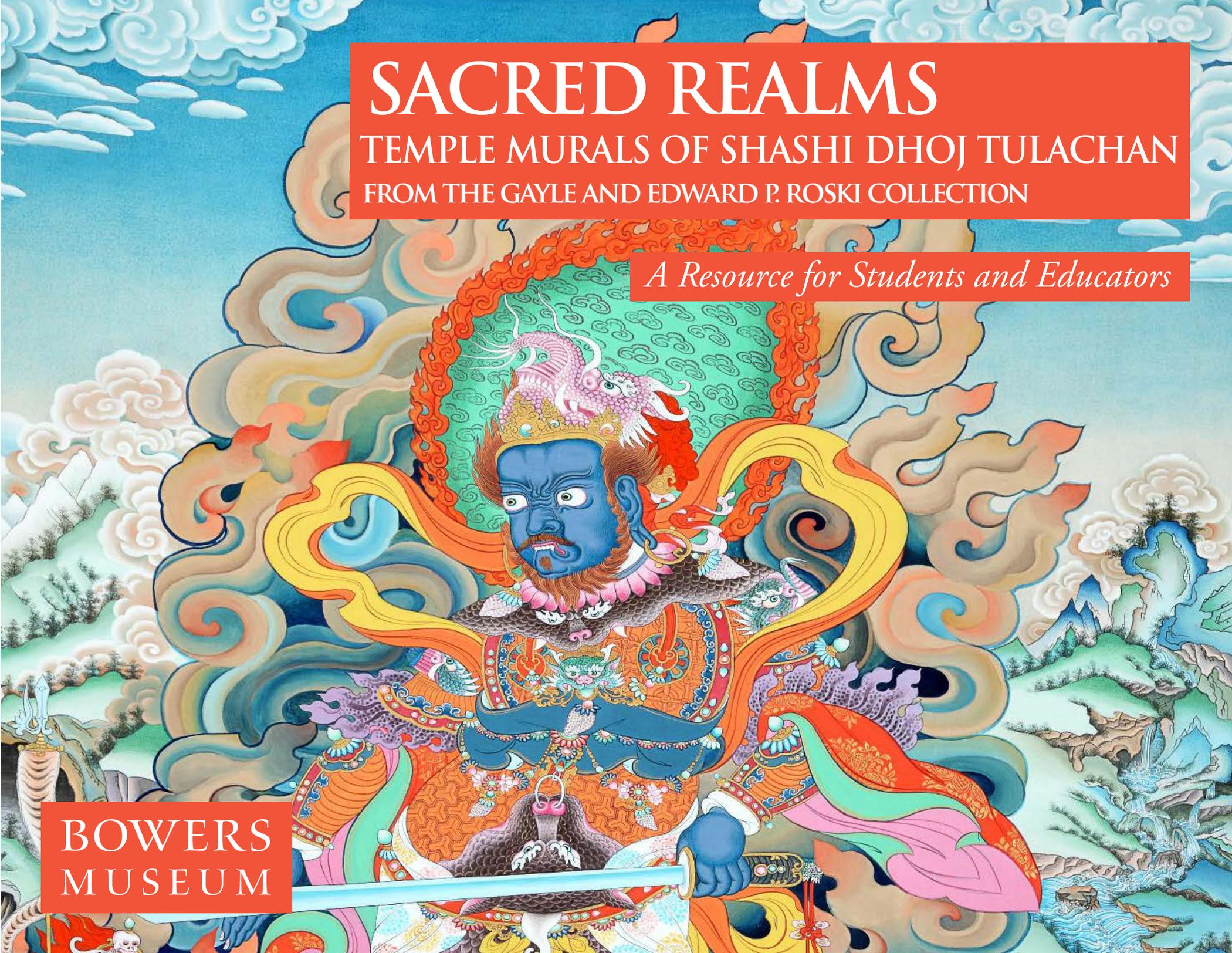


# SACRED REALMS

TEMPLE MURALS OF SHASHI DHOJ TULACHAN  
FROM THE GAYLE AND EDWARD P. ROSKI COLLECTION

*A Resource for Students and Educators*

BOWERS  
MUSEUM



# SACRED REALMS

TEMPLE MURALS OF SHASHI DHOJ TULACHAN  
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*A Resource for Students and Educators*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that the Bowers Museum presents this Resource Guide for Students and Educators with our goal to provide worldwide virtual access to the themes and artifacts that are found in the museum's eight permanent exhibitions.

There are a number of people deserving of special thanks who contributed to this extraordinary project. First, and most importantly, I would like to thank Victoria Gerard, Bowers' Vice President of Programs and Collections, for her amazing leadership; and the entire education and collections team, particularly Laura Belani, Mark Bustamante and Sasha Deming, for their important collaboration. Thank you to Pamela M. Pease, Ph.D., the Content Editor and Designer, for her vision in creating this guide. I am also grateful to the Bowers Museum Board of Governors and Staff for their continued hard work and support of our mission to enrich lives through the world's finest arts and cultures.

Special thanks to Ed and Gayle Garner Roski. Without their love of exploration, world cultures and generosity, it would not be possible to feature these meaningful and important works of art at the Bowers Museum.

Please enjoy this interesting and enriching compendium with our compliments.

Peter C. Keller, Ph.D.

President

Bowers Museum

## **Cover Art**

Detail, Virudhaka (Great King of the South Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994

Artist Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal

Natural mineral pigments

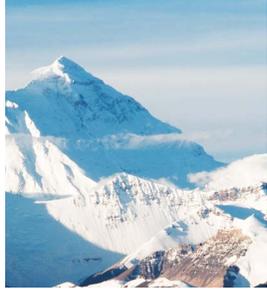
Bowers L.2012.25.8 (mirror image)

Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

# SACRED REALMS

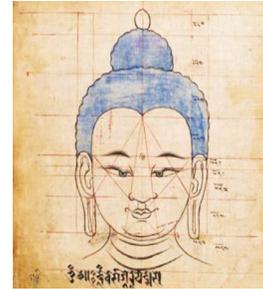
## TEMPLE MURALS OF SHASHI DHOJ TULACHAN

### FROM THE GAYLE AND EDWARD P. ROSKI COLLECTION



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### Introduction

Nine oversized paintings exhibited at the Bowers Museum are the work of one extraordinary Buddhist monk named Shashi Dhoj Tulachan. Before passing away in 2020, the artist was a second generation thangka painter from Tuksche, a remote village located in Mustang, Nepal's northernmost district adjacent to Tibet.

The practice of thangka painting is centuries old. It is an art performed by highly trained monks for the purpose of teaching about Buddha and the tenets of the Buddhist tradition.

Each painting is bursting with imagery and color. Shashi Dhoj Tulachan combined traditional motifs of one of the foremost schools recognized by high level monks in Tibet today, the Tibetan Karma Ghadri School, with images that are purely of his imagination. The vibrant colors he used are made from natural mineral pigments.

Details in the paintings include symbols, deities, mythological creatures and stylized landscapes as well as exquisite patterns and abstract designs. For those seeking enlightenment, these artworks also exist as objects of meditation.

### Focus Questions:

- How are thangkas made?
- Who do the figures that appear in these thangkas represent?
- What is the meaning of the symbols used in the paintings?
- How long does it take to paint each thangka?
- What is the purpose of a mandala?



Mount Everest, North Face  
Himalaya Mountains

Photo by Luca Galuzzi

### Tibet and Nepal

Tibet is a plateau on the northern side of the Himalayas in western China. It is the highest region on Earth. For that reason, Tibet is sometimes called the "Roof of the World." The region shares Mount Everest with Nepal.

The economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture. There is a limited amount of land that is suitable for growing crops. The people raise livestock, including sheep, cattle, goats, camels, yaks, donkeys and horses.

Tibet became a powerful Buddhist kingdom between 600 and 900 CE. Since that time, Tibet has undergone much upheaval as various nations have vied for control the region. In the 1200s, Tibet came under Mongol rule. In the 1700s, the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty of China took rule of Tibet. The Manchus held the region until the dynasty lost power in 1912. Meanwhile, the British "expedition/invasion" of Tibet in 1903-04, whose stated purpose was to establish diplomatic relations and resolve a border dispute, was really intended to counter perceived Russian ambition in the East. Throughout their history, the people of Tibet—who established a unique culture, language and religion—have fought hard to preserve that culture.

