

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SEVEN

VOLUME SEVEN OF *The Collected Works* brings together Chögyam Trungpa's work as a poet, playwright, and visual artist and the teachings on art and the creative process that he gave during his seventeen years in North America, from 1970 until his death in 1987. Chögyam Trungpa's appreciation for and involvement with art are among the most innovative and provocative parts of his teaching in the West. There is also material in Volume Seven that one might call "art history," in which Trungpa Rinpoche shares his knowledge of the symbolism and iconography of traditional Buddhist art and music. All of this produces a rich tapestry of color, form, and sound, which enlivens and deepens our appreciation of this highly creative and prolific human being.

Rinpoche's artistic orientation was something of a departure from the traditional view of the place of art in Tibetan Buddhism. In the Buddhist traditions of Tibet, art is largely connected with monastic life. Formal poetry was composed for Tibetan liturgies, and dohas, or spontaneous poems and songs of spiritual realization, were very much respected. Thangkas, or scroll paintings, and rupas, sculptures, were created to depict vajrayana deities and gurus, as aids to tantric visualization. They were created in an environment of sacredness, and painters and sculptors often performed a sadhana, or ritual practice, to begin their work. Music was also involved in many liturgies, and dance was an important part of some tantric rituals. So the monastic culture was not without poetry, music, and art. In contrast, there was relatively little secular art or literature within the Tibetan culture as a whole, with the notable exception of the great epic of Gesar of Ling and some folk art, literature, dances,

and songs. In some respects, the relationship of art and religion in Tibet was similar to that of medieval Europe, where so much of the music and fine arts was religious in nature. Obviously, there are important distinctions between the two, because Buddhism is a nontheistic religion. The deity in Buddhist art has a very different function, since it is viewed as a quality of emotion and energy discovered within the practitioner's own mind. In some respects, however, art, music, and dance in the Middle Ages in Europe appear to have been less dominated by a religious outlook than they were in Tibet. There were court dances and musicians, as well as landscape and portrait artists. This does not seem to have been the case to any great extent in Tibetan culture.

The reason for raising this point is not so much for the sake of historical or anthropological argument, but rather to highlight how radical it was for Chögyam Trungpa to have developed the relationship he had with the arts in the West. His view and practice of artistic disciplines were much more closely allied with the approach taken to the arts by Buddhism in Japan. In *Dharma Art*, a collection of his talks on art and the artistic process, he himself says: "The cultural attitude is that there is no secular art in Tibet. If you're going to paint even a free-style thangka, the subject has to be a religious one: different gurus, different deities, and different protectors. So in Tibet you can't have too much of a free hand; whereas in the Zen tradition of China and Japan, often people depict secular art in the language of Zen" (p. 39).

Trungpa Rinpoche's own monastic training in Tibet did include an exposure to many of the religious arts practiced there. He pursued a rigorous study of monastic dance but had to leave the country before he completed his training. His root guru, Jamgön Kongtrül, trained him in the composition of dohas, and Trungpa Rinpoche spent many hours reading and studying the sacred poetry of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. He had a particular love for the songs of realization composed by the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa, and the Nyingma master Jigme Lingpa was perhaps his favorite poet.¹

As a small child, Rinpoche was fascinated by the work of craftsmen at his monastery. His secretary and bursar at Surmang Dütsi Tel Monastery arranged for the renovation of the apartment of the tenth Trungpa

1. Chögyam Trungpa's poems in *The Rain of Wisdom*, which appear in Volume Six, are examples of poetry in the traditional Tibetan style.

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(Chögyam Trungpa was the eleventh), who had been a very austere man with simple tastes. Sixteen wood carvers and painters were hired to re-decorate the quarters. In *Born in Tibet*, Rinpoche reports how he was enthralled by their work and how he and one of the workers' sons "liberated" some paints to make pictures of their own. Later in *Born in Tibet*, Rinpoche talks about a visit he made to the Karma Monastery, which had been the seat of one of the Karmapas and was renowned for its thangka paintings. He admired the paintings greatly but also noticed a decline in the quality of more recent works and hoped "that it might be possible for me to do something to revive Tibetan art, but Communist oppression was soon to put an end to any such dreams."² It does appear, however, that Rinpoche received some training in the discipline of Tibetan thangka painting, although this editor has been unable to find any description of it. In the 1960s in India, he created a few very beautiful thangkas, which combined traditional elements and technique with his own unique vision.³

Rinpoche arrived in India in 1960, having made a ten-month journey through the Himalayas on foot to escape the communist Chinese. His first contact with Western literature came in India. In the preface to *First Thought Best Thought*, a book of his poems, he describes his wonder at encountering the contemporary Western approach to poetry at a poetry reading sponsored by the American women's club: "I was very struck by the reading, which I recall included works by T. S. Eliot. This was not hymn, chant, mantra, or prayer, but just natural language used as poetry" (pp. 605–606) In the same preface, he recounts his excitement at running across a "simple and beautiful haiku" in a magazine he was reading one day in New Delhi. He was just in the early stages of learning the English language at that time, and he reports, "It may have been an advertisement for some Japanese merchandise or it may have been a piece of Zen literature, but I was impressed and encouraged that the simplicity of its thought could be expressed in the English language" (p. 605).

2. *Born in Tibet* (1977), p. 87.

3. In India, he made the acquaintance of Tendzin Rongae, a master thangka painter. Rinpoche became close friends with the entire Rongae family. It may be that his training as a painter came out of this association. One of Tendzin's sons, Noedup Rongae, has produced many important thangkas that hang in shrine rooms throughout the Shambhala community.

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Rinpoche apparently had other artistic interests in India. Ato Rinpoche, a colleague of Trungpa Rinpoche's there, has reported that Chögyam Trungpa made small dharma art-like arrangements of rocks and greenery in terrariums while in India.⁴

In late 1963, Rinpoche traveled to England on a Spaulding Scholarship at Oxford University. There, he was immersed in the Western literary and artistic traditions, which made a huge impression on him. In the preface to *First Thought Best Thought*, he describes the impact of an encounter with Western music:

Poetry, linguistic expression, and music are identical as far as I am concerned. Once I was taken to the college chapel by my dear friend Mr. John Driver to hear the *St. Matthew Passion*. This was such a great discovery, experiencing the tremendous heroism and spiritual passion in that atmosphere of sanctity, that I felt as though the occasion were my private feast. From the beauty of the music I gained further appreciation of the Western legacy. A Tibetan friend who also attended felt nothing of the kind. His reaction was that "we had three boring hours listening to the noise of tin cans, pigeons, and chickens getting their necks wrung." I felt so energized as we came out into the chill of the English night that my friend panicked and thought I was in danger of being converted to Christianity! (p. 606)

In England Rinpoche continued his study of the English language, which had begun in India. He took evening classes in English offered to foreign students by the town of Oxford. In later years, in describing his study of English pronunciation to his students, he often recounted how he was made to say the word *policeman* over and over. At Oxford itself, Rinpoche studied Western history, art, religion, thought, and culture. While in England, he also embarked on his own practice of Western artistic and literary disciplines. He wrote many poems in Tibetan and also penned his first verses in the English language, a number of which are included here in Volume Seven. Others were published in 1972 in *Mudra*, which appears in Volume One. They tended to be much more formal or orthodox than later poetic efforts, and it appears that they

4. Interview with Ato Rinpoche by Carolyn Rose Gimian for the Shambhala Archives, circa 1991.

were written out rather than recited spontaneously, the method of composition for almost all of Rinpoche's poetry written in the English language in America.

While living in England, Rinpoche wrote his autobiography, *Born in Tibet*, with an Englishwoman, Esmé Cramer Roberts, as his editor (see Volume One). It was his first book published in the West. Although it is not unusual for a Tibetan teacher to write an autobiographical account of his life, the style of *Born in Tibet* is nothing like a Tibetan account of a teacher's life.

Chögyam Trungpa took his first photograph in Tibet; we know this because he brought it to the West with him. It is a powerful portrait of his root guru, Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen.⁵ During Rinpoche's lifetime, it hung on the shrine in the meditation center he founded in Boulder, Colorado. When Rinpoche conferred the Vajrayogini abhisheka, he had a huge reproduction of this photograph placed on a throne in the shrine room. He kept a copy of the photo in his bedroom, and in the last years of his life he said that he saw a rainbow-colored light coming from the heart center of Jamgön Kongtrül. In India, Trungpa Rinpoche took some very small-format photographs that are kept now in the Shambhala Archives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. They are pictures of sacred places in India, such as Bodhgaya, as well as pictures of other Tibetans, mainly lamas, who appear to have been Rinpoche's friends or traveling companions.

Having taken these early "snapshots" in India, Rinpoche in England made his first photographic studies of landscapes, buildings, trees, and space, among other subjects. The Shambhala Archives has inherited a

5. Chögyam Trungpa described how he took the photograph of Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche: "I was able to acquire a box camera in Tibet, and I got film and chemicals to develop film from China, and I took this very photograph by myself. I asked him, 'Can I take your photograph?' He said, 'You don't need to do that,' and I said, 'I insist,' and he said, 'In that case, let me dress up.' So he got his best brocade gown, shawl, and robe, and he sat in the upstairs of his house on the flat roof, and he said, 'All right. Ready. Do it.' . . . I was nervous about whether it was going to come out properly or not. But fortunately it came out. I took this photograph—what year could it be?—it's probably 1954 or something like that. A friend of mine, another tulku, another rinpoche, showed me how to develop the film. So I took this photograph, and I developed it and printed it in his monastery's library, which is a rather dark place. We put cloth over the window, and we developed the film by trial and error, and the photograph came out all right." (*Collected Vajra Assemblies*, vol. 1, edited by Judith L. Lief and Sarah Coleman [Halifax: Vajradhatu Publications, 1990], p. 187.)

number of prints of Rinpoche's photographs from England. One interesting collection shows a number of shots of two ruins in the English countryside, photographed in the spring when the rhododendrons were in bloom. There are pictures of each building taken from the perspective of the other; architectural details, wide pans, shots of flowers, and views of the sky in relationship to the forms. Clearly, he had discovered photography as art.⁶

In England, Rinpoche made a much more direct connection with Zen and the arts. He studied flower arranging for several years with Stella Coe, a high-ranking teacher of the Sogetsu school of ikebana in England, who reported that he had a natural talent that did not really need to be trained.⁷ It was a discipline he would continue throughout the remainder of his life. While still in England, he made his first brush and ink drawings inspired by Japanese brush painting. About ten years ago, I was shown copies of some of the drawings he did in England, and it was striking how accomplished his technique already seemed.

