

MANDALA LAB

WHERE EMOTIONS CAN TURN TO WISDOM

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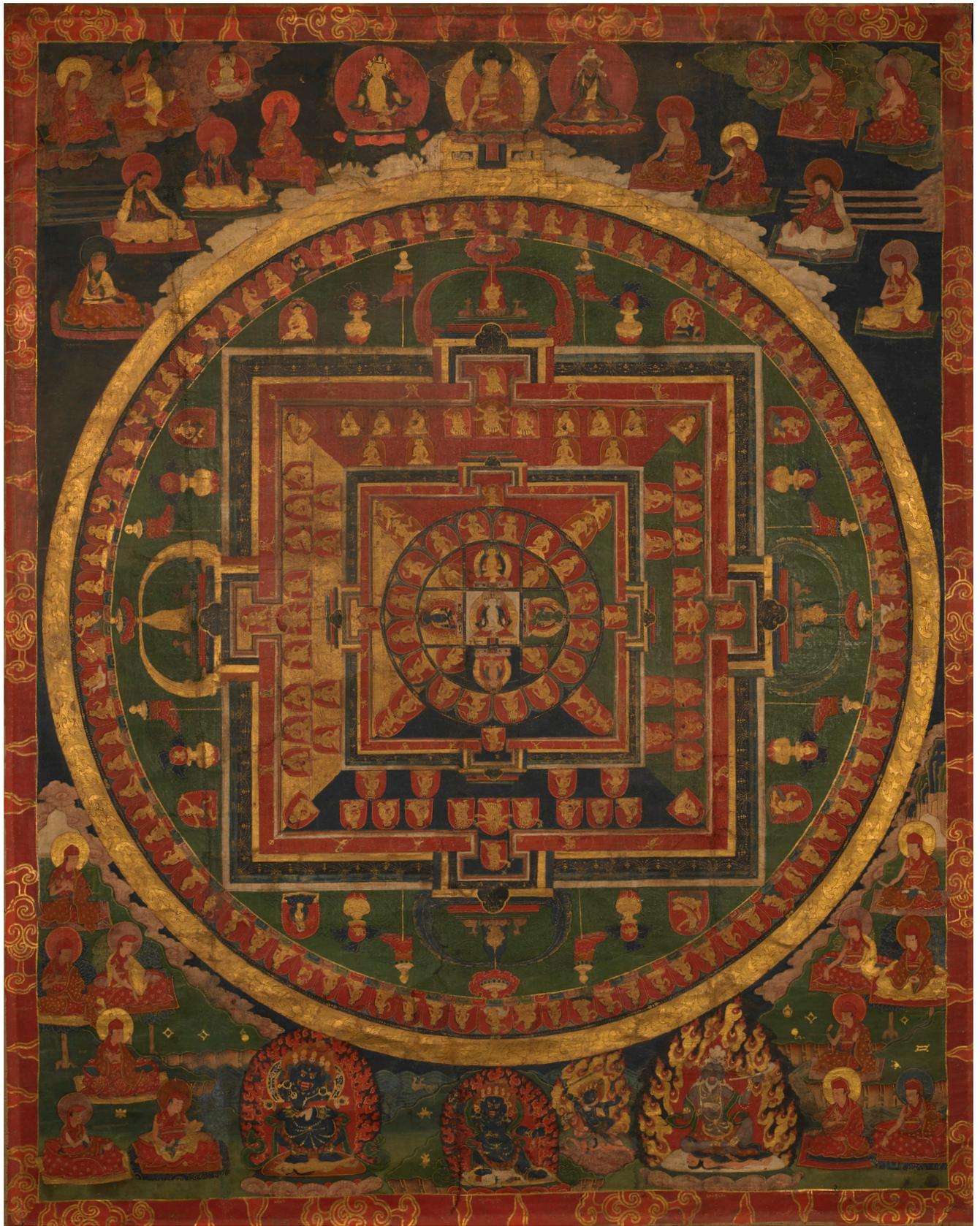
WHERE EMOTIONS CAN TURN TO WISDOM

Emotions are so complicated that scientists struggle to define them. Yet Buddhist practices have long helped individuals grapple with challenging feelings. In the Mandala Lab, we invite you to get curious about your emotions. Consider how complex feelings show up in your everyday life and imagine how you might have the power to transform them.