Chinese soldiers occupied Tibet 1910 to 1913. In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, issued a proclamation reaffirming Tibet's independence. For several decades, local leaders ruled the region. In 1950, China once again gained control. Although Tibetans rebelled against the Chinese in 1959, they were defeated. Tibet became an Autonomous Region of China in 1965. The 14th Dalai Lama, once both the religious and political leader of Tibet, was forced to flee to India along with many of his followers. From exile, he became known worldwide as an advocate for the rights of the Tibetan people. For his efforts, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Today, Tibet remains part of the People's Republic of China. In 2008, neighboring Nepal—birthplace of the Buddha—became a secular state, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, following a peaceful revolution. Although Nepal has been more influenced by the Hindu religion than by Buddhism, these two Himalayan cultures have been closely intertwined throughout history.

# MODULE ONE: MAP OF HIMALAYAN CULTURAL REGIONS



Tibet Autonomous Region is situated in western China on the northern side of the Himalayas. It is north of India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar (Burma), and is the world's largest and highest plateau at 4,000 feet above sea level.

Tibet Autonomous Region of China measures approximately 1600 miles east to west and about 620 miles from north to south. It shares Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain with an elevation of 29,000 feet above sea level, with Nepal.



## LEGEND

1 in. = ~250 miles



- Chhairo Gumpa Monastery
- ▲ HIMALAYAN MOUNTAIN RANGE
- ▲ Mount Everest

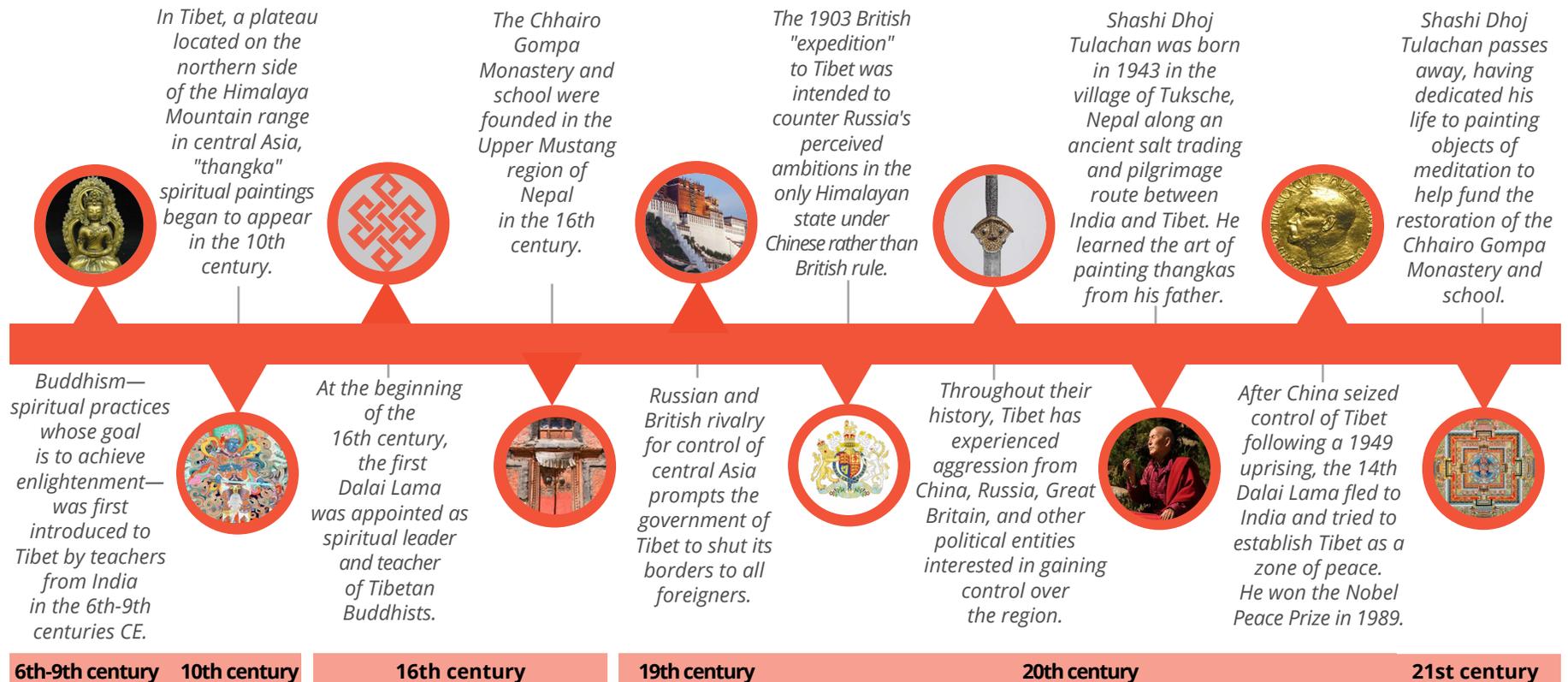
## MODULE ONE: SELECTED EVENTS IN THE TIMELINE OF THANKGAS AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Tibetan people developed a distinctive culture, as expressed through their language, art, music, dance, literature, science and spiritual practice. This culture is characterized by the development of human values such as compassion and non-violence.

In the 7th century, the introduction of Buddhism played a significant role in integrating Tibet's cultural and political development. Buddhist principles became a part of daily life for most Tibetans.

Monks were active in their communities, providing both guidance and education. In its early history, Tibet's culture remained intact due to the country's relative geographic isolation from the rest of the world.

In modern times, however, the culture of Tibet has been more impacted by influences outside their borders, and they have struggled to remain independent. Today, Tibetan people are working hard to preserve their cultural traditions for future generations.



MODULE TWO:

# THANGKAS & TEMPLE MURALS





Traditional Portable Thangka Painting,  
late 20th century  
Tibet Autonomous Region, China  
Linen cloth, silk brocade and metal  
Bowers 2019.12.1  
Gift of Barry and Irena Gernstein

### Thangkas

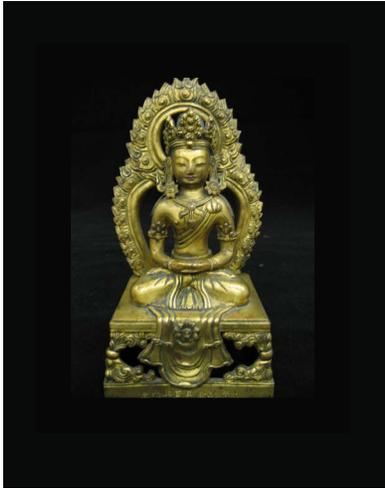
Thangkas are scroll-like paintings featuring Buddhist deities and mandalas. The practice of thangka painting is centuries old and is an art performed by highly trained monks for the purpose of teaching about Buddha and the tenets of the Buddhist tradition. Details in these paintings include deities and mythologies, as well as exquisite patterns and abstract designs. For those seeking enlightenment, these artworks also exist as objects of meditation.

Thangka paintings began to appear by the 10th century CE. They are typically painted on silk or linen cloth with a bamboo rod inserted along the bottom edge. They average 24" in height by 16" in width. Their size and construction enables thangkas to be rolled up and carried easily from one place to another, where they can be hung anywhere for teaching purposes. In the language of Tibet, the word *thangka* means "something rolled up."

The nine oversized paintings shown in the Bowers Museum exhibit are not thangkas in the traditional sense. The paintings are much larger—similar in size to mural paintings found inside monasteries. These thangkas, painted between 1994 and 2004, are considered temple murals due to their size. The examples in the museum's collection also differ from classic thangkas because their use of color, shape, proportion as well as the characteristics and qualities of the imagery are not as regulated as they tend to be in traditional examples.

### Temple Murals

All of these temple murals are the work of one extraordinary artist and spiritual leader, Lama Shashi Dhoj Tulachan. He was a 2nd-generation Buddhist monk and thangka artist living in Tuksche, a remote village in the Mustang district of Nepal. Tulachan painted this set of images by combining the traditional motifs of one of the foremost schools recognized by high-level monks in Tibet today with images that are purely of his imagination. The vibrant colors he used are made from natural and mineral pigments. Tulachan's intent was to use the traditional practice and skills he learned from years of training while also incorporating his own imagination and personal motifs. To appreciate these works of sacred art, some familiarity with basic concepts of Buddhism is helpful.