In Japan, Zen developed a very close relationship with the "fine" arts and beyond that with the practice of many other disciplines as "arts" in their own right. Even beyond art, the Japanese developed a sense of one's activity or disciplines as a "way," or *do*: *chado*, the way of tea; *kyudo*, the way of archery; *kado*, the way of flowers, and so on. It is a common Buddhist understanding that ordinary activities can be a form of meditation in action; or, put another way, that one can bring mindfulness and awareness to bear on anything one does. But the idea of a *do* or way is that one's conduct of secular, everyday activities can become the means to realizing a sacred outlook and can be a path to awakening, a path even to enlightenment. Whether or not Trungpa Rinpoche first encountered this idea in England, it is clear that he understood and embraced this approach later in life, as we shall see.

Somewhere in the course of his early encounters with Western art and literature, whether in England or when he first came to North America, Chögyam Trungpa also came to an understanding of the role of contemporary art in the West as a source and an expression of spiritual

6. This group of photographs is a good visual example of how Trungpa Rinpoche was working with what he later described as seeing and looking. See pages 138–139 for the discussion of this principle of dharma art.

7. See *Kalapa Ikebana Newsletter*, Winter 1984, pp. 1–2.

inspiration and sacred view. In his approach to translating Buddhist terms and concepts into the English language, as was discussed in the introductions to Volumes Two and Six, he found that the vocabulary and ideas used in Western psychology were better suited to the expression of Buddhism in the West than language with an overtly religious tone. Similarly, “secular” Western art, music, and literature have for more than a century communicated sacredness and an uplifted view—giving us access to beauty, profundity, and wisdom. Of course, one can still be moved by the religious music of Bach or Brahms, by the majesty of Chartres, or by medieval paintings of Christ and the saints. We have not lost touch with the inspiration evoked by such religious art, and many modern artists continue to create works of art with religious content. However, most contemporary art, while it may be deeply spiritual, is not confined or defined by religious themes, and contemporary artists frequently do not turn to overtly religious symbolism and themes to convey their deepest longings or their most direct experience of reality. However, although art has become largely disconnected from an overtly religious iconography, message, or subject matter, it has remained a deeply spiritual medium, often with a greater ability to move us and nurture our spirit than organized religion seems to possess. Chögyam Trungpa grasped this from early on in his tenure in the West.

While this secular evolution within art is not a particularly new or radical understanding for most of us in the West, for Chögyam Trungpa it must have required a considerable reorientation, given the tradition out of which he came. In his country, there were the equivalents of Michelangelos and Leonardos still painting the walls of monasteries. Yet the secularization of the arts in the West does not seem to have been a difficult or unpleasant discovery for him. He apparently embraced the freedom of Western art and beyond that the possibilities for using the arts as a vehicle to communicate a sacred view of everyday activity and to provoke inquisitiveness and wakefulness in his Western Buddhist students.

Rinpoche’s ideas about the relationship between art and spirituality came out of his direct involvement with the arts. He had been practicing calligraphy and flower arranging and writing poetry for a number of years before he had much to *say* about those disciplines. Many of Rinpoche’s talks on art and the artist have been gathered together and presented in *Dharma Art*, edited by Judith L. Lief and published in 1996. The

book is based on material presented by Chögyam Trungpa over nearly ten years, from 1972 through 1981. Interestingly enough, the editorial approach in *Dharma Art* is itself rather artistic—in some ways more like a painting than the usual systematic presentation made in a book. The volume presents a number of themes as highlights that overlay one another to create a complex and interconnected fabric. It begins with a letter written by Rinpoche on the occasion of the Naropa Institute's first summer program in July 1974. The remaining chapters are, with few exceptions, based on talks given by Rinpoche in courses at Naropa and in dharma art seminars and other gatherings with artists held in many locations around the United States. About half of the material is based on talks given at Naropa, many of these taken from a seminar called "The Iconography of Buddhist Tantra," held in the summer of 1975, in which Chögyam Trungpa articulated not only his first systematic take on dharma art itself but also a view of how human perception operates and how it is refined through the development of meditative awareness. Such awareness, both panoramic and detailed, can then be applied to any artistic enterprise as well as to the general conduct of "Art in Everyday Life," the title of one chapter of the book. There is also a consideration of symbolism, not just as it applies to art but as a component of all human experience.

The first chapter, "Dharma Art—Genuine Art," defines dharma art for the reader. The opening paragraph gives us the first part of the definition:

The term *dharma art* does not mean art depicting Buddhist symbols or ideas, such as the Wheel of Life or the story of Gautama Buddha. Rather, dharma art refers to art that springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state. It is an attitude of directness and unselfconsciousness in one's creative work.

The last sentence of the letter, and of the chapter, gives us the second part of the definition of dharma art: "Genuine art—dharma art—is simply the activity of nonaggression." These two components of dharma art are reflected throughout the talks that Chögyam Trungpa gave on art and the artistic process. The first aspect—that dharma art is a reflection of the meditative state of awareness—is expressed in many different

ways throughout his work. Chögyam Trungpa did not articulate a series of principles that related to art as opposed to other activities in life or other aspects of his teaching. I think it would be more accurate to say that he applied principles of dharma—which refers both to basic truth and specifically to the buddhadharma, or the doctrines of Buddhism—to the understanding and execution of art. He also let the art speak directly for itself—and he used and refined the understandings that arose from his art to communicate with his students. He made use of his own artistic expressions to convey to his students how he saw the world. In his dharma art seminars, Rinpoche often gave demonstrations of calligraphy and flower arranging and had poetry read, or composed on the spot. Artistic expression was a means for him to demonstrate aspects of the immediacy and depth of perception that words fail to convey. This communication was not just aimed at other artists: art was a means of communicating with everyone in his life.

In May of 1979 I traveled throughout the province of Nova Scotia with Rinpoche and a group of his students. Rinpoche brought his camera with him and took pictures as we toured around. One afternoon while we were driving on the North Shore of the province, we took a dirt road down to a tiny fishing pier, which a battered sign proclaimed as “McDonald’s Cove.” It was a gray day, the water and the sky both appearing dull and dirty to me. We looked at the water and the lobster traps on the pier and talked with a few fishermen. Rinpoche casually snapped some photographs. A few weeks later, when I saw the slides from that afternoon, I was particularly struck by his shots of the water, by the luminous quality of these photographs and the nuances of color, form, and light that he had captured. I realized that he and I were seeing very differently when we looked at the same things. I could feel wonder, depth, and delight in his pictures, as compared with the monotony and dismal tones of my own memories of that day. Once, for a charity auction to raise funds for some good cause in the Buddhist community, Rinpoche contributed a pair of his glasses to be auctioned, so that the successful bidder, as he put it, “could share my vision.” When I saw his photographs of a fishing cove in Nova Scotia, I knew exactly why one would want to do that!

Although his art spoke for itself in these ways, he also used the *discussion* of dharma art to talk about how one might develop that perceptiveness in oneself. In part, he often conveyed a very simple message: you

need to meditate if you want to understand or create dharma art. “Absolutely nobody can become a good craftsman or a good artist without relating with the practice of meditation” (p. 31) That might sound like a limiting definition of art, leading one to ask, “Can only Buddhists become artists?” However, he follows up this statement with a clarification of what he means by meditation:

For instance, Beethoven, El Greco, or my most favorite person in music, Mozart—I think they all sat. They actually sat in the sense that their minds became blank before they did what they were doing. Otherwise, they couldn’t possibly do it. Just coming out of the market and plopping down at the dining-room table and writing a play—that’s impossible. Some kind of mind-less-ness in the Buddhist sense has to take place. (p. 32)

Trungpa Rinpoche often talks about that open space of blank mind that precedes artistic creation, or is its first step, as “first thought best thought.” “First thought” is an evocative term for the primordial ground of disciplined spontaneity that he recommended as the best approach—in fact, the only genuine one—to writing poetry, executing a calligraphy, or embarking on any artistic project. He also developed this concept in early seminars on the Buddhist teachings, particularly in the exposition of the teachings of mahamudra from the tantric tradition, and later in many lectures on the Shambhala principles of warriorship and enlightened action. In *Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala*, Rinpoche connects first thought with the discovery of a dot in space that wakes up the warrior:

Whether you are confused or in a neutral state of mind or your mind is full of subconscious gossip, in any case there is always space. The dot in space is what we call first thought, best thought. In the midst of preoccupations, in the middle of your shower, as you put your pants on, while you dry your hair, while you cook your food, in the midst of all sorts of neutral states of being, the dot is a sharp point that jerks you, shakes you. You are quite easily going through your life, quite naively, and suddenly there’s a jerk out of nowhere. First thought, best thought. . . .

By practicing . . . you develop the capability to bring about *the*

first thought. Sometimes your so-called first thought is filled with aggression, resentment, or some other habitual pattern. At that point, you're experiencing second thought rather than the real first thought. It's not fresh. It's like wearing a shirt for the second time. . . . That is like missing the first thought. First thought is fresh thought. By practicing . . . you bring about the fresh first thought.⁸

However, it was in the realm of art that Rinpoche first used the phrase "first thought best thought." This is a good example of how art influenced dharma in his presentations—not just the other way around. In the chapter "State of Mind," in *Dharma Art*, Chögyam Trungpa talks about first thought as a "sense of vision taking place in one's state of mind. Such vision comes from a state of mind that has no beginning and no end. It is very present, on the spot. . . . First thought does not come from subconscious gossip; it comes from before you think anything. In other words, there's always the possibility of freshness" (p. 137).

In many of his presentations of the Buddhist teachings, Trungpa Rinpoche was pointing out that essential nature of mind which is free from doubt, fear, or concept. It comes back over and over again in his teachings on art. He also demonstrated or evoked that state of mind through various displays. He was able to create a flower arrangement, a logo, a calligraphy, a photograph, or a jewelry design that stopped your mind in its tracks. A friend of mine once showed me a ring she was wearing that had been designed by Chögyam Trungpa. When I looked at it, it took my breath away and I burst into tears—for no reason at all. I had the same experience looking at the paintings of Monet. Isn't this an essential quality of art—that it does not allow us to rest in the comfortable world of our subconscious gossip but evokes a fresh and immediate experience?

Gina Etra Stick, an architect and designer who worked with Trungpa Rinpoche for many years on various design projects and was instrumental in organizing the education component of the dharma art programs taught by him, commented on how first thought came into their design work together:

As with most things with the Vidyadhara, design work happened in profoundly simple ways. A design session would go something like

8. *Great Eastern Sun* (2001), pp. 152, 154.

this. We would sit down, and he would say, “We have to do a logo” for such-and-such business. We would hang there for a few minutes, space pregnant. Each of us would try to sense the essence of the particular business involved. We would try to find what I call the seed syllable: the most basic energy underlying that particular activity. In our Shambhala world, all activities, institutions, or businesses begin with the logo, the pin, the seed syllable. This is the basic utterance out of which all of the multitude of details of a business venture arise. Rinpoche would then say, “What do you think?” I might say, “Seems like red to me.” He might say, “Ya, red with purple undertones.” Or, “Actually, I was thinking green.” We would communicate that way, not saying much, to the point where our minds would meet. This was very intimate, personal, playful, and fun. The Vidyadhara loved to design. In fact, later in his life, the only two things he never delegated were the hiring of key personnel in the organization, and design.