Mandalas are teaching tools that help Buddhist practitioners gain a clearer understanding of their world. With the help of a trusted teacher, some practitioners use mandalas like the one that inspired this interactive space to learn how to confront and transform five mental states (*kleshas*). Potentially harmful feelings of pride, attachment, envy, anger, and ignorance can be turned into wisdoms. This emotional transformation, which we might think of as a series of a-ha moments, is necessary to reach the Buddhist state of enlightenment. It can take lifetimes to achieve. The Mandala Lab draws on one aspect of the rich teachings associated with the mandala to promote a better understanding of ourselves and others. See, smell, touch, and breathe your way through a series of exercises to contemplate your emotions.

#MandalaLab



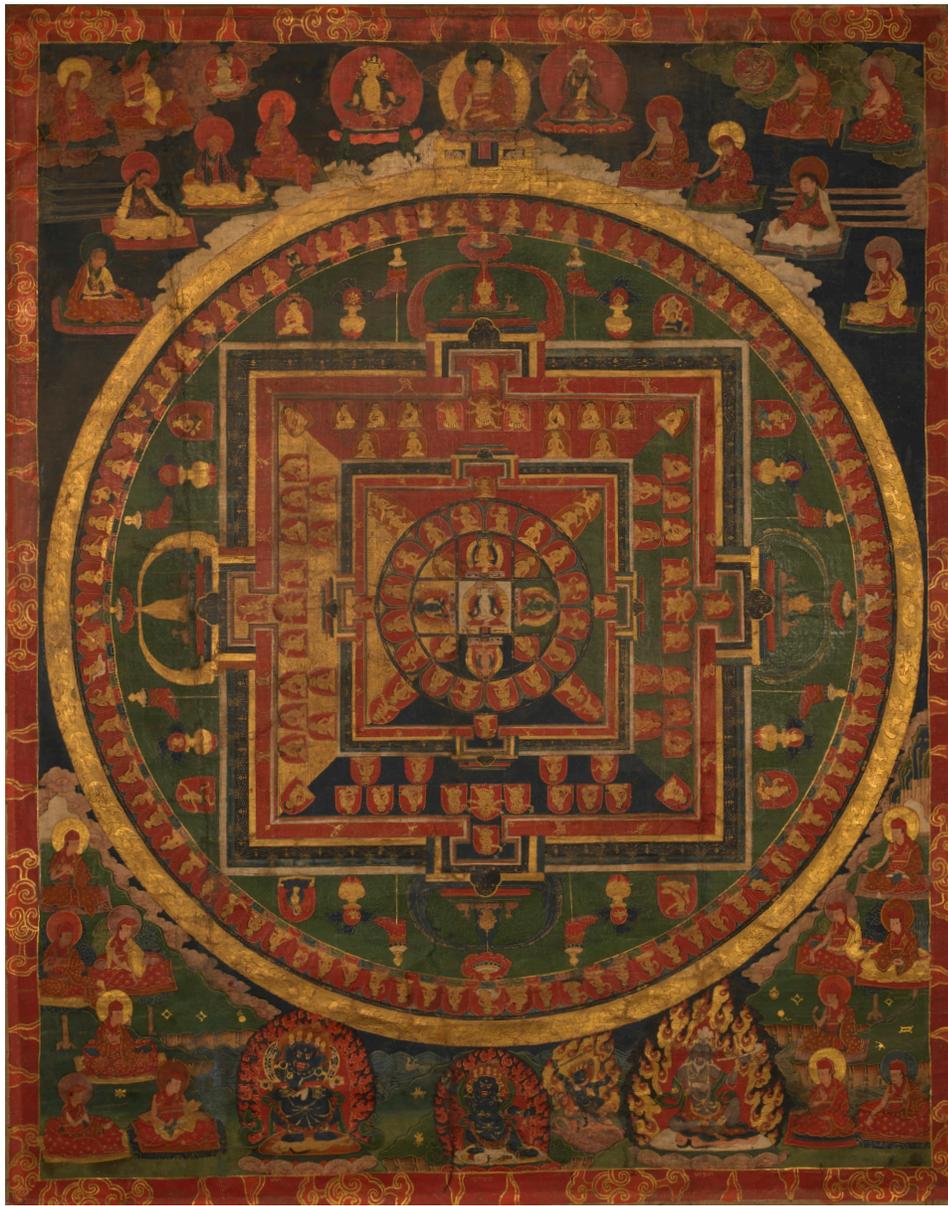


OUR INSPIRATION: THE MANDALA

Understanding the truth about life—and all of existence—requires a little help. Buddhist practitioners use mandalas as artistic aids to advance their journey toward the all-knowing state of enlightenment.

The Sarvavid Vairochana Mandala features an outer circle surrounding a perfect square, and four quadrants placed around an inner circle. Each colored quadrant represents a particular earthly element, cardinal direction, and buddha, or enlightened being. Buddhas sit at the tips of the triangular quadrants, and together with the white central figure of Vairochana they represent the Five Wisdom Buddhas. They help practitioners transform the five afflictive emotions of pride, anger, attachment, envy, and ignorance that cloud our worldview into the wisdoms and skills necessary to reach enlightenment. Each emotion and its corresponding wisdom serve as inspiration for the Mandala Lab.

Sarvavid Vairochana Mandala
Tibet; 17th century
Pigments on cloth
Rubin Museum of Art
Gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin
C2006.66.346 (HAR 773)



CHECK YOUR PRIDE

Recognizing our best qualities can be a source of power, but from a Buddhist point of view, it can translate to an excessive self-focus that stops us from seeing ourselves and those around us clearly. Pride can cause harm when it leads to devaluing others or even oneself. Imagine someone who believes they are better than everyone else. You might describe this person as self-centered. Their sense of self affects their way of interacting with others.