Sculpture of Buddha, 18th century  
Tibet Autonomous Region, China  
Bronze; 8.75 x 8.75 in.  
Bowers 99.32.1  
Gift of Norma Kershaw

### Tibetan Buddhism

Buddhist philosophy developed from the teachings of the Buddha (also referred to as Lord Buddha or "The Awakened One"), a historical and spiritual figure who lived in northern India between the mid-6th and mid-4th centuries BCE. The ideas embodied in Buddhist philosophy spread from India to Central and Southeast Asia in the 6th century CE, and later to the West in the 20th century.

The Buddha is thought to have been born on the northern edge of the Ganges River basin in what is today southern Nepal. The name given to him at birth was Siddhartha Gautama. Information about his life comes from legend as well as from texts produced several hundred years after his death. Some texts are attributed to the Buddha and were passed down through word of mouth. They are called *sutras*. Other texts were both produced and communicated by the Buddha's followers.

Although there are many variations or sects of Buddhist philosophy, among the ideas or concepts they share are:

- **Bodhisattva:** A person who is on the path to enlightenment but has chosen to remain on earth to help others achieve freedom from suffering.
- **Buddha:** A person who has discovered and followed the path toward enlightenment and has shared it with the world, thereby becoming worthy of entering nirvana. Because buddhas appear rarely over the course of time, their appearance in the world is considered a momentous event.
- **Karma:** The results of a person's actions. Good actions bring good karma. Bad actions bring bad karma.
- **Lama:** A spiritual leader whose status can be passed down through reincarnation (for example, the 14th Dalai Lama is considered by Tibetan Buddhists to be the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion.)
- **Nirvana:** A state of perfect happiness, the goal of Buddhism.
- **Samsara:** Rebirth or reincarnation. Over the course of many lifetimes and reincarnations, persons perfect themselves through good actions until they are worthy of passing into nirvana. Buddhists' ultimate goal is to escape from suffering and the cycle of reincarnation.



Portrait of Chhairo Lama Shashi Dhoj Tulachan  
Lower Mustang, Nepal

Photo by Nima t100

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

## SHASHI DHOJ TULACHAN

Lama Shashi Dhoj Tulachan was a Buddhist monk and spiritual leader of the Chhairo Gompa Monastery. His father Kamal Dhoj Tulachan and his grandfather taught him to create thangkas when he was a young boy. Shashi assisted his father and elder brother, accompanying them to villages around the Mustang district of Nepal. In 1961, at the age of 18, he received his first solo assignment.

The Tulachan family is from the neighboring village of Tuksche. In addition to thangka paintings, they are responsible for many wall paintings and statues to be found in the region, both in monasteries and in private household shrines. Lama Shashi's statue work can be seen at a Buddhist pilgrimage site in Nepal which, according to Buddhist tradition, was the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama around 563 BCE. He also designed many of the Buddhist statues produced at a monastery in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Mandalas painted by Shashi Dhoj Tulachan and his brother Chakra Dhoj Tulachan, are the centerpiece of a meditation center in Toga, a mountain village in the Honshu region of Japan.

Lama Shashi devoted much of his life's work to restoring the school and community of monks at Chhairo Gompa Monastery. He passed away in 2020 due to complications from COVID-19.

### Chhairo Gompa Monastery

Chhairo Gompa Monastery is a structure of stone, clay and timber established in the 16th century as the first monastery of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. It is situated at an elevation of 8000 feet in the Upper Mustang region of Nepal. Lama Shashi Dhoj Tulachan is the spiritual leader of the monastery and has been dedicated to its restoration and to re-establishing a community of monks there.

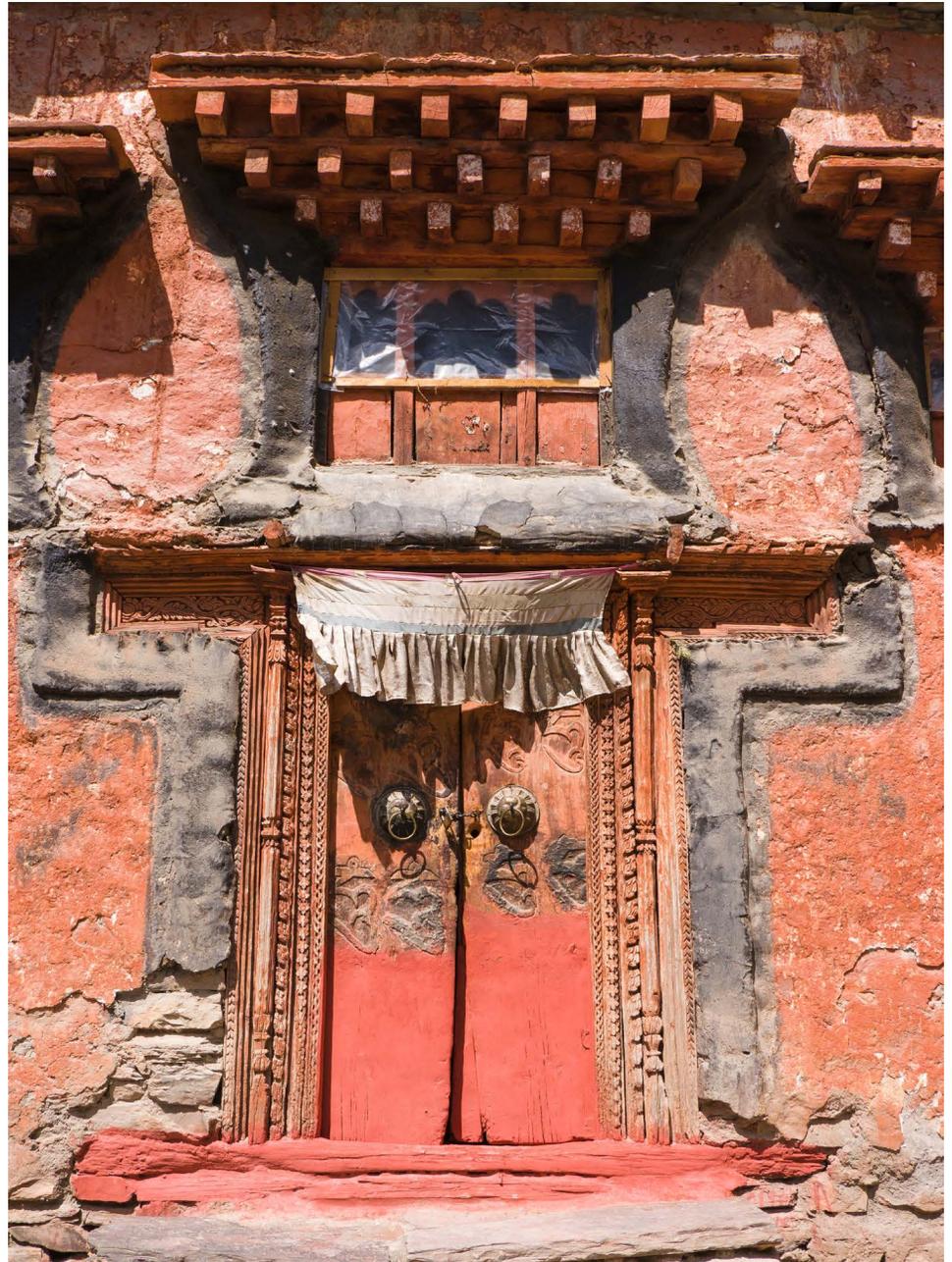
Chhairo Gompa is located along the Annapurna Circuit, a popular Nepal hiking trek that begins in the Himalayan foothills. The circuit includes two of the world's ten highest mountain peaks as well as the Kali Gandaki River gorge, the deepest valley in the world.

The trek was once an ancient salt trading route from India to Tibet. The village of Tuksche, where the artist Shashi Dhoj Tulachan lives, is located along this route. Wool, salt and turquoise from Tibet were traded for rice and cloth from lowland Nepal. The houses in the area are large stone structures with wooden balconies. Many are now used as inns for trekkers.

The geographic features seen in the temple murals show the majestic beauty of the area's snow-capped mountains, raging rivers and dramatic waterfalls.

Entrance to Chhairo Gompa Monastery  
Mustang District, Nepal

Photo by Faj2323





## Eleven-Headed Avalokiteshvara with a Thousand Arms and Eyes

Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva of compassion. This thangka painting features two of the seven ways Avalokiteshvara is typically portrayed.