Sometimes we would dance around with “first thought best thought” as our *modus operandi* or design methodology. In this design process, one relaxes to allow a gap, then relaxes more to allow the first thought, the first inspiration that arises, to express itself. The first thought or inspiration is considered the best, because it is the freshest, occurring *before* thought. This design process requires a lot of bravery to stick with your first thought and not rely on convention, concept, or something safe. This type of design often provokes an abrupt shift in the viewer as it provokes in turn their return to original or first mind. So you can see that the design process as well as the result were ways of mind training. For me, these sessions directly wired me into the Vidyadhara’s way of thinking, and his spectacular way of not thinking.⁹

Gina Stick also sent me some comments on the work that she did with Chögyam Trungpa on the design of the *Garuda* magazines, which were annual or semiannual publications between 1971 and 1977. Shortly after his arrival in North America, Trungpa Rinpoche began putting together the first *Garuda*, which presented articles on themes connected with meditation and Buddhism, many penned by himself but by others as well. (Many of the original articles from the *Garuda* magazines are

9. E-mail communication from Gina Etra Stick to Carolyn Rose Gimian, 2002.

included in *The Collected Works*.) There was also news about what was happening in the Buddhist community in each issue of *Garuda*. There were five issues of *Garuda* published in total. The first two issues were large format, 8½ by 11 inches; the last three were in an unusual format of approximately 8½ by 9 inches. The *Garudas* were also uniquely designed, so that the visual presentation of the material was as important and powerful as the written content. Of the design work on *Garuda*, Gina Stick commented:

The Vidyadhara designed the *Garudas* with a methodology called “first thought, best thought.” . . . First thought, best thought refers to our first inspiration arising from original or first mind. Designs created in this way in turn provoke a glimpse of original mind in the viewer.

In contrast to traditional book design where page layouts usually adhere to a standardized format, here the idea was that each two-page spread would be new, reading provoking a sort of shock, a gap, and a new realization. These books hang together with a different kind of logic: a dharmic logic, a continuity and rhythm of change. Turning the page, you are turning the mind, back, to original mind, and forward, in nowness. Design is not decorative: it is a vehicle of practice, teaching, and awakening. So each page is fresh, with each page the reader is fresh, able to see the image and logos directly.¹⁰

Toward the end of his life, Trungpa Rinpoche was fond of hiding behind doorways and jumping out to surprise an unsuspecting passerby with a huge exclamation that was close to the ghostly “Boo!” He was particularly delighted if he could make someone shriek or jump into the air. At times, he incorporated the “Boo! transmission” into his dharma talks, startling whole audiences into wakefulness at the most unexpected moments. The ability to bring things to one extraordinary point from the midst of silence and spaciousness was a fundamental gift that he had and which he gave to his students, in many different ways. In part, this was the teaching of first thought best thought.

Rinpoche also used the principle of heaven, earth, and man (in the sense of humanity) in his development of the principles of dharma art.

10. Written communication from Gina Etra Stick to Carolyn Rose Gimian, January 2002.

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This threefold principle comes from the Chinese tradition and was also integrated and developed further in Korea and Japan. Rinpoche would have known this threefold view of the world from his studies in Tibet, and he would also have applied this concept in his studies of flower arranging, or ikebana, where it is commonly used to describe the elements of an arrangement. Beginning around the time that he began to focus on the Shambhala teachings, Rinpoche chose to apply this schema in dharma art presentations. He treated the topic in a number of different ways. Relative to the discussion of first thought, the heaven, earth, and man material in his essay in *The Art of Calligraphy: Joining Heaven and Earth* is particularly germane. In the section of his essay entitled “Creation,” heaven is presented as the first step or stage in creating a work of art. Here, he connects heaven with vision, or nonthought. The experience of heaven is like standing in front of your huge blank canvas, holding your brush, ready to paint:

At that point you become frightened, you want to chicken out and you do not know what to do. . . . [Or] you might have blank sheets of paper and a pen sitting on your desk, and you are about to write poetry. You begin to pick up your pen with a deep sigh—you have nothing to say. . . . That first space is heaven, and it is the best one. It is not regarded as regression, particularly; it is just basic space in which you have no idea what *it* is going to do or what *you* are going to do about it or put into it. This initial fear of inadequacy may be regarded as heaven, basic space, complete space. (pp. 185–186)

Rinpoche goes on to talk about how first thought arises in that space:

Then as you look at your canvas or your notepad, you come up with a first thought of some kind, which you timidly try out. You begin to mix your paints with your brush, or to scribble timidly on your notepad. The slogan “first thought is best thought!” is an expression of that second principle, which is earth. (p. 186)

Finally, he says, you have the man principle, which is the confirmation of both the panic of heaven and the first thought of the earth principle. “At that point there is a sense of joy and a slight smile at the corners of your mouth, a slight sense of humor. You can actually say something about what you are trying to create” (ibid.).

A brief essay included in Volume Seven, “Heaven, Earth, and Man,” is accompanied by calligraphies that illustrate this principle. Here, Chögyam Trungpa connects this threefold approach with the Buddhist principle of the three kayas, which he describes as “an old Buddhist tradition of perception based on threefold logic.” He goes on to describe the kayas in relationship to art: “The tantric art of Tibetan Buddhism uses the element of dharmakaya as the background of manifestation, sambhogakaya as the potential of manifestation, and nirmanakaya as the final manifestation.” The calligraphies that accompany the text, along with Trungpa Rinpoche’s commentary on each one, give us a playful view of the heaven, earth, and man principles and how they can spark one’s creative expression in open and unexpected ways.

In terms of understanding how we perceive the world, as the basis for the creation of art, Trungpa Rinpoche also talked about another concept: seeing and looking. In the “State of Mind” chapter of *Dharma Art* he talks about seeing as the first principle: cutting your thoughts, projecting your mind, and seeing things as they are. Then it is possible to *look* at the details or explore further. Confoundingly enough, in his essay in *The Art of Calligraphy*, he states just the opposite, that the artist’s inquisitiveness begins by looking, the starting point that then allows one to *see*. He says here that looking represents prajna, or discriminating awareness, while seeing is the expression of jnana, or wisdom. Both approaches seem to make sense. Switching the order of seeing and looking seems contradictory only if one fails to recognize that Chögyam Trungpa was not primarily interested in creating a *philosophy* of art or a systematization of artistic theory. He was struggling to communicate the nuances of human perception: how intelligence arises in space, how it communicates with and grasps the sensory world, and how a human being can provoke that fresh perception through artistic creation.

In brief, then, the principles of first thought best thought; heaven, earth, and man; and looking and seeing were ways in which Chögyam Trungpa elaborated on the application of meditative awareness to perception and more specifically to the creation of dharma art. The second part of his dharma art letter in 1974 was the definition of dharma art as the activity of nonaggression. This is a theme that runs throughout all of his presentations on art and the artistic process. He was very critical of art that arises from an aggressive or violent state of mind. In this regard, he criticized artistic eccentricity purely for its own sake and self-

centered art that glorified the artist's ego. He felt that violent art was quite dangerous. As he wrote in the chapter "Meditation" in *Dharma Art*, when you create violent artwork:

You are creating black magic, which harms people rather than helps them. . . . Creating a work of art is not a harmless thing. It always is a powerful medium. . . . It challenges people's lives. So there are two choices: either you create black magic to turn people's heads, or you create some kind of basic sanity. Those are the two possibilities, so you should be very, very careful. (p. 36)

If, on the one hand, Chögyam Trungpa advocated dharma or meditation as a prerequisite for genuine art, he also emphatically taught the importance of artfulness and the application of awareness in the conduct of one's life. Well before he began presenting the Shambhala teachings, which introduced the ideas of cultivating self-respect, elegance, and fundamental richness in one's environment, he introduced this idea of art in everyday life—the extension of artfulness in one's day-to-day conduct of life and one's moment-to-moment relationship with the world.

At the 1973 Vajradhatu Seminary for his advanced students, he gave an extraordinary talk entitled "Art in Everyday Life," which makes up the chapter by that name in *Dharma Art*. Here he brought together both sides of the equation—art equals awareness equals art—in a discussion of how awareness practice, or vipashyana, relates both to everyday conduct and to the actual creation of art. He talked here about awareness as overcoming "fundamental, phenomenological clumsiness and crudeness." In that sense, awareness is the antidote to aggression. Or, put another way, practicing mindfulness and awareness gives one the ability to develop a nonaggressive relationship with one's perceptions and one's world. In "Art in Everyday Life," Rinpoche also discussed how art itself "in the transcendental sense" becomes "the real practice of awareness, or vipashyana." At this level, he said, the artist becomes a bodhisattva, someone completely dedicated to helping others, "which is the highest, most supreme society person," which can be understood here as the person engaged in society or engaged in their culture. This was the germ of the articulation of art as *do*, a way of awakening, not just an isolated activity.

This idea of art as a *do* or path seems to underlie much of his work

in the arts in America, particularly in the later years, when his attention was focused on the Shambhala teachings on warriorship and society. As we shall see later in the discussion, he created multifaceted dharma art experiences for people, which brought together a broad audience of practicing artists and practicing meditators, incorporating lectures and discussion groups on dharma art, demonstrations and exhibits of art, exercises to work with principles of dharma art, and art installations that were conceived of and directed by Rinpoche, but which incorporated the efforts of as many as a hundred students. Art as an activity that utterly transforms your life and the lives of others was a message he communicated in many ways.

So far, the discussion of Chögyam Trungpa's view of art and creativity has focused largely on the artistic process: how one looks, how one sees, how one creates. However, he also talked a great deal about *what* one sees if one looks at the world with awareness. The world in fact is speaking for itself all the time, proclaiming itself, and through awareness the artist—and the practitioner—can contact and appreciate the self-existing messages that arise from the world. That is the meaning of nontheistic symbolism.¹¹ As Trungpa Rinpoche says in *Dharma Art*:

The basic notion of nontheistic symbolism is that whatever exists in our life—our birth, our death, our sickness, our marriage, our business adventure, our educational adventure—is based on symbolism of some kind. . . . Symbolism usually comes as messages. It is a very simple eye-level relationship: me and my world. . . . There is always some kind of message taking place. What message? We don't know. It's up to you. There's not going to be a fantastic dictionary or encyclopedia. This is simply a reminder that every activity you are doing—smoking cigarettes, chewing gum—has some kind of meaning behind it. (pp. 45, 47)

11. I would like to thank Fabrice Midal for pointing out the importance of Chögyam Trungpa's discussion of symbolism. He sent me a copy of remarks he made at a conference, entitled "Le symbolisme dans le bouddhisme tibétain," in which he quotes Trungpa Rinpoche's remarks on symbolism in *Dharma Art* and then comments: "Le symbolisme, montre-t-il, n'existe pas indépendamment de notre expérience. En réalité même elle est notre expérience." Roughly translated, this comment reads: "He [Chögyam Trungpa] shows us that symbolism does not exist independent of our experience. In reality, it is no other than our experience."