Changing our behavior or worldview requires work and sustained practice. Buddhist practitioners recognize the potential for harm inherent in pride and try to transform it. They aim to cultivate equanimity, the ability to see all things as equal. From this perspective, accomplishments and failures are one and the same. By shaking pride's hold on us, we can learn to suspend our judgments and see ourselves and one another with a sense of equality.

How does your sense of pride impact your behavior?

Wisdom Buddha: Ratnasambhava

Direction: South

Color: Yellow

Element: Earth





EXPERIENCE

How does pride show up in your life?

Acknowledging our pride can be tough. Take a moment to consider some statements about pride that might resonate with you from time to time.

Place a token in the corresponding slot to acknowledge this aspect within yourself.



LET GO OF ATTACHMENT

According to psychology, attachment can create powerful bonds, but in the Buddhist worldview, attachment is a cause of suffering. It can appear as a sense of infatuation or craving, whether it brings us joy or harm. Imagine a smell that you love or hate—just thinking about it might trigger a memory or emotional reaction. The strong thoughts and feelings you attach to a stimulus—whether new or familiar—may make it difficult to respect someone else’s dissimilar experience.

To let go of attachment, Buddhist practitioners cultivate the ability to see the world without bias. With discerning wisdom, they acknowledge how attachment clouds their judgment, and they relinquish its grip on their point of view. They reframe their biased responses to everyday encounters and see things from a new vantage point. From this perspective, people can be respected when they have radically different responses to the same stimuli. Empathy grows when we create space for a multitude of reactions and viewpoints.

How do your attachments shape your worldview?

Wisdom Buddha: Amitabha

Direction: West

Color: Red

Element: Fire





EXPERIENCE

How does attachment impact your senses?

Smell a scent at each station and reflect on what emotions arise within you. Six contemporary artists chose a smell with personal meaning for them and shared a story about it. Each station features a custom-made scent based on their selection.

After you explore them all, share your own memory in our Scent Library.

Contributing Artists

Laurie Anderson

Sanford Biggers

Tenzin Tsetan Choklay

Amit Dutta

Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Wang Yahui





LAURIE ANDERSON
(b. 1947, Glen Ellyn, IL; lives and works in
New York, NY)

Uncle Allen, 2021

Single-channel video with sound;

1 min. 42 sec.