- 1) The bodhisattva is shown with 11 faces representing 11 virtues that overcome evil.
- 2) The bodhisattva is shown with 1000 arms representing its great capacity to help others, and with 1000 eyes, reflecting an immense capacity to see others' suffering.

Eleven-Headed Avalokiteshvara with a Thousand Arms and Eyes, 1994  
Artist: Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal  
Natural mineral pigments

Bowers L.2012.25.1  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

## MODULE TWO ACTIVITY: THANGKAS & TEMPLE MURALS

Thangkas first appeared in Tibet in the 10th century CE. A lama, or spiritual leader, would travel throughout the countryside to speak to people about significant teachings and events in Buddha's life. He would bring along painted scrolls to help explain important ideas. Made of silk with a pole at each end, they could be rolled up, making it easy to carry them from place to place.

### Looking Closely at Art: What do you see?

Thangka paintings contain rich and beautiful imagery. Each offers a tremendous amount of detail. It can be challenging to take in or appreciate the entire painting all at once. One way to approach complex images is to focus on smaller sections of the painting one at a time to see what you can discover. To make this easier, an imaginary grid has been superimposed on the thangka at right, dividing it into nine sections: 3 across and 3 down. The upper left rectangle, for example, is A1. The central rectangle is B2.

Using Visual Thinking Strategies, three questions can be asked as you focus on what is happening in each section:

- What's going on in the image?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

As you look at thangkas and temple murals, ask yourself: What do I think the artist's intent was in making this painting? What do I see in the background landscape? What colors do I notice? If there are people, what are they doing? Are they holding an object or making specific facial expressions or gestures with their hands? What sort of adornment do they have (clothing, shoes, jewelry, halo)? Can I identify certain animals or mythical creatures?



MODULE THREE:

# SYMBOLS & DEITIES



## Eight Auspicious Symbols



BANNER OF VICTORY



CONCH SHELL



8-SPOKE CHAKRA



ENDLESS KNOT



LOTUS FLOWER



PAIR OF FISHES



PARASOL



TREASURE VASE

## Eight Mudra Hand Gestures



"Om" / balance  
GYAN MUDRA



inner peace  
SHIELD OF SHAMBHALA



purification  
APANA MUDRA



compassion  
DYANA MUDRA



sun energy  
SURYA MUDRA



open heart  
FLYING LOTUS



greeting  
NAMASTE



spirit of life  
PRANA MUDRA

In yoga and spiritual practices of Buddhism, **mudras** have been used for thousands of years to direct one's flow of energy or assist in meditation and healing. Hundreds of gestures are used in dance, ceremonies and sculpture. They appear in thangkas and temple murals to help communicate something about a figure's character or actions.

Most mudras are performed with the hands and fingers, often in combination with movements of the wrists, elbows, and shoulders. Some mudras involve the entire body. Can you make these gestures? What other gestures do you use to communicate?



Statue of Great King

Bowers L.2014.15.1

Loan Courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

### Buddhist Deities

**Great Kings** are fierce warrior deities who protect both Buddhist teachings (Dharma) as well as people who follow Buddhist practices.

- The four kings featured in the thangkas that follow are said to have participated in all of the important events in the Buddha's life. According to legend, they assisted at the birth of the Buddha, they held up his horse's hooves when he left his father's palace to seek enlightenment, and they gave him four bowls of food following his fast under a tree.
- Images of these Four Guardian Kings are often placed at entrances to gompas and at the four portals of a mandala.
- Each king is associated with one of the **four cardinal directions**: North, South, East or West.
- They are also distinguished from one another by:
  - **Realm**: Their special role or purpose
  - **Body color**: Blue, green, red, white, yellow
  - **Animal**: Deer, elephant, horse, mongoose, lion or tiger
  - **Supernatural creatures**: Garuda, blue dragon
  - **Eight auspicious symbols**: The Four Great Kings appear with one or more of these objects thought to signal good fortune: the 8-spoke chakra, the banner of victory, the conch shell, the endless knot, the lotus, the parasol, the pair of fishes, and the vase of inexhaustible treasures.
  - **Five senses**: Each king is connected to one or more of the five senses: sight, smell, sound, taste and touch.



## Virupaksa Great King of the West Direction

Virupaksa is a Guardian King. His red face, bulging eyes, scowling expression, and the halo of flames surrounding his head may make



Virupaksa seem frightening. However, his fierceness is directed against forces that obstruct Buddhist teachings or practice. In his right hand, he holds a pearl with a gold flame. In his left he holds a **stupa** for Buddhist relics. The silver snake wrapped around his right arm represents his role as Leader of Serpent Spirits who inhabit the underworld to guard concealed Buddhist teachings. Virupaksa's animal is a white elephant, a symbol of mental strength.

Virupaksa (Great King of the West Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994  
Artist: Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal  
Natural Mineral Pigments

Bowers L.2012.25.7  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

## Dhrtarastra Great King of the East Direction

Shashi Dhoj Tulachan's thangka of the Great King Dhrtarastra uses symbols that are important to Tibetan culture and Buddhist traditions.



Tigers are not specifically native to Tibet, but the tiger is an important animal in the Central Asian cultures of China and India. It is a symbol of strength and fearlessness. In ancient Asia, tiger skins were worn in battle, and a tiger skin is often pictured on thangkas and temple murals as a mat or seat for deities.

Dhrtarastra (Great King of the East Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994  
Artist: Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal  
Natural mineral pigments

Bowers L2012.25.5  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski



## MODULE THREE: SYMBOLS & DEITIES

### About Dhrtarastra

- Dhrtarastra is associated with the East direction and with the season of Spring.
- Dhrtarastra's name means "He who upholds the realm."
- Dhrtarastra is distinguished by his white body color.
- Dhrtarastra's role is King of Celestial Musicians. He is associated with the sense of sound. In this thangka, he is playing a lute.
- Dhrtarastra's mythical creature is the blue sea dragon, which appears three times in this image. Can you find all three?
- Dhrtarastra appears with one of the Eight Auspicious Symbols



One of the Eight Auspicious Symbols appears in this thangka. It may look a bit different than the abstract symbol above. Can you find where it is hiding in the background landscape? What is its name?

---



Dhrtarastra is King of the Celestial Musicians.



Can you locate the other musician in the thangka of Dhrtarastra? What instrument is that musician playing?



Dhrtarastra is wearing boots that look like his mythical creature, the blue dragon. Can you locate them in the thangka image?

Look closely. What kind of footwear is the other musician wearing?

---



What landforms, bodies of water and celestial features do you see in this painting? Name one of each:

LAND: \_\_\_\_\_

WATER: \_\_\_\_\_

SKY: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your favorite part of this thangka?**

---



Vaisravana  
Great King of the North Direction



Vaisravana, Great King of the North Direction, with 16 Attendants, 1994

Artist: Shashi Dhoj Tulachan

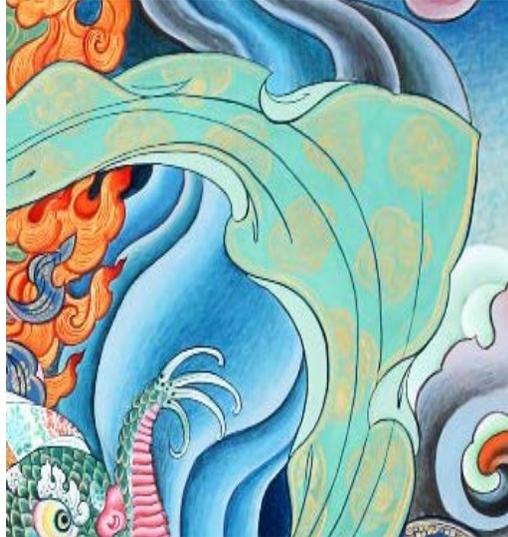
Natural mineral pigments

Bowers L.2012.25.7

Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski



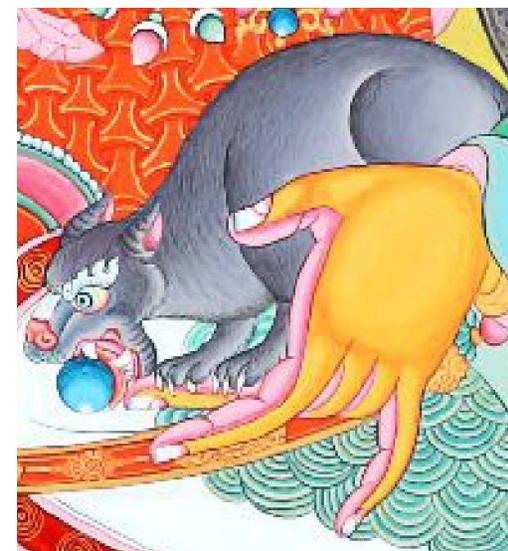
Vaisravana carries a Banner of Victory.