In the vajrayana Buddhist perspective, which is the basis for this understanding, symbolism is not something impersonal. It is deeply personal, connected to our existence and to our nonexistence, as Rinpoche points out:

People’s usual idea of symbolism is that it is something outside them, like a signpost or billboard, that gives them signs, perhaps of religious significance. That’s not quite true. Symbolism is connected with your self, your inner being. In other words, you are the biggest symbol of yourself. That is symbolism. . . .

There are two basic understandings of symbolism: the theistic and the nontheistic. Theistic symbolism is a constant self-existing confirmation; that is, whenever symbolism exists, you exist and your world exists. In the case of a nontheistic symbolism such as Buddhism, you don’t exist, symbolism doesn’t exist, and the universe doesn’t exist. That’s quite shocking! “How do we go beyond that?” you might ask. But we don’t actually go beyond that. Instead of trying to go beyond it, we try to get into it. (pp. 44, 45)

According to Rinpoche, symbolism itself is also a path, not just a result: “Symbolism is a question of gaining new sight. It is being extremely inquisitive to see things in their own nature, not always wanting to change things.” Through his or her appreciation of symbolism, the artist participates in and connects with a sacred world. Sacredness is both part of the process and part of the outcome: what the artist sees and experiences. Through the process of appreciating the inherent symbolism of reality, the artist sees the world as a sacred place, and his or her activity becomes sacred activity. Rinpoche often talked about this as connecting with basic goodness and as experiencing and creating harmony and richness. He also connected it with the artist’s role in the creation of enlightened society. In an interview about one of his dharma art installations, “Art of Simplicity: Discovering Elegance,” he said, “Dharma art is the principal way we are trying to create enlightened society, which is a society where there is no aggression, and where people could discover their innate basic goodness and enlightened existence, whether it is in a domestic or political or social situation” (p. 686).

We turn now to the specific consideration of the artistic disciplines that Chögyam Trungpa worked with in America. In looking at the vari-

ous disciplines that Rinpoche both practiced and taught about, we will see more about the development of his ideas on art and creativity.

POETRY

When Chögyam Trungpa arrived in America in 1970, he had been writing poetry for many years. In “Tibetan Poetics,” a 1975 conversation with Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman, which was published in 1976 in *Loka II: A Journal from the Naropa Institute*, Rinpoche talks at length about the classical style of Tibetan poetry in which he was trained and how it used very formal language, metaphors, and set line lengths. He compares the classical poetry with the more colloquial style employed by Milarepa and other great spiritual teachers to convey what Rinpoche calls “songs of their own experience.” He also describes his own approach to writing poetry in Tibetan in the West, in which he continued to employ classical line lengths, as well as some use of rhyme and puns. He contrasts his Tibetan poems with the approach he adopted to writing in English: “I just regard the poems that I write in English as finger painting, in my mind.” The vast majority of the poems he wrote in America were written in English in this free style, influenced more by the poets he met in America than by the classical training of his upbringing.

Rinpoche encountered the American poetry scene soon after he arrived in the United States. He and Allen Ginsberg ran across one another in New York in 1970.¹² Rinpoche and Ginsberg encountered one another as they were both trying to hail the same taxicab in Manhattan. Ginsberg was introduced to Rinpoche by one of Rinpoche’s companions, while they were standing on the street, and upon learning who Rinpoche was, Ginsberg spoke the Vajra Guru mantra of Padmasambhava, “OM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM,” and clasped his hands in a traditional bow or salutation. Rinpoche, who was with his wife, Diana, and their companion invited Ginsberg and his ailing father to share the cab. After dropping Ginsberg’s father at his apartment, they continued on to Allen’s place,

12. Neither one of them seemed to remember that they had first met in the early sixties at the Young Lamas School in New Delhi. Ginsberg only realized this “pre-meeting” had taken place after Rinpoche’s death, when Ginsberg looked at a photograph of himself being shown around the Young Lamas’ School and realized that Trungpa Rinpoche had been his guide.

where they stayed up into the night talking, writing poetry, and becoming friends. When later they knew each other better, Ginsberg asked Rinpoche what he thought of being greeted by this mantra, and Rinpoche replied that he wondered whether Allen had known what he was talking about.¹³

This chance meeting led to an enduring friendship, collaboration, and a teacher-student relationship. On the Buddhist front, Rinpoche was the teacher, Ginsberg the student; on the poetry front, Rinpoche acknowledged how much he had learned from Ginsberg, and Ginsberg also credited Trungpa Rinpoche with considerable influence on his poetry.

Ginsberg introduced Chögyam Trungpa to many other poets, some of whom became longtime friends and students. Rinpoche's interactions with the poets were sometimes explosive affairs. In 1972, a poetry reading was organized in Boulder, with Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Robert Bly, and Nanao Sasaki sharing the stage with Chögyam Trungpa. While Bly was reading, Trungpa Rinpoche put a huge gong over his own head and hammed it up so that the audience dissolved into laughter rather than paying attention to Bly's reading. Bly and Snyder were furious, attributing Rinpoche's behavior to alcohol. They left and were never again part of any poetry scene that had anything to do with Rinpoche. Rinpoche himself later said that his actions were meant to cut through the self-righteous and self-serious attitude displayed by some of the poets at this reading.¹⁴

In 1974, Rinpoche invited Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman to teach at the first summer session of the Naropa Institute. The Jack Kerouac School of Poetics (originally "of Disembodied Poetics") became a founding department at Naropa. Ginsberg remained affiliated with Naropa until his death in 1997; Anne Waldman, though now based in New York, continues her affiliation with Naropa and travels to Boulder to teach in the summers and several times throughout the year. In its first two summers, Naropa attracted an impressive group of writers who collaborated, read, and taught there. "Poets' Colloquium," from a gathering in 1975,

13. Allen Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Interviews: 1958–1996*, edited by David Carter (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p. 381; © 2001 by the Allen Ginsberg Trust. See also David Rome's comments in the Editor's Preface to *First Thought Best Thought*.

14. See Samuel Bercholz's remarks on this occasion in the publisher's foreword to Volume One.

originally published in *Loka II*, shows the freewheeling and spirited discussion among Rinpoche, Ginsberg, Waldman, William Burroughs, W. S. Merwin, Philip Whalen, David Rome, and Joshua Zim. The discussion ranges over a variety of topics: why and how the poets write poetry, whether to take a typewriter into retreat with you, whether a poet writes for an audience, and whether a conscious death is possible. Ginsberg and Whalen compose poems on the spot; Merwin remembers one to share. In the fall of 1975 at the Vajradhatu Seminary, Merwin and Rinpoche had a huge falling out, which drew considerable negative publicity.

Rinpoche discussed his relationship with American poets in his Preface to *First Thought Best Thought*:

I have met many American poets. Some are like coral snakes; some are frolicking deer; some are ripe apples; some are German shepherds who jump to conclusions whenever a sound is heard . . . some are like mountains, dignified but proclaiming occasional avalanches; some are like oceans, endless minds joining sky and earth . . . some are like lions—trustworthy, sharp, and kind. I have confronted, worked with, learned from, fought and fallen in love with these American poets. All in all, the buddhadharma could not have been proclaimed in America without their contribution in introducing dharmic terms and teachings. . . .

I would like to thank Allen Ginsberg . . . and I would also like to thank all the poets in America who contributed to this book—either positively or negatively. As is said: a month cannot happen without new moon as well as full, light cannot shine without shadows. My profound gratitude to everyone. (pp. 606–607)

I do not think his expression of gratitude was facetious. Indeed, he cared enough about American poetry and the American poets to work with them, love them, confront them, and fight with them.

Chögyam Trungpa's poetry is altogether intimate communication, conveying in a very personal voice his insights into his perception, his experiences and relationships, and his aspirations. One could gain almost an entire—and unique—history of his time in North America and how he viewed it purely by reading and reflecting on his poetry. The poems offered in Volume Seven of *The Collected Works* come primarily from two

large collections edited by David I. Rome: *First Thought Best Thought: 108 Poems*, arranged chronologically and published in 1983; and *Timely Rain: Selected Poetry of Chögyam Trungpa*, organized thematically and published posthumously in 1998.¹⁵ Other poems included in *The Collected Works* first appeared in small-press editions.¹⁶ A number of poems from the *Loka* magazines are also appended, including a long poem recited spontaneously by Rinpoche and Allen Ginsberg. *The Collected Works* also includes poems published in the *Vajradhatu Sun*, the *Shambhala Sun*, the *Garuda* magazines, and in other periodicals and newsletters.

Allen Ginsberg and Chögyam Trungpa shared many years of personal, poetic, and spiritual collaboration. Both Ginsberg and Waldman took part with Rinpoche in several panel discussions and poetry readings at Naropa. Ginsberg contributed the Introduction to *First Thought Best Thought*. He encouraged Rinpoche to speak out about his ideas on poetics, inviting him to talk to Ginsberg's classes at Naropa. "Poetics," which appeared in the *Shambhala Sun* in 1993, was based on a discussion among Trungpa, Ginsberg, and Rome that took place in Ginsberg's Meditation and Poetics course at Naropa in 1978. Here Rinpoche talks about using a threefold logic of ground, path, and fruition in writing poetry and says that "obviously poetry comes from an expression of one's phenomenal world, in the written form." "Dharma Poetics" from *The Heart of the Buddha* (see Volume Three) presents another discussion from one of Allen Ginsberg's classes in 1982.