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.4.1

Scent created by Christophe Laudamiel

What smells elicit an emotional reaction in you? This artist created a short video inspired by a particular smell. Follow the onscreen prompts to experience a scent based on the artist's story, share your response to it, and watch the video.

Visit each station for a different scent story.



Image courtesy of the artist

APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL

(b. 1970, Bangkok, Thailand; lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand)

Waterfall, 2021

Single-channel video;

2 min. 1 sec.

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.5.1

Scent created by Christophe Laudamiel

What smells elicit an emotional reaction in you? This artist created a short video inspired by a particular smell. Follow the onscreen prompts to experience a scent based on the artist's story, share your response to it, and watch the video.

Visit each station for a different scent story.



Photo by Sean Wang

TENZIN TSETEN CHOKLAY
(b. 1979, Dharamshala, India; lives and works
in New York, NY, and Dharamshala, India)

1994, 2021

Single-channel video with sound;

2 min. 58 sec.

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.6.1

Scent created by Christophe Laudamiel

What smells elicit an emotional reaction in you? This artist created a short video inspired by a particular smell. Follow the onscreen prompts to experience a scent based on the artist's story, share your response to it, and watch the video.

Visit each station for a different scent story.

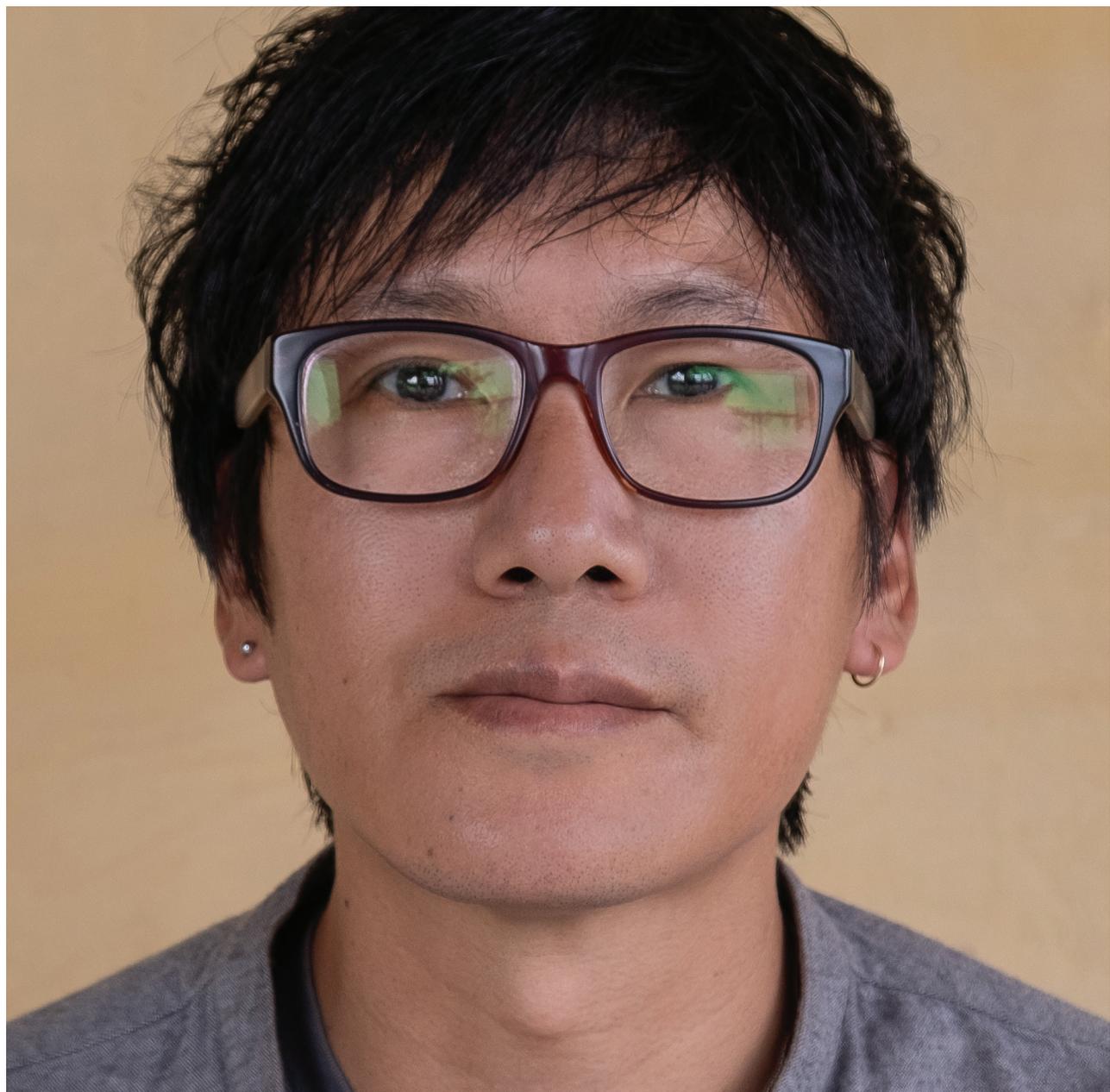


Image courtesy of the artist

WANG YAHUI

(b. 1973, Taipei, Taiwan; lives and works in Taipei, Taiwan)

The Smell of a Rice Field, 2021

Single-channel video;

2 min.

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.7.1

Scent created by Christophe Laudamiel

What smells elicit an emotional reaction in you? This artist created a short video inspired by a particular smell. Follow the onscreen prompts to experience a scent based on the artist's story, share your response to it, and watch the video.

Visit each station for a different scent story.



Image courtesy of the artist

AMIT DUTTA

(b. 1977, Jammu, India; lives and works in Palampur, India)

The Scent of Earth, 2021

Single-channel video;

2 min.

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.8.1

Scent created by Christophe Laudamiel

What smells elicit an emotional reaction in you? This artist created a short video inspired by a particular smell. Follow the onscreen prompts to experience a scent based on the artist's story, share your response to it, and watch the video.