Vaisravana is associated with the sense of touch, as evidenced by the swirling silk scarves that surround him.



Vaisravana's hand gestures express his generosity.



Vaisravana's special animal is the mongoose.

### About Vaisravana

Vaisravana is yellow in color and carries a Banner of Victory in his right hand and a mongoose expelling jewels in his left.

- Vaisravana is associated with the North direction and with the season of Winter.
- Vaisravana is Chief of the Four Heavenly Kings.
- Vaisravana's name means "great fame."
- Vaisravana is distinguished by his yellow body color.
- On the previous page, note that Vaisravana is adorned with a jeweled crown, turquoise hoop earrings and a lotus petal necklace.
- Vaisravana's special animal is the mongoose.
- Vaisravana's hand gestures or mudras express his generous character.



## Virudhaka Dharma King of the South Direction

Virudhaka is the fiercest of the Four Guardian Kings who protect the Dharma at the cardinal points of the compass. He is holding a sword and scabbard with both hands, symbolizing the wisdom to cut through delusion or obstacles. In this thangka, there are several textures that look like fish scales or nets.



Could it be that Virudhaka's auspicious symbol is the Pair of Fishes? Who do you think the two figures in the lower left section of this temple mural are? What might they be doing?

Virudhaka (Great King of the South Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994  
Artist: Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal  
Natural mineral pigments

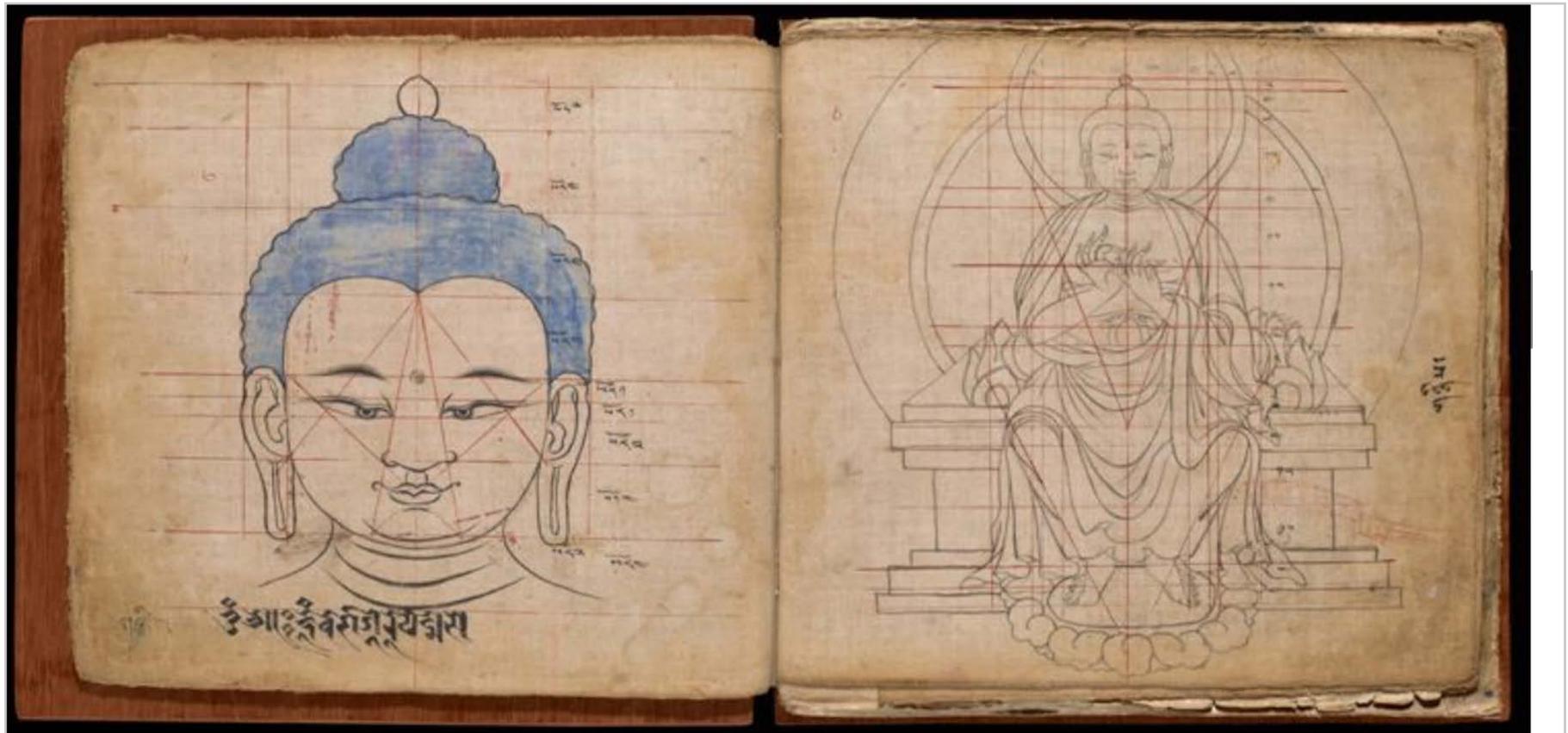
Bowers L2012.25.8  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

MODULE FOUR:

# MAKING SACRED ART



## MODULE FOUR: MAKING SACRED ART



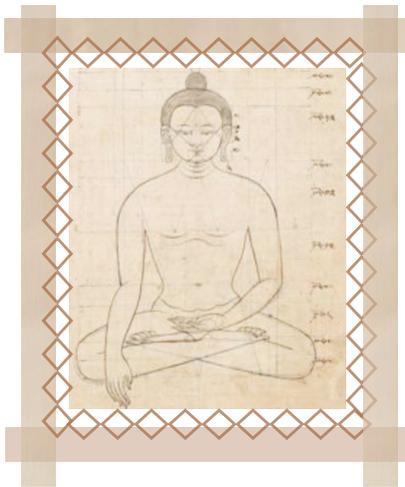
### Process: Drawing Proportions

This 18th century pattern book is part of the Getty Museum's Open Collection Program. This volume was produced in Nepal for use in Tibet. In 36 pen-and-ink drawings, the book presents precise guidelines for how to depict the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures. The volume stipulates those drawings of deities must conform to exact proportions. Buddhists believe that during meditation, deities may inhabit the thangkas, but only if the drawing itself is a beautiful work of art.

*Tibetan Pattern Book of Proportions*, 18th century  
Black and colored ink on linen pages, with wooden boards  
Getty Research Institute Digital Collections Image 930002.

For that reason, it is considered best for these illustrations to be created by lamas.

In the world of art, styles generally evolve over time. But because of the consistency and ritualization of sacred drawings over hundreds of years, it may be more difficult to accurately date Buddhist artifacts.



*Canvas Preparation for Traditional Thangka Painting*  
Linen cloth, twine, wood, gesso

*Image insert:*  
*Tibetan Pattern Book of Proportions,*  
18th century  
Black ink on linen

Getty Research Institute Digital Collections  
Open Content Program  
Image 930002.008  
Public Domain

### Process: Thangka Painting

#### PREP

1. A piece of cotton, linen or silk cloth is stitched on to a narrow wooden frame along all four sides.
2. The lightly framed cloth is then tightly stretched over a larger wood frame with a heavy thread using crisscross stitches.
3. It is treated on both front and back with a layer of gesso, then the canvas is rubbed on both sides with a stone to achieve a smooth surface.

