

ARTFORUM

“Transcending Tibet”

ROGUE SPACE | CHELSEA
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Tibetan art is now meta-ethnic. In this exhibition, the Shangri-la imaginary collides with realities particular to the global Tibetan cultural diaspora. The redefinition proposed here delivers a broad range of formal possibilities and artistic strategies. Most involve some degree of secularizing the Buddhist themes that defined art—thangka painting—for centuries.

The inclusion of Western artists working in Tibetan idioms dramatically expands the discourse. Livia Liverani trained in Ladakh with an experienced painter of the sacred arts; she recreates traditional compositions in a pastiche of patterned silks. Yet Buddhist iconography is shunned in Tserang Dhondup’s portrait of a Tibetan man wearing a Nike jacket and holding an iPhone5. An academically trained painter, Dhondup represents the opposite end of the spectrum. Chinese artist Lu Yang’s video *Wrathful King Kong Core*, 2011, puts Tantric gods within a sci-fi context. Using a dedicated sound track by noise musician Yao Dajun, she visualizes attributes of the wrathful god Manjushri alongside a neuroscientific introduction to the anger pathways of the human brain stem.



Sonam Dolma Brauen, *My Fathers Death*, 2010, used monk robes, plaster, dimensions variable.

Tibetan-Swiss artist Sonam Dolma Brauen’s sculptural installation *My Father’s Death*, 2010, is the most stirring work: an understated pile of crimson-and-gold monks’ robes folded on the floor. These consummately Tibetan materials—monks robes, donated at the artist’s request—surround nine plaster-molded stupas (*tsa tsa*). Making and offering *tsa tsa* is an important spiritual practice, and while the significance of the plaster stupas may be obscured behind geometric abstraction, Brauen’s minimalism implies the deeply personal stories couched in their materials. In these contexts, we discover new boundaries where ethnicity, artistic training, or formal attributes correlate in novel ways. “Tibet” becomes a remarkably diverse concept tenuously binding everything together.

— Lee Ambrozy

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