Visit each station for a different scent story.



Image courtesy of the artist

SANFORD BIGGERS

(b. 1970, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in New York, NY)

Joanin Temple for Mandala Lab, 2021

Single-channel video with sound;

2 min. 19 sec.

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.4.1

Scent created by Christophe Laudamiel

What smells elicit an emotional reaction in you? This artist created a short video inspired by a particular smell. Follow the onscreen prompts to experience a scent based on the artist's story, share your response to it, and watch the video.

Visit each station for a different scent story.



Photo by Matthew Morrocco

ACT WITHOUT ENVY

Envy or jealousy is a fear-based stress response in our bodies. It can be spurred by a painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by someone else that we want for ourselves, and it might manifest as a sense of competition. We may feel left behind or like underachievers. This mode of comparison can alter our thinking and even stop us from taking steps toward our own success.

Instead of coveting another person's success, Buddhist practitioners learn to acknowledge it as worthy of joy and appreciation. They take swift action in their own lives without making comparisons. This all-accomplishing wisdom shows that replacing envy with positive actions collectively contributes to a greater good. Collaboration becomes possible, leading to a stronger sense of community.

How does envy influence the way you treat others?

Wisdom Buddha: Amoghasiddhi

Direction: North

Color: Green

Element: Air





EXPERIENCE

How does envy impact your senses?

Breathing can teach us a lot about our emotions and physical health. Take a moment to focus on your breath. Inhaling and exhaling only through your nose, match the rise and fall of your breath to the light in the center of the room.

Contributing Artist

Palden Weinreb





PALDEN WEINREB

**(b. 1982, New York, NY; lives and works in
New York, NY)**

Untitled (Coalescence), 2021

PU resin, LED lights, microprocessor

Rubin Museum of Art

SC2021.1.1

Courtesy of the artist

Help protect the art. Please do not touch.



Image courtesy of the artist

COOL YOUR ANGER

Are you ready to fight? That's what our brains say when we feel anger. It can arise when we are confronted by something we perceive as unfair, unjust, or unacceptable. Imagine anger as a roaring waterfall; the sound and sight of the water may be all-consuming, obscuring the rock wall behind it. Anger can prevent us from seeing the bigger picture, leading to aggressive, harmful actions.