#### DRAWING / PAINTING

4. A grid is drawn consisting of eight lines: a central vertical line, two diagonals, a horizontal line and four outer borders.
5. Using graphite, the deity is sketched to align with predetermined proportions. The central figure is large. Minor figures will be much smaller.
6. The palette for a thangka or mandala consists of black plus five basic colors—white, yellow, red, blue and green, plus blends and gradients (gradual transitions from one color to another). Pigments have traditionally come from natural mineral sources such as azurite (blue), malachite or copper (green), cinnabar or vermilion (red), ochre (yellow), chalk (white) and carbon (black). Each color has symbolic meanings. After visualizing the color scheme, the artist marks color placement using an abbreviated notation system. Flat color is applied starting from the most distant section, working back to areas closest to the painter.
7. After all flat color is applied, thin coats of dye diluted in water gradually add volume and dimension to the forms.
8. Objects are outlined to define shapes and set them apart from the background.
9. After adding facial features to each figure, the painting is ready for the final step: adding the deities' eyes. An auspicious day is chosen for a ritual blessing, then eyes are painted to awaken the now-completed work of art.

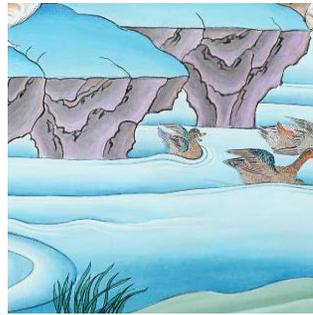
#### FINISHING

1. Cord fastenings are cut, and the canvas is removed from the stretcher. The thangka is now mounted on silk. Rods are attached to the top and bottom edges so the thangka can be easily rolled up for a journey.
2. Traditional thangka painters do not sign their work. Artists who paint according to centuries-old designs are thought to use their artistic skills to channel divine creation of sacred art that links the past and present.

### Process: Scenic Backgrounds

In thangka paintings, scenic backgrounds have traditionally been one area less regulated by strict guidelines for form and proportions. Skies in a thangka often include celestial bodies (sun and stars) as well clouds and rainbows. Landscapes feature mountains, lakes, rivers, waterfalls and a variety of trees—perhaps inspired by the painter's local environment or by the artist's imagination.

Here are details of four background scenes from Shashi Dhoj Tulachan's thangka paintings:



A. Twisted-trunk Bodhi tree



B. Dramatic waterfalls



C. Stylized clouds



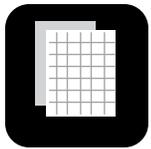
D. Snow-capped mountains

**If you were painting a thangka to reflect your environment, what would you include?**

## MODULE FOUR ACTIVITY: GEOMETRY IN SACRED ART



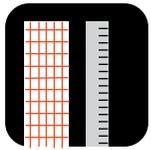
### TECHNICAL DRAWING SUPPLIES



Graph Paper 8.5 x 11 in.



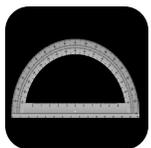
Sharp Pencil and Eraser



Rulers for measuring and drawing straight lines



Compass for drawing circles



Protractor for measuring angles

### Exploring Geometry in Art

Before the invention of computers, artists, architects and engineers used to make "technical" drawings by hand using drafting tools and techniques. These are still used today in making one-of-a-kind thangkas and temple murals where a geometric design is rendered directly on a piece of stretched canvas.

Although geometric designs can now be easily created using software tools, it can be both fun and instructive to go back to try these methods, tools and techniques that were the inspiration for the way we do things today:

- **Graph paper:** Paper (sometimes translucent) that is printed with horizontal and vertical grid lines every 1/4" or 1/8". These lines help you achieve precise measurements, consistent sizes and alignment of elements that would be more difficult using "free-hand" methods.
  - **Compass:** A mathematical tool that creates circles or arcs of many sizes. A compass has two "legs"—one has a sharp point and the other holds a pencil. The legs are connected by a hinge that can be adjusted to change the radius (and therefore the size) of the circle you will draw. Holding onto the top of the compass, place the sharp end on your paper where you want the center of your circle to be. Then press down slightly on the sharp leg while twirling the compass to draw a circle. To draw concentric circles, always place the sharp point of your compass in the exact same location, then narrow or widen the distance between the two legs to draw smaller or larger sizes of circles.
  - **Protractor:** A transparent semi-circle with marks used to measure angles from 0 to 180 degrees.
- 1 Play. Experiment with these drawing tools to see what you can create. Technical drawing tools are especially good for certain types of drawing. Try a mandala, a building or city, a robot, a futuristic mode of transport, an abstract design or anything else you can imagine that contains simple geometric shapes.

- 2 Share.

MODULE FIVE:

# MINDFULNESS



### Practicing Mindfulness: Mandalas as Meditation

#### What is a Mandala?

In Sanskrit (the language of India), the word mandala means circle. A mandala is a geometric design that holds much symbolism in Buddhist cultures. In their most basic form, mandalas are circles contained within a square. They are arranged in sections organized around a single, central point. They are typically produced on paper or cloth, or made from sand or stone. Mandalas are believed to represent different aspects of the universe and are used as instruments of meditation. Buddhists believe that by entering the mandala and proceeding towards its center, you become part of the process of transforming the universe from suffering to joy.

#### A Brief History of Mandalas

Siddhartha Gautama, the first Buddha, was born in Nepal. He left his kingdom to seek enlightenment through meditation and thoughtful action. When he began to preach his philosophy in parts of India, he gained followers and eventually established the first community of Buddhist monks. As they travelled the Silk Road (the ancient network of trade routes that connected the East and West) they brought Buddhism to other lands. They carried mandalas with them and shared the practice of painting them with other cultures.

#### Types of Mandalas

Mandalas used for both artistic and spiritual purposes:

- 1. Teaching mandalas** are symbolic. They serve as mental maps for their creators in which each shape, line, color and pattern illuminate a different aspect of Buddhist philosophy.
- 2. Healing mandalas** are made for the purpose of meditation. They are intended to evoke feelings of calm and peace. Building the mandala can take a team of artists several weeks. Soon after it is complete, a sand mandala is destroyed, in keeping with the Buddhist view that nothing in life is permanent.

### Peaceful-Wrathful Deities

What are "Peaceful-Wrathful" Deities? According to the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, **peaceful deities** are "buddhas and bodhisattvas, great teachers and high monks." **Wrathful deities** include the guardian deities such as the Four Great Kings, who "use their power to protect Buddhism and to destroy the three major obstacles to enlightenment: anger, greed, and ignorance."

### Symbols and Colors

At the center of a mandala is a single dot, the starting point of contemplation. It is surrounded by lines and geometric patterns that represent the universe and the cycle of life. Buddha is often represented in a mandala as a wheel or tree. Dozens of other symbols are also contained within each mandala. They often include:

- **8-spoke chakra:** In Sanskrit, "chakra" means "wheel." It can represent the Buddha's teaching or the idea of a perfect universe. (The word *chakra* can also refer to certain sources of energy in the human body.) You have probably noticed that the number "8"—as well as factors or multiples of 8 such as 4, 16, 32, and 64—appear frequently in Buddhist culture. For example, there are Four Great Kings, Four Noble Truths, Eight Auspicious Symbols, and an 8-Fold Path to spiritual awakening.
- **Lotus flower:** The symmetry of a lotus depicts balance. As it grows from beneath the surface of water toward the light, it also symbolizes the process of a human reaching for enlightenment.

Each color used to create mandalas has special significance. Among the interpretations of their meaning are:

- **Yellow:** Happiness
- **Orange:** Creativity; transformation
- **Red:** Power; passion; protection
- **Pink:** Love; intuition
- **Purple:** Spirituality
- **Blue:** Wisdom
- **Green:** Healing; harmony
- **White:** Peace



## Peaceful-Wrathful Deities, 2004

Mandalas are constructed with a series of concentric circles and squares surrounding a central dot.



The experience of looking at a mandala can be a spiritual journey that centers the body and mind. Each time someone views a mandala, there is always something new to see and appreciate.

