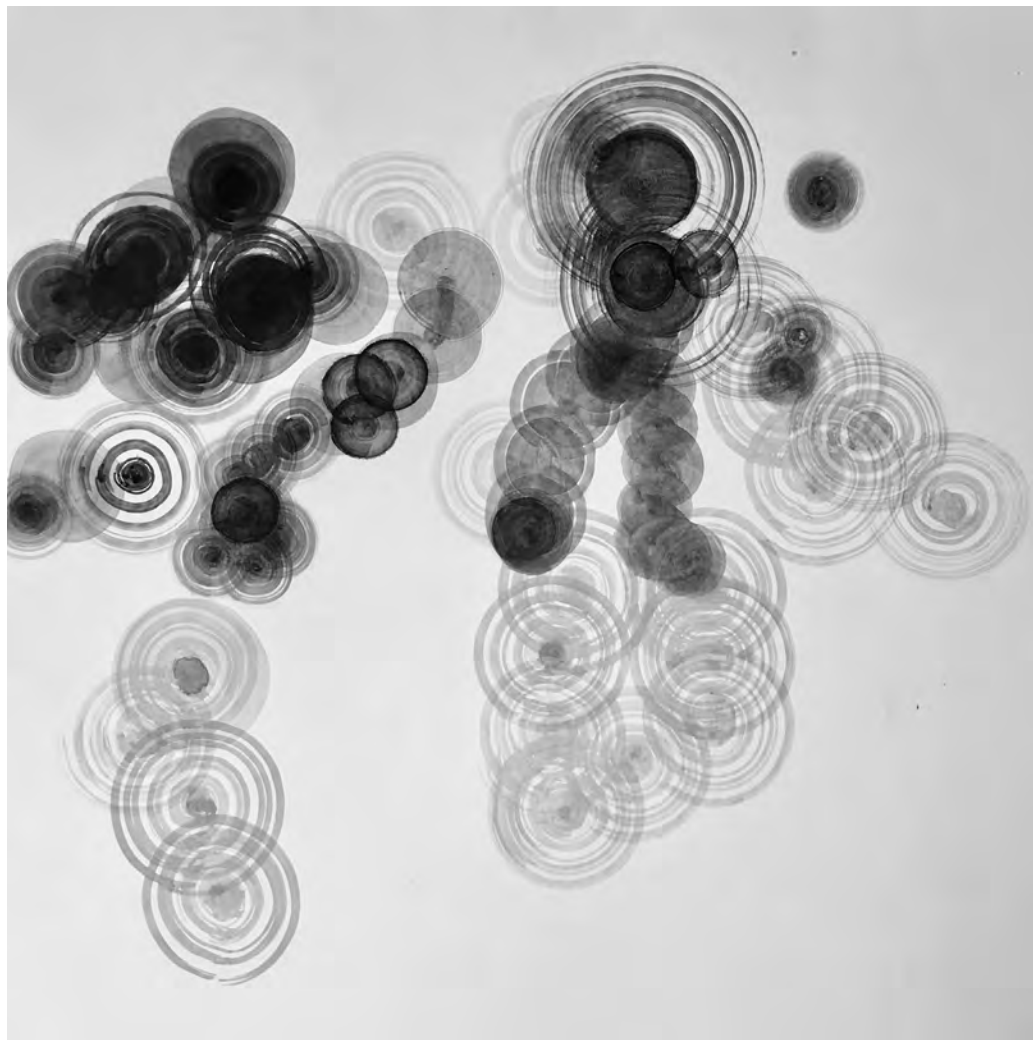


Photo courtesy of Pexels.

Relative symbol is conditional and representing something other than itself, like a road sign indicating a narrowing of the road; the sign is indicating a narrowing and is not itself the narrowing. An absolute symbol represents only itself — it is not pointing toward anything else. As

Selected Pieces

by R. Pyx Sutherland



Primarily I paint spontaneously without measurement or preliminary drawing. Over time with continued practice, a space has arisen where trust in the brush has grown. Faith has developed by 'leaning into' the materials and allowing them to offer their support. It's a kind of inti-

macy. Focus gives confidence, perhaps because it is without personal thought and judgment. I am just joining a dance with ink, paint, (or whatever media).

The two pieces included here make this point. "Proof of Existence" is a new part of an ongoing (5-year) project, the Ensō



On this page, "Seated Figure;" opposite page, "Proof of Existence."

ink series. "Seated Figure" arrived spontaneously as part of my writing this text. It is an unforeseen image, made with new marks, using a new tool, a surprising handmade brush of human hair. This unexpected experience of mark making is now part of an evolving dialogue to be integrated and accepted.

Entering into this dialogue with the materials, I experience clarity and pacifying energy. ○