When properly harnessed, anger can provide crystallizing focus and propel change. In the face of anger, Buddhist practitioners cultivate patience to gain a new perspective. They use the sharp, piercing qualities of the emotion to cut through confusion instead of causing harm to others. This awareness, known as mirror-like wisdom, reveals a clear reflection of the situation or condition.

How does anger fuel your actions?

Wisdom Buddha: Akshobya

Direction: East

Color: Blue

Element: Water





EXPERIENCE

Can you find stillness within anger?

Approach any instrument in the center of this space and follow the instructions at right to participate. Let anger be transformed through sound and stillness.

Contributing Artists

Billy Cobham

Sheila E.

Peter Gabriel

Evelyn Glennie

Sarah Hennessey

Huang Ruo

Shivamani

Bora Yoon





GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY EVELYN GLENNIE (b. 1965, Aberdeen, Scotland; lives and works in Cambridgeshire, England)

Bronze

Rubin Museum of Art

X2021.10.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Photo by Jim Callaghan

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY SHIVAMANI (b. 1959, Chennai, India; lives and works in Mumbai, India)

Brass; manufactured in Kathmandu

Rubin Museum of Art

X2021.11.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Image courtesy of the artist

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY PETER GABRIEL (b. 1950, Chobham, England; lives and works in Wiltshire, England)

Bronze; manufactured by Ryan Shelledy

Rubin Museum of Art

X2021.12.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Image courtesy of the artist

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY SHEILA E. (b. 1957, Oakland, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Phosphor bronze; manufactured by Matt Nolan, UK
Rubin Museum of Art
X2021.13.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Image courtesy of the artist

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY HUANG RUO **(b. 1976, Hainan, China; lives and works in** **New York, NY)**

Phosphor bronze; manufactured by Matt Nolan, UK

Rubin Museum of Art

X2021.14.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Photo by Max Lee

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY BORA YOON **(b. 1980, Chicago, IL; lives and works in** **New York, NY, and Princeton, NJ)**

Hammered brass Korean gwengari

Rubin Museum of Art

X2021.15.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Image courtesy of the artist

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY BILLY COBHAM (b. 1944, Colón, Panama; lives and works in New York, NY)

Nickel silver; manufactured by Ryan Shelledy
Rubin Museum of Art
X2021.16.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.