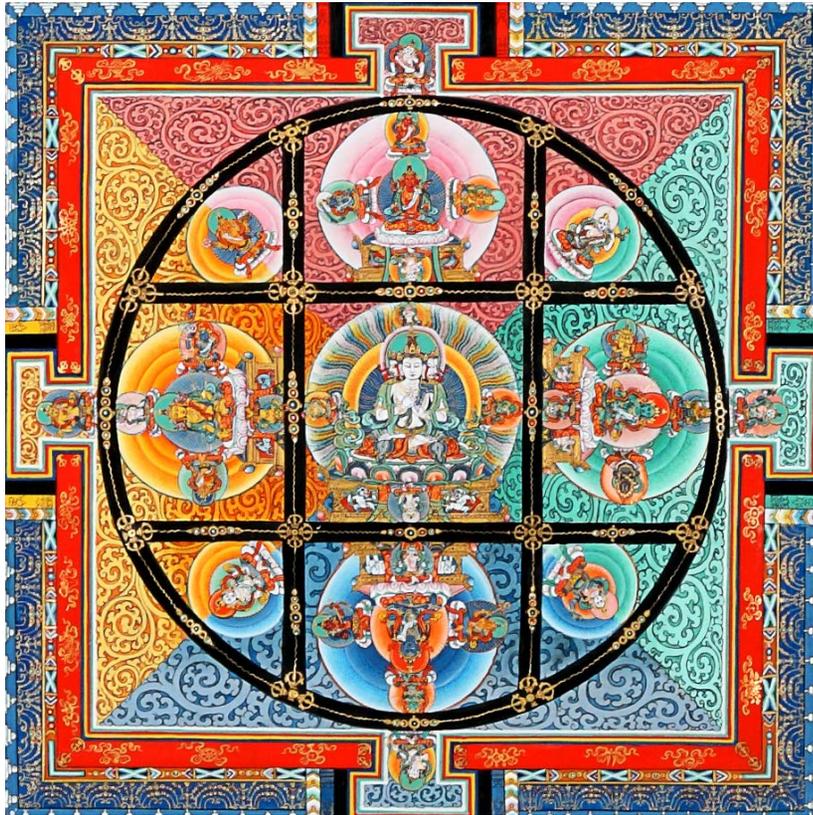
Peaceful-Wrathful Deities, 2004  
Artist: Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal  
Natural mineral pigments

Bowers L.2012.25.3  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

## MODULE FIVE: MINDFULNESS

### Peaceful/Wrathful Deities Mandala, 2001

Viewing these giant 8-foot mandala paintings in person reveals their beautiful patterns and amazing level of detail.



This mandala depicts the world of the five celestial or heavenly Buddhas.

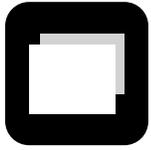
Peaceful/Wrathful Deities Mandala, 2001  
Vajrahattu Vairocana  
Artist Shashi Dhoj Tulachan, Nepal  
Natural mineral pigments

Bowers L.2012.25.6  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski



## MODULE FIVE ACTIVITY: LOTUS COLORING PAGE

You will need:



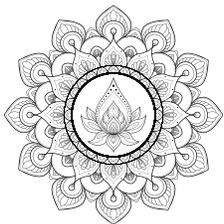
Sheet of Paper  
8.5 x 11 in.



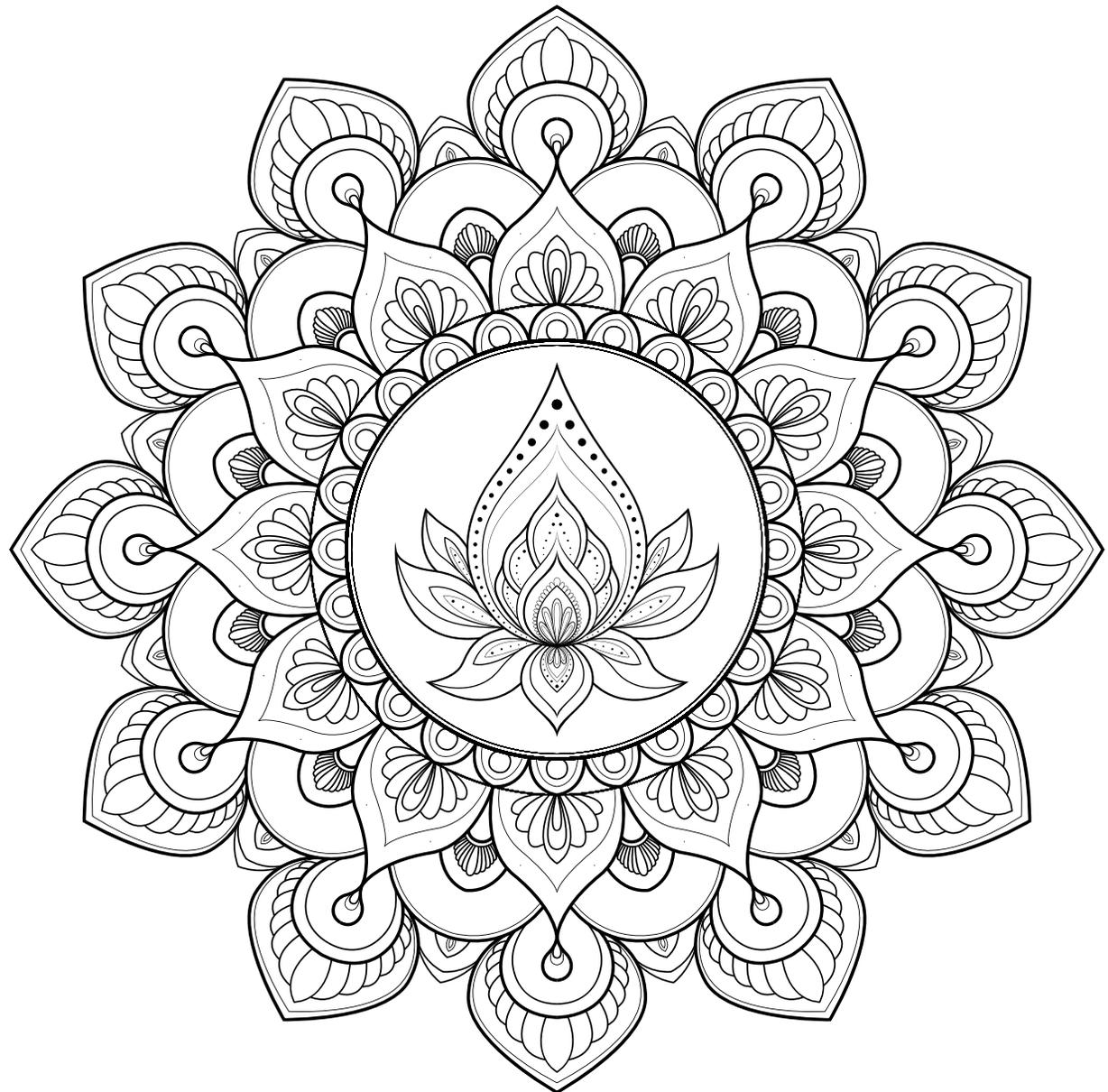
Colored Pencils



Pencil Sharpener



Lotus Artwork



Black and White Mandala

Vector Illustration by Lenak  
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MODULE SIX:

# REFLECTION



### Reflection

Studying cultural traditions that have defined the art of Tibetan Buddhism, one finds a great contrast between the ideas of creative self-expression and an approach to art as a spiritual practice.

In the West, a high value is placed on individual creativity. Artists often strive to create something new that has never existed before—the idea they bring to a project, the materials they choose to work with or the innovative techniques they use. These artists build on what they have learned from teachers and as apprentices, but are not bound by tradition. Their works typically carry their signature, and the artists have the potential to experience success and gain notoriety for their work.

In contrast, Eastern cultures place much less emphasis on the identity and role of the artist. They are seen as conduits of divine creation, and personal innovation is often considered secondary to performing the ritual of bringing a work of art to life using methods passed down for decades or centuries. In some cultures, to sign a work of art is considered of an act of ego rather than a humble appreciation for the artistic gifts they were given.

What do you think about how art should be approached? Which do you think is most important: the opportunity to express individual creativity or the opportunity to honor traditions passed down from one generation to the next?

How do you feel when you create a work of art?



“ WHAT YOU THINK . . .  
YOU BECOME

WHAT YOU FEEL . . .  
YOU ATTRACT

WHAT YOU IMAGINE . . .  
YOU CREATE ”

—ATTRIBUTED TO BUDDHA

## MODULE SIX CAPSTONE PROJECT: SAND ART MANDALA

### Design a Mandala



### To make a mandala template:

- Paper and colored pencils
- Compass
- Scissors

### To fill in the design:

- 6" clear plastic lid from deli container  
(This will keep the outer edge of your sand intact.)
- Clean sand
- Red, yellow, blue and green food coloring
- White or black glue
- 4 spoons (one for each color of sand)
- Small funnel

### Instructions:

Using a compass, draw a simple design consisting of four concentric circles. The diameter of your outer circle should equal the diameter of your clear plastic lid. Carefully cut around the outer edge of your design, which will be the template for your mandala. Place it inside the plastic lid.\*

Squeeze white or black glue along the lines of your design. This will help keep the colors of sand separate. Let dry thoroughly. Divide the sand into four batches. Use red, yellow, green and blue food coloring to dye the sand. Carefully hold a funnel over one section and slowly spoon one color of sand into the top of the funnel to fill that section. Repeat with all four colors. Use a small brush to tidy up edges.