The creative interactions between Allen Ginsberg and Chögyam Trungpa gave rise to the famous concept of "first thought best thought." In an interview with Paul Portuges in 1976, Ginsberg commented that

15. Many poems appear in both collections.

16. John Castlebury, a student of Trungpa Rinpoche's and a poet himself, has for many years published *Windhorse*, a journal of poetry, which he began in Boulder, Colorado, and moved to Nova Scotia, Canada, in the early 1990s. A number of Chögyam Trungpa's poems appeared in various volumes of *Windhorse*. In 1997, for the tenth anniversary of Trungpa Rinpoche's death, John published an entire issue of *Windhorse* dedicated to the poetry of Chögyam Trungpa, as well as his talks and panel discussions on poetry. A number of poems from *Windhorse* are included in *The Collected Works*. David Rome, James Gimian, and I also put together two posthumous volumes of Rinpoche's poetry: *Warrior Songs* and *Royal Songs*. *Warrior Songs* was handset in letterset type; both small volumes are fine, cloth, small press editions of poetry, available in limited editions. David Rome and I did the editing of both volumes; James Gimian was the publisher and actually did the typesetting of *Warrior Songs* himself, together with Mr. Dawson at the Dawson Print Room of Dalhousie University, Halifax.

he thought he had come up with the phrase first and that Trungpa Rinpoche had appropriated it from him.¹⁷ In any case, this remark concretely reinforces a point Rinpoche made in his discussion of the American poets in his preface to *First Thought Best Thought*: that buddhadharma could not be proclaimed in America without the contribution of the American poets. In Ginsberg's interview with Portuges, he also commented that Trungpa Rinpoche asked him to take part in the poetry school at Naropa (Ginsberg is too humble here to say that he was one of its founders) because Rinpoche "wanted his meditators to be inspired to poetry, because they can't teach unless they're poets—they can't communicate."¹⁸ As mentioned earlier, Chögyam Trungpa was not just interested in art for artists, or poetry for poets. As Ginsberg notes, Rinpoche was trying to affect the perception and communication "skills" of all of his students through the medium of art.

For further insight into Chögyam Trungpa's poetry itself, the reader is directed to the poems themselves, to the comments made by Allen Ginsberg in his Introduction to *First Thought Best Thought* (also reprinted as the Introduction to *Timely Rain*), and to David I. Rome's Editor's Preface to *First Thought Best Thought* and his Afterword to *Timely Rain*. In the Afterword, David attempts to look at Chögyam Trungpa's life and psychology through the lens of his poetry. David Rome, Rinpoche's private secretary and close student-friend for many years, has read, studied, and appreciated poetry for much of his life, with a particular fondness for the works of W. B. Yeats. He and Rinpoche shared an appreciation for poetry that was a creative spark for Rinpoche and an encouragement to persevere with his own poetic efforts. In his Preface to *First Thought Best Thought*, David talks about Rinpoche's spontaneous method of composing poetry, which took place on many late nights at the end of a full day of activities. For many years, David Rome was frequently the scribe who took down Rinpoche's poetry as he spoke it aloud. In his preface, perhaps out of modesty, David does not tell us that he was also the person who was called upon to read Trungpa Rinpoche's poetry in public gatherings of all kinds. David Rome's ability to evoke the words, the sounds, and the silence gave a voice to the poems—a voice that undoubtedly still echoes in the minds of many of Rinpoche's students who

17. Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Interviews*, p. 406.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 399.

heard David Rome read on so many occasions. David is one of the finest editors of Rinpoche’s work, as is reflected in the published poems. Rinpoche’s poetry has never been among his bestsellers—poetry rarely is—but it is some of his most difficult work to edit.

David Rome was my mentor when I was first learning to edit Chögyam Trungpa’s work. I assisted him with the editing of the 1977 Epilogue to *Born in Tibet* and worked with him for several years on other projects. At one point, I asked Trungpa Rinpoche if I could edit in my own style, based on what I was learning from David Rome, or whether I should learn to edit exactly as he did. Rinpoche was very definite: “You should learn to edit just like David.” I doubt that Rinpoche believed I would be able to do this, since no two people would approach their work in exactly the same way. In fact, I think the point was that I would learn more from David if I paid very close attention, which indeed I did after this discussion. I have always been grateful for what I gleaned from my apprenticeship. For *The Collected Works* David Rome kindly sent me some comments on his editorial work with Chögyam Trungpa, particularly the editing of Rinpoche’s poetry. David Rome writes:

Rinpoche basically trusted me to edit appropriately and didn’t intervene much. Being true to his meaning was always my highest priority and I would check my editing by reading back to him whenever possible.

He wanted his voice to sound correct in English, and it was a challenge in editing the poetry sometimes to not change too much—to leave some of the oddness in because it was so much his voice and his mind, while rectifying other things like disagreement in tenses or persons or dropped articles, etc., where those only distracted from the sense. My habit at first with the poems was to make each phrase its own line—basically starting a new line whenever there was a pause in the dictation. Rinpoche often had lists in his poems—“jackal, peacock, limping ostrich, baboon with hiccups” (made-up example!)—and I would give each item its own line. At some point Rinpoche noticed this on the page and said, make the lines longer.

One funny anecdote—but it’s more about me than him—concerns the famous poem “Victory Chatter.” There was a line that talked about “well-cared-for bows and wrestling armor.” So it ap-

peared in *First Thought Best Thought* and elsewhere for years. Neither I nor anyone else questioned the odd notion of “wrestling armor.” Only much later did it dawn on me that he must have said “rustling” armor—not only did that make more sense, but it was clear from an earlier line in the poem “Rustling of armor takes place constantly.” What other slips of the secretarial (or transcribitorial) ear may lie on the page still undetected? Alas!¹⁹

Although the introduction to Volume Seven has focused primarily on the classical Tibetan influences and the influence of contemporary American poets on the work of Chögyam Trungpa, there were many factors that affected his poetry. It would be remiss to leave the discussion of Chögyam Trungpa’s poetry without mentioning once again the Japanese influence on his work. The beginning of the introduction to Volume Seven quotes Rinpoche’s story about encountering a haiku in a magazine while he was still in India. There is little evidence of Japanese influence on the poetry he wrote in England, but there are many signs of it in his American poetry. His interest in Zen and Japanese aesthetics was undoubtedly reawakened by his meetings in the early 1970s with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, the founder of Zen Center San Francisco. Particularly in later years of his life, especially in 1983 and 1984, Rinpoche wrote many haiku-like three-line poems. During this era, he also instructed many of his students in how to recite spontaneous haiku and would mercilessly put them on the spot, asking them without warning to compose short poems—frequently about the four seasons. He usually would compose poetry in tandem with a student: first his spring haiku, then the student’s, and so on.²⁰

I remember a session in 1983 where he asked a student very learned in the Buddhist doctrine to recite poems about the seasons and insisted Buddhist terminology be eliminated from the compositions. Rinpoche

19. E-mail communication from David I. Rome to Carolyn Rose Gimian, January 29, 2002.

20. Over the years, students were not infrequently asked to contribute lines to Rinpoche’s poems or to produce their own poem on a topic. For example, in the late 1970s in a late-night session in his office, following the abhisheka of Vajrayogini in which Rinpoche entered a number of his senior students into this tantric mandala, he and a group of students, including the Vajra Regent (Rinpoche’s dharma heir), wrote dohas, poems expressing spontaneous insight. These have never been published. There are many other examples of this kind of group poetry effort.

rejected several efforts until a suitable “nonsectarian” haiku was forthcoming. Like everything in his life, poetry was not just a means of self-expression, but a way to work with others, to train them, and to wake them up. In the “Poets’ Colloquium” Rinpoche says that the audience “might pick up some kind of spark. . . . So what I expect out of my work is that people will pay attention and they will think twice.” Readers may find that advice applicable as they peruse his poems.

In *Timely Rain*, in addition to Chögyam Trungpa’s poems, David Rome included other compositions, which he calls “Sacred Songs.” These are related to Rinpoche’s poetry, but they were composed in Tibetan as part of a number of tantric and Shambhala liturgies, including several received as terma texts. They are not included in *The Collected Works*. The Sound Cycles that Rinpoche used in his early Mudra Theatre work, which were included in the appendix to *Timely Rain*, are reproduced in Volume Seven; they are discussed below, in the section on theater. In the appendix, David Rome has also included several examples of elocution exercises that Rinpoche wrote in the 1980s.²¹ They too appear in Volume Seven.

It seems that a brief discussion of elocution would be helpful to the readers of *The Collected Works*, given that it’s a rather unknown part of Chögyam Trungpa’s work and not a common discipline practiced in this day and age. The method of elocution that Trungpa Rinpoche developed was to have his North American students read aloud, with an Oxonian accent, exercises that he had written. He would usually read the exercise to demonstrate the correct pronunciation and then would ask the student to read slowly and carefully through the text. The irony of a Tibetan gentleman teaching Americans to pronounce English was not lost

21. I was one of Chögyam Trungpa’s primary students of elocution, and during the last few years of his life and also since his death, I’ve taught a number of elocution classes based on the exercises and method that he developed. Allen Ginsberg, being a curious, open-minded, and unassuming person, attended a four-week elocution course that I taught at the 1984 Vajradhatu Seminary. He was interested in learning what new things Chögyam Trungpa was doing with the English language, and I’m sure that he had a much better appreciation for the deeper significance of Rinpoche’s method of elocution than I did! It’s my intention to write an article about Rinpoche’s interest in English pronunciation at some point, since it is one of the less-well-known, more humorous, and quite intriguing aspects of his love affair with the English language. For further information on Trungpa Rinpoche’s approach to elocution, see the excellent chapter in *Trungpa: Biography* by Fabrice Midal (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002; English translation forthcoming from Shambhala Publications under the title *Chögyam Trungpa: His Life and Vision*).

on him. He generally enjoyed these sessions immensely. He would correct the student's pronunciation and ask them to repeat particular words or phrases many times, until he was satisfied with their elocution. Rinpoche's experiment with elocution began in 1983, but for some years before that, he had noted that he felt that many Americans had a particular speech neurosis, which manifested in swallowing and mumbling their words with a lack of attention to how they were speaking. Given Rinpoche's appreciation of contemporary American poetry and the way in which he embraced the freedom of expression in the West, it might seem contradictory that he adopted a method based on the upper-class received pronunciation of British English, certainly among the most formal approaches to speaking the English language. Rinpoche often referred to his approach to elocution as a form of "speech therapy." I think that what he found troubling about many Americans' speech was the lack of mind-body coordination and the lack of mindfulness and awareness in relating to communication. I don't think his use of Oxonian had anything to do with a class prejudice, nor was it based on lack of appreciation for American English. Rather, he was trying to address the casual aspect of American speech by contrasting it with a very formal approach that was sufficiently difficult for his American students to mimic that it caught their attention and held it while they were practicing elocution. Additionally, he was interested in conveying the onomatopoeia that he felt was inherent in language. The pronunciation of a word and its meaning should be indivisible, he felt. He sometimes said that when a word was properly pronounced it should feel very concrete, like holding a potato in your hand. In that sense, he was trying to bring his students to a poetic appreciation of language and to help them to have a more alive relationship with their own language. Here are some unpublished remarks that Chögyam Trungpa made at an evening gathering where elocution was the focus:

Language is very special. It distinguishes between animals and human beings. Relating to language is also a Buddhist technique, such as the practice of mantra. Language is like the two wings of a bird. One wing is the vowels and the other is the consonants. The vowels and consonants are regarded as two feet walking together, two arms, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils: they have to go hand in hand. The Oxonian way of pronouncing words is a special way of

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accentuating human communication. It's much better than barking dogs! . . . The elocution exercises are not regarded as poetry. They are regarded as *exercises*. My final and last remark to the readers tonight is that you shouldn't torture yourself. As far as the readers are concerned, it will be very interesting to hear the ways that people from different parts of the United States speak and how they relate with language. In reading these exercises, one has to have delight in saying these words. Language is also onomatopoeic.²²

One of Chögyam Trungpa's elocution exercises is entitled "Playing with the English Language." This was a man who was fascinated by the English language, who embraced it, chewed on it, used it, swallowed it, and offered it up for all of us to celebrate. He was indeed a great player of the language, almost in the way that a musician plays music. One hopes that the readers of *The Collected Works* will find much to enjoy and ponder in Chögyam Trungpa's poetry and his artful play with and on words.