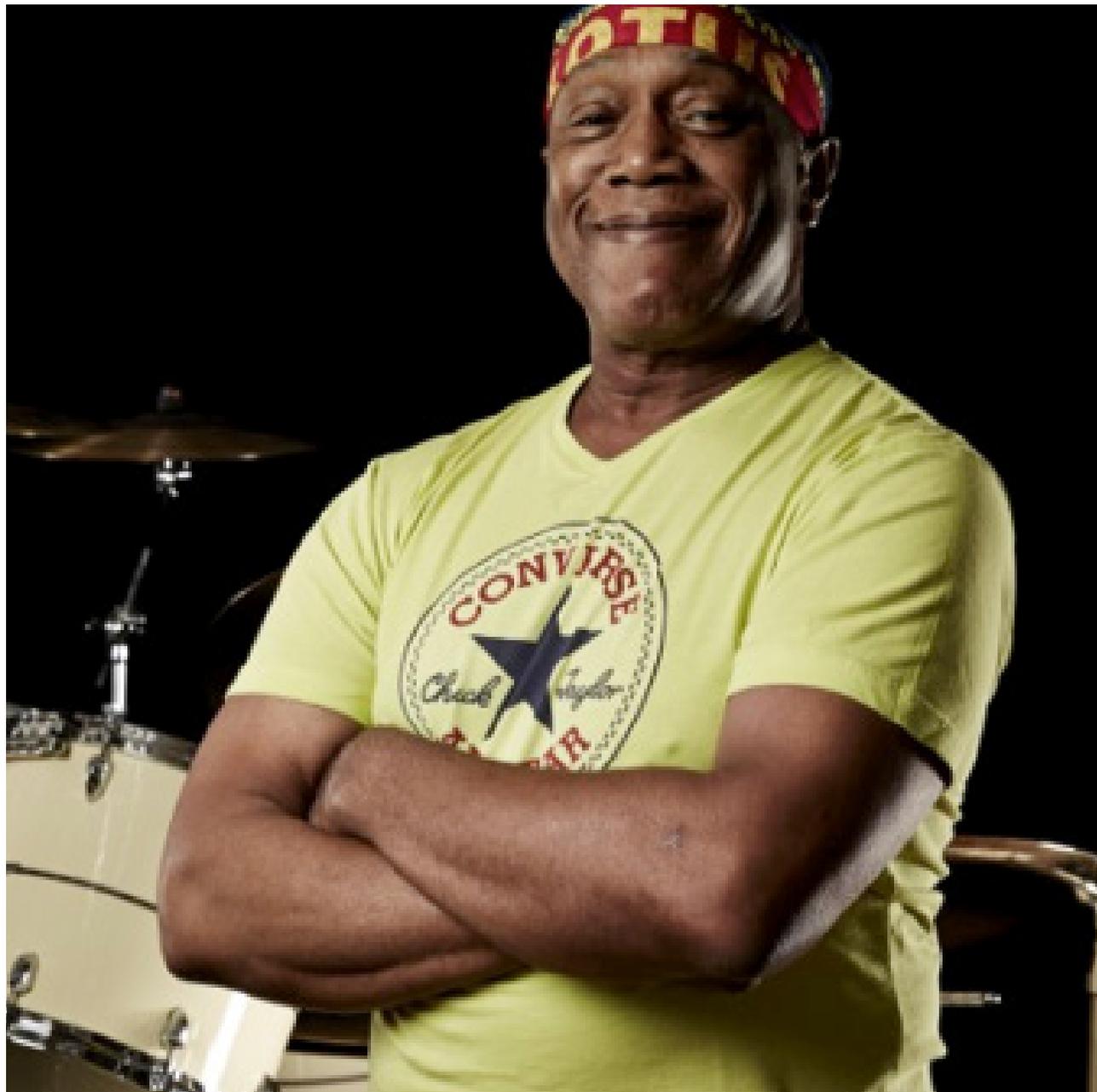


Image courtesy of the artist

GONG SPECIFICATIONS BY SARAH HENNIES **(b. 1979, Louisville, KY; lives and works** **in Ithaca, NY)**

Hammered bronze
Rubin Museum of Art
X2021.17.1

This musician has selected a type of gong for you to strike and lower into the water. Follow the instructions below to participate:

1. Imagine your anger.
2. Gently strike the gong in front of you one time using the mallet to the right.
3. Raise the handle to the left to partially submerge the gong in the water.
4. Listen to the sound of your anger transform.
5. Let the sound fade, and for an added challenge, watch the water return to stillness.
6. When finished, lower the handle to return the gong back to its starting position.



Image courtesy of the artist

OVERCOME IGNORANCE

You don't know what you don't know. Ignorance rears its head when we cut ourselves off from our feelings. Lacking awareness can lead to negative actions toward others and limit our personal growth. Whether we willingly choose to disregard the facts or are caught unaware, ignorance prevents us from seeing situations exactly as they are.

Wisdom itself is the antidote to ignorance. When practitioners achieve all-accommodating wisdom, they experience the beneficial aspects of each emotion and develop an unbiased worldview. They see situations without confusion and are no longer susceptible to the tricks our minds play when clouded by emotion. Without this awareness, it is impossible to attain the other wisdoms explored in the mandala. Becoming more aware of our emotions and their impact can lead to increased empathy. As you exit the Mandala Lab, what knowledge will you welcome in?

How does ignorance limit your ability to grow?

Wisdom Buddha: Vairochana

Direction: Center

Color: White

Element: Space





EXPERIENCE

What changes when we invite in wisdom?

Learning about our emotions is one powerful step toward overcoming ignorance.

Use the digital touchscreens to choose an emotion for further exploration. Receive a teaching that might change how you relate to this emotion. Contribute your own piece of advice that may be shared with future visitors.

Let a new journey with this emotion begin.