\* Older or more experienced students can make more intricate mandala designs by adding simple shapes within each circle. Again, use glue to outline these shapes to keep the edges intact.

## MODULE SIX CAPSTONE PROJECT: SAND GARDEN

### Create a Sand Garden with Meditation Stones



#### You will need:

- Clean Sand (about 1 pound)
- Lid from 5" x 7" cardboard box
- Black tempera paint and paintbrush (optional)
- Plastic fork or toy rake
- Three flat, smooth stones

Photo by Billion Photos

#### Step by Step:

- 1 Making a Sand Garden can be a calming experience. First, gather 1 pound of clean sand, either from the beach or purchase from a craft store.
- 2 Find three smooth stones that will stack one on top of another.
- 3 Then, find a lid from a 5" x 7" box to hold your sand garden. If you wish, paint the outside and inside walls of the lid with black tempera paint and allow to dry.
- 4 When the lid is completely dry, carefully pour enough sand to almost fill the lid, leaving 1/2" around the top so the sand will not spill when you use a rake to create your designs.
- 5 Gently swish a fork or a small toy rake through the sand until the simple pattern you make pleases you. Then add stones. You can change the design of your sand garden whenever you like!

## GLOSSARY

**Auspicious:** Favorable, pointing to a successful outcome.

**Avalokiteshvara:** The bodhisattva ("buddha-to-be") of infinite compassion and mercy.

**Bodhisattva:** A person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion, in order to help others who are suffering.

**Buddha:** An enlightened one. According to Buddhist belief, there have always been and will always be buddhas. They are the supreme entities in the hierarchy of Tibetan deities.

**Chakra:** Circle. Any of several points of physical or spiritual energy in the human body according to yoga philosophy.

**Chhairo Gompa:** The monastery in Nepal where Lama Shashi presides.

**Dalai Lama:** The leader of Tibetan Buddhism, believed to be Avalokiteshvara reincarnated.

**Dharma:** The doctrine or universal truth proclaimed by the Buddha.

**Four Great Kings:** Protector deities who guard Buddhist teachings and practitioners.

**Guru:** A spiritual teacher.

**Lama:** A spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism, whose status can be passed down through reincarnation (like the Dalai Lama).

**Lotus:** A plant with roots that grow upward from the mud of a pond whose leaves and flower petals bloom above the surface of the water. It symbolizes spiritual rebirth from earth into the heavenly realm.

**Mandala:** A symbolic diagram used in sacred ceremonies and as an aid to meditation.

**Monastery:** A building where a community of monks live.

**Monks:** Members of a religious community, committed to a life of service.

**Mudra:** A symbolic hand gesture with meaning in both Hindu and Buddhist faiths.

**Nirvana:** A place of complete happiness; the goal of a Buddhist's life.

**Reincarnation:** In Buddhism, the teaching that a person's actions lead to a new existence after death, in an endless cycle called *samsāra*.

**Stupa:** A small structure erected as a Buddhist shrine.

**Thangka:** A painting depicting Tibetan Buddhist deities and teachings, painted in a ritualistic fashion and used for religious practice and for meditation.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### LINK TO CONTENT STANDARDS ON BOWERS MUSEUM WEBSITE

#### CONTENT STANDARDS

The projects and activities in this teacher and student resource guide address California Content Standards for the Arts, English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Science and Technology.

[www.curriculum-standards-sacred-realms.com](http://www.curriculum-standards-sacred-realms.com)

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- Page 8 7SR\_Timeline1\_Thumbnail\_Seated Buddha Figure, Qing Dynasty\_Bronze\_Bowers 99.32.1a-b. Gift of Norma Kershaw  
7SR\_Timeline2\_Thumbnail\_Thangka 8\_Virudhaka\_Great King of the South Direction with 16 Attendants\_Shashi Dhoj Tulachan\_Nepal\_1994\_Bowers L.2012.25.8\_ Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski

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7SR\_Timeline10\_Peaceful Wrathful Deities, 2004\_Shashi Dhoj Tulachan\_Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski
- Page 10 7SR\_Traditional Portable Thangka Painting, late 20th century. Tibet Autonomous Region, China. Bowers 2019.12.1. Gift of Barry and Irena Gernstein
- Page 11 7SR\_Seated Buddha Figure, Qing Dynasty\_Bronze\_Bowers 99.32.1a-b. Gift of Norma Kershaw
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- Page 14 7SR\_Thangka1\_Eleven-Headed Avalokiteshvara with a Thousand Arms and Eyes,1994\_Artist: Shoshi Dhoj Tulachan\_2004 Bowers L.2012.25.1\_Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski
- Page 15 7SR\_Thangka1\_Eleven-Headed Avalokiteshvara with a Thousand Arms and Eyes,1994 (with grid overlay)
- Page 17 7SR\_Auspicious Symbol1\_Banner of Victory\_P.Pease for Bowers Museum  
7SR\_Auspicious Symbol2\_Conch Shell\_Illusletra CR\_Shutterstock 1759865600  
7SR\_Auspicious Symbol3\_8-Spoke Chakra\_jisoo88\_Shutterstock 1744117538  
7SR\_Auspicious Symbol4\_Eternity Knot\_Elfinadesign\_Shutterstock 453117589  
7SR\_Auspicious Symbol5\_Lotus Flower\_ddok\_VectorStock 23381691  
7SR\_Auspicious Symbol6\_Pair of Fishes\_Amey Shoot\_Shutterstock 1132370156  
7SR\_Auspicious Symbol7\_Parasol\_P.Pease for Bowers Museum

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- 7SR\_Mudra1\_Gyan Mudra\_SvetaZi\_Shutterstock 485430145
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- 7SR\_Mudra3\_Apana Mudra\_SvetaZi\_Shutterstock 485430145
- 7SR\_Mudra4\_Dyani Mudra\_Pikoso.kz\_Shutterstock 90966710
- 7SR\_Mudra5\_Namaste\_Lunatictm\_Shutterstock 1492494296
- 7SR\_Mudra6\_Surya Mudra\_SvetaZi\_Shutterstock 485430145
- 7SR\_Mudra7\_Flying Lotus Mudra\_SvetaZi\_Shutterstock 485430145
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- Page 18 7SR\_Statue of Great King\_Bowers L.2014.15.1\_Loan courtesy of Gayla and Edward P. Roski
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- Page 20 7SR\_Dhrtarastra (Great King of the East Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994\_Shashi Dhoj Tulachan\_Bowers L.2012.25.5\_Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski
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- Page 22 7SR\_Vaisravana (Great King of the North Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994\_Shashi Dhoj Tulachan\_Bowers L.2012.25.7\_Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski
- Page 23 7SR\_Vaisravana (Great King of the North Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994\_Shashi Dhoj Tulachan\_Bowers L.2012.25.2\_Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski
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- Page 28 7SR\_Detail, Scenic Backgrounds\_Shashi Dhoj Tulachan  
A. Twisted trunk Bodhi tree\_Virudhaka (Great King of the South Direction) with 16 Attendants\_1994\_Bowers L.2012.25.8  
B. Dramatic waterfalls\_Virudhaka (Great King of the South Direction) with 16 Attendants\_1994\_Bowers L.2012.25.8  
C. Stylized clouds\_Dhrtarastra (Great King of the East Direction)\_1994\_Bowers L.2012.25.5  
D. Snow-capped mountains\_Virudhaka (Great King of the South Direction) with 16 Attendants, 1994\_Bowers L.2012.25.8  
Loan courtesy of Gayle and Edward P. Roski
- Page 29 7SR\_Compass on Circles\_Kucher Serhii\_Shutterstock 229373554  
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- Page 39 7SR\_Sand Mandala Project\_P.Pease for Bowers Museum
- Page 40 7SR\_Sand Garden with Meditation Stones\_BillionPhotos\_Shutterstock 1167257569

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