FILM

Within a very short time after Rinpoche came to the United States, he became involved in an undertaking referred to as the Milarepa Film Project, whose purpose was to make a film about the life of Milarepa, Tibet's great poet-saint. In 1972, Rinpoche hosted a Milarepa Film Seminar in Boulder to explore this idea further. It's likely that Trungpa Rinpoche saw his first movies in India, although there is no record of this, and he undoubtedly attended the cinema in England. He was already interested in photography, as mentioned earlier in the introduction, and quite possibly his interest in making movies grew out of his efforts as a still photographer. He traveled to Los Angeles during his very early teaching tours in the United States in 1970 and '71, and there he met filmmakers Johanna Demetrakas and Baird Bryant, who worked on the Milarepa Film Project as well as on later films with which Rinpoche was involved. Johanna Demetrakas reports:

22. Edited from notes taken by Carolyn Rose Gimian December 17, 1983, at an evening of elocution and other readings at the Kalapa Court, the residence of Chögyam Trungpa.

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Before the Milarepa Film Seminar, Rinpoche had been in L.A. He asked Baird and me to do a little homework. He asked us to shoot (we worked in 16mm then) shots that manifested each of the five buddha families. I believe he suggested outdoor, nature shots. Baird and I lived in Malibu then, and I remember hiking up the cliffs and shooting through grasses and wildflowers, with the ocean in the background. He encouraged us to compose our shots with a foreground, middleground and background. Of course this gave each shot a lot of depth and dramatic energy. We did the assignment and headed for Boulder.²³

Baird Bryant also commented on the work that he and Johanna did with the five buddha families:

The Milarepa Film Seminar, which took place in Barry Corbett's living room in Boulder, was the beginning of many episodes regarding Dharma and Film Practice. . . . There were maybe 12 to 16 students here, most of whom had recently been introduced to the idea of the five buddha families, which remained the foundation of film thought, and the totality of Dharma Art to follow. Johanna and I, in preparation for the seminar, had gone out with my 16mm camera and shot scenes which, in our limited understanding at the time, represented the different families, or facets of the teachings on ego, etc. I thought that a shot of a tangled, dried thicket of twisted branches was a good representation of the ego tied in knots. I also shot the side of a hill wherein I saw a face drawn in the stone. When I told Rinpoche what I saw there, he said, a bit condescendingly, "That's very American." I remember thinking, so Tibetans see it differently, and how come? I know that, since that time, I have never been able to see a rotten log lying in the forest without thinking, there's the symbol of the Ratna Family. Likewise green buds bursting into fresh leaves say Karma Family in my head. The deep blue sky speaks of Buddha, graceful seductive curves in whatever medium represent Padma, and in contemplating the physical world I see it as the great Mudra of the spiritual universe: the complete Vajra Family, and in my world Trungpa Rinpoche is enthroned therein.²⁴

23. Fax on the Milarepa Film Project from Johanna Demetrakas to Carolyn Rose Gimian, August 2002.

24. E-mail communication from Baird Bryant to Carolyn Rose Gimian, December 2, 2002.

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Already in 1971, Chögyam Trungpa had begun talking about the five buddha families and their application to art. Earlier volumes of *The Collected Works* show how Rinpoche introduced the five buddha families in the discussion of psychology and vajrayana Buddhism. Interestingly, their application to artistic creation seems to have been among his earliest introductions of this material. These principles, which describe styles of or approaches to perception, are based on Buddhist tantric teachings. The buddha families represent both qualities of innate wisdom and of confused perception that can be transformed into wisdom. In vajrayana Buddhism they are associated with descriptions of deities, the buddhas of the five families who represent wisdom and meditative states of mind.

A major feature of the Milarepa Film Seminar was Rinpoche's introduction of the five buddha families in relationship to filmmaking. In that context, he never said anything about where they came from in the Buddhist teachings. He introduced them in this way:

We are trying to get at some basic understanding of seeing things in their absolute essence, their own innate nature. We can use this knowledge with regard to painting or poetry or arranging flowers or making films or composing music. It is also connected with the relationships between people. These five buddha principles seem to cover a whole area of new dimension of perception. They are very important at all levels and in all creative situations. We won't go through the philosophy; we'll start with the functional qualities of these five principles. It seems they are associated with a sense of composition. (pp. 645–646)

He explained his motivation for making this film as follows:

Teaching is not meant to be verbal alone. It is very visual. Since we have the possibility of another dimension, using the great medium of motion pictures, I feel that this could be not only Milarepa's life teaching, but Tibetan Buddhism visualized in its raw and rugged form without the intrusion of psychedelic images and other extraneous material. (p. 638)

His intention was to convey the insights of Tibetan Buddhism and the power of meditative perception, letting the images speak for them-

selves. He wanted the film to “create a tension without using human beings visually,” which he acknowledged “would be an incredible challenge.” The images in the film would be limited “to animals or objects or nature or thangkas.” However, Rinpoche made it clear that this would also “not be just a documentary with that ‘educational film quality.’”

He also talked about specific scenes and shots. To convey the desolation that Milarepa felt in retreat when he longed for his teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche suggested that the movie might “work with desert, something completely open, and find one human footprint or maybe the footprint of an animal, a horse, and maybe horseshit. There could be a snowstorm and at the same time sand is blowing. The cameramen as well as the director should develop an absolute relationship with sand and storm, not just try to entertain” (p. 639). The study of the five buddha families was intended to shape how the film was shot, from five different perspectives representing the different energies of each family. Rinpoche talked about how tension and audience involvement would come from changing the buddha family perspectives throughout the film.

The material from the seminar was edited and published in an article in the *Chicago Review* in 1972, from which the quotes above are taken. The article was entitled “Visual Dharma: Film Workshop on the Tibetan Buddhist View of Aesthetics and Filmmaking.” Other contributors to that issue of the *Review* included Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Bly, and Charles Bukowski. An article excerpting some of the material also appeared in the *Filmmaker’s Newsletter*, a small Los Angeles publication. So there was a wider audience curious about the ideas that Rinpoche was putting forth.²⁵

In the fall of 1973, in connection with the film project, Rinpoche set out for Stockholm with Johanna Demetrakas, Baird Bryant, and several other students. In the Editor’s Introduction to *Dharma Art*, Judith Lief reports that “he traveled to Sweden to visit the Museum Ethnographia, where a series of magnificent Milarepa thangkas had been stored for

25. For materials related to the Milarepa Film Project, see also the articles on the life of Milarepa in Volume Five. In the Introduction to that volume, the suggestion is made that one of these articles was an early treatment of some possible scenes for the Milarepa film.

years but seldom seen the light of day.”²⁶ Baird Bryant describes the journey to Sweden:

One morning I got the call, Rinpoche wanted me to go with him to Stockholm to film the collection of thangkas depicting the life of Milarepa. Allen Ginsberg had raised the money to finance the project through a series of poetry readings and fundraisers. Ruth Astor was making the arrangements.

When I saw the price of the tickets, I started making enquiries and I found that, taking a charter flight, both Johanna and I could go for the same price. Ruth said OK, and we were both on our way. We flew to Amsterdam and took the train to Stockholm. We had to change trains in Copenhagen, which meant unloading all our film equipment, cases, tripod, etc. onto the platform. We were hungry, so Johanna took some money and left the station to find something to eat. While she was gone, a train pulled into the quais from which we were to leave. I decided to load all the gear onto the car so it would all be done and waiting in the car when Johanna returned. After ten minutes or so, the train pulled out of the station with only me on board. [Realizing I was alone and on the wrong train, I ran through the cars looking for a conductor or whomever. Finding no one, and seeing we were going into the switchyards there was nothing to do but wait until we stopped, at which time I ran to the engine and explained my plight. They saw the urgency, threw the switch onto a parallel track and rolled back into the station. It was time for the train to Stockholm to leave, and I was filled with panic: Johanna had little money, I had her passport, and, just as I loaded all the gear onto the right car, the train pulled out, headed for Stockholm. I didn't know if Jo was on the train or had waited in the station for me to show up. Then, here she came through the connecting door. We just collapsed from relief. When we were united with Rinpoche and I told him the story, he said to me, “You were testing your limits. Congratulations on passing the test.”²⁷

Johanna Demetrakas picks up the story here:

26. In *Trungpa*, Fabrice Midal reports that Rinpoche's discovery of the existence of these thangkas was his inspiration altogether for the Milarepa Film Project.

27. Bryant, *ibid*.

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The shoot took place at a natural history and anthropology museum in the middle of a park in the middle of Stockholm. The park was large, like Central Park. The Swedish Film Institute was on the other side of the park. We were also housed at the museum, which had rooms, showers, and a kitchen-dining room for visiting scholars. The Swedes were wonderfully hospitable, took good care of us, and left us alone in our work. It was very comfortable and secure in the museum, and elegant.

We worked from late morning, probably around ten, to late night, around nine or ten or sometimes later at night. . . . I was always starving when we finally broke from work to have our late dinner. I would attack the food ravenously, then become aware of Rinpoche's graceful and civilized *slow* eating. A little wake-up moment among the many during this intense experience. . . .

The work: A museum curator would bring the thangkas in. There were seventeen of them, rather large, maybe 3 or 4 feet tall by perhaps 2½ feet wide. We would unroll a thangka and carefully hang it on an easel kind of setup. Rinpoche would look it over and tell us the main figure. He'd describe the setting, the symbols, and the characters. He told us how the painters mixed their colors from minerals, which gave the paintings a dark and somewhat cold metallic quality. Also the use of gold leaf, how precious and meaningful when used, not for materialistic purposes. On one of the thangkas there was a delightful little man (not Milarepa) with his back to us and his pants down. . . . he was showing the effects of years of sitting meditation. Rinpoche also talked about the beautiful, stylistic clouds and how they looked like that in Tibet. Also about the formal approach to thangka painting, all the proportions predetermined, the egolessness of the painter.

Rinpoche and Baird worked an hour or two, sometimes more, on each thangka. I would look in the eyepiece often to see how his framing worked. Then we would roll the thangka back up.

I think this experience of learning about Milarepa through Rinpoche was the first glimpse I got of the true supernatural or mystical powers of teachers such as Milarepa and [Trungpa] Rinpoche. When he described Milarepa sitting in the freezing cold with nothing but that flimsy cotton shirt flapping around him in the wind, it was very real. Or when he discussed Milarepa's aunt's family, the betrayal and the hatred that poisoned Mila, it was deeply disturbing. And of course

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his understanding of Milarepa's poetic voice was so intimate and subtle you felt like you were there, actually hearing Mila recite his songs. . . .

Of course, it was, as always, an intense experience to be with him for that week, working day and night. I think he must have been happy to be there with the thangkas, because he seemed to be relaxed and content all the time.²⁸

Baird Bryant describes the work at the museum in Sweden, with emphasis on what it was like to work so intimately with Trungpa Rinpoche:

So there we were lodged in the guest rooms at the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm with a special room put aside for us to work in. When we were getting set up with the lights, a place to hang the thangkas and so forth, the director of the museum came to see. Somehow he had the notion, perhaps from Ruth, that we were going to shoot with animation cameras. He wanted to see how we were going to animate the thangkas . . . i.e., make them move. He seemed quite disappointed when we informed him that we were using regular film cameras, and making the thangkas move was out of the question . . .

[At the Milarepa Film Seminar] my main concern was how could the magic of Milarepa be shown in film, aside from a kind of Superman cartoon where Mila would fly to the top of the mountain, leaving the Bön magician, riding his shaman's drum, far behind. Or how would you show Milarepa walking through solid stone? Well, when Rinpoche, Johanna, Bill Hunter, and I arrived . . . at the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm and started unrolling the thangkas depicting the life of Milarepa, it became patently clear how it could be done. Unrolling the first thangka was like opening a portal into another world. It was magnificent, some 2 by 4 feet, in perfect shining condition, glittering with gold . . . completely magical. As we looked at more of them, each had a large central figure of Mila, one of them green from eating nettles, getting older with each one, surrounded by little figures telling the story of his adventures: conjuring a giant scorpion to pull down the house of the evil uncle, killing the party-goers inside. Building nine houses and tearing down eight, and so on

28. Demetrakas, *ibid.*

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and on. It was all there. The entire life of the great poet-saint of the Kagyü lineage. . . .

On the first setup, I realized that my big 25 to 250 zoom was not holding focus, it had not traveled well, and the tripod was not the best for the fine work. Johanna and I and Bill Hunter walked across the commons to the Swedish Film Institute to see about another tripod and to see if there was a technician who could columnate the lens. Bill's wooden leg had not been kind to him during the walk, so his movements were curtailed from then on. We could not and never did solve the lens problem. I decided we had to go forward or lose the whole shoot. Before I went to work, I explored the ways of compensating and working with the lens the way it was. Before the first shot, Rinpoche, under his breath, recited a mantra to enlist the aid of the deities.

Rinpoche would study the thangka, then direct the shots one after another. "Start wide here, then zoom and pan slowly onto this figure. Pan across this line of characters showing that each one of the twelve is the same." "Who are they?" I asked. "They are all Milarepa," he replied. "He divided himself into twelve." Naively, I said, "Could you show me how to do that? . . . I would do that!" Rinpoche looked at me askance but said nothing. And so it went for the six days we were there. . . .

As protection, after the film shoot, we used the 4- by 5-inch view camera that the museum had and shot a complete set of Ektachromes. The idea being that back in Boulder, if more shots were needed, they could be done from the high-quality 4 by 5's . . . a treasure in themselves still to be found in the Vajradhatu Archives.²⁹

Tragically, because of the problem with the lens described above, when the filmmakers returned to the United States and developed the film, they found that "the lens caused the film to go a little out of focus, some of the time,"³⁰ but not all the time. However, "for eventual big-screen 16mm projection, this could not be fixed."³¹ The project was put on permanent hold, as Baird Bryant reports:

29. Baird Bryant, *ibid.* The Archives, as mentioned, does have close to a hundred slides of details of these beautiful Milarepa thangkas, photographed during the trip to Sweden.

30. Demetrakas, *ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

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At Naropa, during the first summer session where I was teaching Film Expression, I made inquiries about the Milarepa film and got different answers: It was at Barry Corbett's house, it was under Ken Green's bed, etc. Then I asked Rinpoche. He said, "I'm sorry to say, the Milarepa film is in the Bardo." So, there it was, somehow lost.³²

After Rinpoche's death, the footage made its way into the Shambhala Archives. In the last few years, there has been some interest, but as yet no action, to review the footage to see what can be done with the latest technologies available. Johanna Demetrakas notes that, in preparing her comments on the Milarepa Film Project for this introduction, "Baird and I talked about the possibility of fixing or working with the Milarepa footage. . . . With video, and the finishing tools available today, we could probably produce a good copy."³³

It would be impossible now to complete the Milarepa film exactly as Trungpa Rinpoche envisioned it, since he wanted to use the footage of the thangkas in conjunction with landscapes and "nature shots" filmed in different styles to reflect different themes in Milarepa's life and different buddha families. This part of the project was never completed. There might, however, be enough information in the talks from the Milarepa Film Seminar for a filmmaker to make a film based on Rinpoche's intentions. This would be extremely interesting, since there was no other artistic endeavor that Rinpoche proposed quite like the Milarepa film. The closest one can come, perhaps, is Chögyam Trungpa's own photographs, which often seem to play with different perspectives and foci that may well be based on the buddha families. It's only now, so many years after his death, that the Shambhala Archives is starting to reproduce some fine prints of Rinpoche's photographs, in conjunction with Michael Wood, a photographer-student of Rinpoche's who helped to start the Miksang school of photography based on many of the principles of dharma art.³⁴

32. Baird Bryant, *ibid.*

33. Demetrakas, *ibid.*

34. Along with Michael Wood, John McQuade was the founder of the current Miksang Society. Miksang was the inspiration of the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin, Chögyam Trungpa's dharma heir. His interest in photography led him to start the first Miksang group for exploring the possibilities of a contemplative approach. Later he encouraged and supervised the development of the current Miksang Society. In 1985, he approved the Miksang course of training and officially established the Miksang Society as a vehicle for exploring and presenting contemplative photography. Ösel Tendzin's calligraphy "Mik-sang" serves as the masthead of the group's stationery.

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The Collected Works includes material based on talks given by Chögyam Trungpa at the Milarepa Film Seminar in several forms. Two chapters of *Dharma Art*, “Five Styles of Creative Expression” and “Endless Richness,” are based on the seminar. To underscore the more universal appeal of the material, the specific connection to the film project has been edited out. However, because the original talks are of such interest for anyone involved in making films, and because they contain such detailed information on different aspects of filmmaking, the *Chicago Review* article mentioned above is also included in Volume Seven, with Rinpoche’s diagram of the five buddha families reproduced from the *Filmmaker’s Newsletter*.

Chögyam Trungpa was involved with several other film projects. In 1974 a film called *Empowerment* was made to celebrate the first visit to America of His Holiness the sixteenth Karmapa. A second film on the Karmapa, *The Lion’s Roar*, was made following His Holiness’s death in 1981 and incorporated much of the footage from *Empowerment*. Rinpoche worked on both of these films, more as an adviser than in the screenwriter or director role. A film about Trungpa Rinpoche’s work as an artist, *Discovering Elegance*, was made in connection with one of the art installations he created in California at the LAICA Gallery in Los Angeles. He was very involved in how that film was shot, and he had specific ideas about the editing of the footage. His ideas were not all adopted, but one of the film’s producers and cameramen, James Hoagland, kept the notes on Rinpoche’s ideas for the editing and has talked about reediting the film based on his intentions. Baird Bryant worked on many of these film shoots and has supplied some comments on the work that he did with Chögyam Trungpa:

Along the way, however, between the Milarepa Seminar and the shoot in Sweden, there are some events which are notable. . . . It was at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center that at one point we went out with the camera to make some shots. Rinpoche said, “Zoom on the top of that ridge and pan along with the telephoto.” He watched me make the shot, not very smoothly, and then said, “You’re getting a picture of your nerves.”

“How did you know?” I replied. These are the kind of things that will stay with me forever.

Then came the visit of His Holiness, the sixteenth Karmapa, and

shooting for *The Lion's Roar*.³⁵ First, the Black Hat ceremony on the pier in San Francisco. Shopping, playing Pong at the amusement pier, going to the zoo where the animals all became very excited by the vibes of this Dharma King. I remember the shift in my consciousness about Rinpoche. Until that time he was always somehow fundamentally, it seemed, a Lama who had taken off his robes and dressed in western clothes . . . a powerful being, yes with all kinds of esoteric knowledge, but still, one of the boys who liked to drink, smoke cigarettes, and get it on with the ladies . . . my kind of guru.

But then, when His Holiness arrived, suddenly there he was in all his glory, in magnificent brocades, probably the uniform of a Tibetan general, with the whole weight of the lineage stacked on his head like a hundred Buddhas and Boddhisattvas one on top of the other. The glory of it left you no choice but to bow as deeply as you could before such splendor.

[Later] the shooting of *Discovering Elegance* was like old times back in the museum. We understood each other perfectly. "Draw back wider and wider, then hit!" I would be zooming back on the entire arrangement (they were all fabulous), then going in as quickly as possible on one flower at the edge of the arrangement. Each one called for a different shot, and one after the other, we covered all the rooms: the anteroom, the study with those exotic fold-out books, the kitchen (if you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen, John Steinbeck III remarked on seeing the charred limbs of one display), and finally, the Drum room with its massive Tibetan drum as the centerpiece.³⁶

Altogether, Chögyam Trungpa's involvement with film seems to have been an amazingly fertile time. The stories from this period enable

35. Probably Baird Bryant is referring to making of the film *Empowerment* during His Holiness Karmapa's first visit to North America in 1974. Much of the footage from this film eventually was used in *The Lion's Roar*.

36. Baird Bryant, *ibid*. Baird ends his memoir: "All I can do is point to the greatest tribute that has ever been paid me. In *The Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala*, Rinpoche writes, ' . . . I have a friend and student named Baird Bryant whom I've worked with for many years. He is a filmmaker, and we worked together on several films. I can see that he has that kind of sadness. He wishes that something could be done for others, that something could be made right. He has that sadness, aloneness and loneliness, which I appreciate very much. In fact, I have learned from witnessing my friend's experience, my best friend.' Thank you for all your precious gifts, my best friend, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche."

us to see just how intimate and vibrant his involvement was with American avant-garde art and artists in the early 1970s. This creative interaction continued in other aspects of his artistic work as well.

THEATER

In America, Chögyam Trungpa developed an intense interest in theater, and in the 1970s and early '80s he wrote seven plays.³⁷ In 1968, Rinpoche had met the American playwright Jean-Claude van Itallie at Samye Ling, Rinpoche's meditation center in Scotland. For *The Collected Works*, Jean-Claude provided me with excerpts from his memoirs concerning his first meeting with Rinpoche in England, as well as with detailed comments on the genesis of his relationship with Trungpa Rinpoche and the theater work they did together. The record of the first meeting in Scotland and what led up to it, largely excerpted from Jean-Claude's memoirs, is a window into Chögyam Trungpa's first encounter with theater work in the West. Jean-Claude writes:

In Eskdalemuir [in 1968] I was visiting Tania Leontov, aka Kesang Tonma, my old high school friend. She'd accompanied me to London in 1967 when my play *America Hurrah* opened at the Royal Court.

At that time, because of my interest in Buddhism, Joe [Chaikin, director and founder of the Open Theater] introduces Tania and me to the pair of Vietnamese monks who worked on Peter Brook's *US*. Later, when Tania stays on in London after I leave, the Vietnamese monks alert her to the opening of a new Tibetan Buddhist Center, Samye Ling, in Scotland, founded by a young Oxford-educated lama named Trungpa Rinpoche. Tania goes to Scotland and becomes Trungpa's secretary.

1968, June 1-7 (approx.)—Eskdalemuir, Scotland:

At Samye Ling I'm standing in the kitchen with Tania when a short Tibetan in burgundy monk's robes appears. He seems to mate-

37. *Kingdom of Philosophy*, *The Heart Sutra*, *Prajna*, *Water Festival*, *Sandcastles*, *Child of Illusion*, and *Proclamation*. *The Heart Sutra* appears to be an earlier version of *Prajna*. It was apparently composed as an exercise for a theater and play-writing workshop Rinpoche conducted in 1973 or early 1974. *Kingdom of Philosophy* was written during a retreat at Charlemont, Massachusetts, in 1972. I have been unable to obtain information on the dates or circumstances of the composition of the other plays.

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rialize next to the refrigerator. Tania says to me, “This is Trungpa Rinpoche.” He looks young and has soft brown eyes. I don’t fully understand until Tania tells me again later that this monk is the founder of the center.

A couple of days later I’m granted a formal audience with Rinpoche. I wait nervously by the house in a barren field with sheep grazing. Tania comes out to get me, giving me Rinpoche’s mail to hand to him. Rinpoche sits cross-legged on a cushion. With some stiffness I sit in the same way facing him.

Rinpoche is gracious and gentle. He asks me questions about the theater. I describe Grotowski’s work. I ask Rinpoche if, as I believe, there’s a connection between our preoccupations in off-off-Broadway theater and Eastern spirituality. I tell him, “From the work we’re doing, I’m learning the importance of being a participant in—rather than a spectator of—my life.”

Rinpoche suggests, “Why not see yourself as an emperor in the center of the world allowing everything to happen around you without getting too involved?”

During our conversation, Rinpoche asks several times, “Where are you going?” Each time he asks, “Where are you going?” I recite part of my itinerary: “I’m taking the train to London on Wednesday, then I’m flying to Boston. . . .”

At the end of the interview Rinpoche asks again: “Where are you going?” My crossed legs have fallen asleep. I can hardly get up. We both laugh.

Later I use this interview as the basis of the Call Girl’s interview with a guru in *King of the United States*.³⁸

In the early 1970s in America, Chögyam Trungpa started a theater group called Mudra Theater, which performed a number of his plays and worked with exercises that Rinpoche developed, based on the principles of what came to be called “Mudra Space Awareness.” Most of this work took place in Boulder. During the 1970s, Rinpoche gave several dozen talks on theater work and Mudra Space Awareness, which were transcribed and edited for the use of members of the Mudra Theater group but have never been published, except for a fragment from one talk that

38. From a work in progress, *War, Sex and Dreams: A Playwright’s Memoir* by Jean-Claude van Itallie. Used by permission.

appeared in the *Vajradhatu Sun* magazine, reproduced in this volume. The exercises he developed seem to have been related, at least in part, to insights that Trungpa Rinpoche gained from his practice and study of both mahamudra and the dzogchen teachings, or maha ati, as well as his training in monastic dance in Tibet. He once described Mudra Space Awareness thus: “Having been born, so to speak, now we can try to stand, and then we’ll begin to walk, and then we’ll introduce the monastic dance which I studied in Tibet.”³⁹

The earliest exercises that Rinpoche developed worked with the interplay between sound and silence. They were called “Sound Cycles,” and David Rome included a number of them in the appendix to the poetry collection *Timely Rain*. Rinpoche described them as “a means of relating to the space in which your vocal projection takes place.”⁴⁰ David Rome reported to me that “there were other [early] exercises as well that are now unfortunately lost, especially some fascinating ones applying the five sense perceptions—but not literally—to working with objects.”⁴¹

In 1973, a theater conference took place in Boulder. The conference was organized and attended by Rinpoche’s students, with much of the primary work being done by Jean-Claude van Itallie, who found funding for the conference and arranged for many prominent avant-garde theater people to attend. Because of Jean-Claude’s efforts, Robert Wilson and many actors from his theater company, the Byrd Hoffmann School of Byrds, attended the conference, as well as actors, playwrights, and directors from the Open Theater, the Manhattan Project, the Magic Theater, the Iowa Theater Lab, and the Provisional Open Theater.

39. Midal, *Trungpa*, p.185.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 181. According to Fabrice Midal in *Trungpa*, his book on the life and teachings of Chögyam Trungpa—which contains an excellent chapter on Mudra Theater—the Sound Cycles were written in response to a request from Joseph Chaikin, the founder and director of the Open Theatre, who asked Rinpoche to write something that reflected his theories of theater work. However, according to Jean-Claude van Itallie, who figured prominently in the development of the Mudra work, Joseph Chaikin, when recently asked, told van Itallie that he never asked Rinpoche to write anything. Jean-Claude van Itallie wrote to me, “I think it quite possible, however, that Rinpoche was stimulated toward theatrical explorations by theater discussions he had with me and other theater people.” E-mail communication from Jean-Claude van Itallie to Carolyn Rose Gimian, November 2002.

41. E-mail communication from David I. Rome to Carolyn Rose Gimian, October 2002.

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The idea for the conference arose in a conversation over dinner between Trungpa Rinpoche, Jean-Claude van Itallie, and some other students. Jean-Claude writes:

I'm having dinner in a restaurant with Rinpoche, Tania [Leontov], and others near Barnet, Vermont, when the idea comes up to have a theater-and-meditators conference in Boulder. The idea emerges from the conversations that Rinpoche and I often have about the kind of theater I'm involved with and its relationship to meditation. Rinpoche is enthusiastic about the idea. I'm a vegetarian at the time, but Rinpoche puts steak on my plate from his plate, saying, "Eat this. You'll need the strength to put the conference together." Of course, because he asked me to, I eat the piece of steak. And I put together the conference.

At the time I'm on the Board of Theater Communications Group and I'm on the Theater Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts. Both these groups give me money to put together the conference, which costs a total of something a little over \$10,000. It's to their credit that they funded something which was purely for the benefit of the participants—not to include a public performance. It was to be an "Eastern meditation meets Western avant-garde theater" conference. I apply to the International Theater Institute too, and while they have no money to give me, they give me help including an assistant, Maurice McClellan, who works at ITI. I invite the most exciting people I know in the theater. The avant-garde theater community is not huge at the time. We all know each other. Of those who say they'll come, there's Robert Wilson and members of his company. I'd given Bob his first job in the theater—designing the dolls for *Motel in America Hurrah*. Andre Gregory (whom you might have seen in *My Dinner with Andre*) came. He'd been a couple of years ahead of me at Harvard. Lee Worley came. She was at the time living in Santa Fe but I had met her in 1963 at the beginning of the Open Theater where she was an actress. That was Lee's first contact with Rinpoche. Other friends came—the actor Nancy Cooperstein, the playwright Maria Irene Fornes, the critic Gordon Rogoff, the director John Lion, the photographer and designer Kozuko Oshima. . . . Some people did not come. The Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, for whom I had translated from the French on his first trips to NYC, refused saying, "One guru at a conference is enough." The British director

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Peter Brook could not make it. The American director Joseph Chaikin didn't care to come, saying, "I don't like organized religion."

It's my first visit to Boulder. I stay at the Boulderado Hotel with a view of the mountains. Rinpoche has named this conference *The Mudra Workshop*. We rented a fraternity house on Broadway near Baseline for the proceedings. Some of us gave workshops. I gave a playwriting workshop. The theater artists perform for the meditators who are gratifyingly shocked by the lack of conventional theater form. Robert Wilson stages a special performance. I write something quickly which both theater artists and meditators perform. There are panels and classes. I give one in playwriting which Irene Fornes takes. Rinpoche gives several talks and appears in a theater happening on the last day as a fortuneteller at the center of a maze created with newspaper walls. . . .

Rinpoche at the conference told people who asked him what buddha families they belonged to. He told me I'm ratna-vajra like himself. Rinpoche encouraged his students to classify different things including theater pieces and paintings as combinations of buddha, ratna, vajra, karma, or padma families. It's a game I enjoyed. It honed our perceptions of the universal energies in the world and culture around us. Rinpoche was interested in many artistic fields of endeavor including performance, painting, poetry, and playwriting and he enjoyed practicing them all to one degree or another. The buddha families are a language in which to speak about specific energetic qualities common to all art, indeed to all phenomena.

Toward the end of the conference we put on an impromptu performance for each other. I wrote a little play which people read aloud. It included a parody of some of the people at the conference. I remember one line and the person who read it again and again: "I sing my own melody."⁴²

One of the participants mentioned by van Itallie, Lee Worley, has also provided some comments on the 1973 theater conference. Lee, who has been the head of the theater department at Naropa University (formerly Naropa Institute) for many years, describes her experiences at the conference:

42. From an e-mail from Jean-Claude van Itallie to Carolyn Rose Gimian, 2003. Used by permission.

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In January of 1973 Jean Claude van Itallie invited me to Boulder, Colorado, to attend a theater conference. . . . I was living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, having moved out of New York City with my baby daughter and her father the previous year. Three young men from my new acting workshop in Santa Fe wanted to come with me, and since Boulder was close by, the conference agreed to pay our way.

In addition to members of New York's Open Theater, I remember that the conference drew people from the Firehouse Theater of Minneapolis, the Magic Theater of San Francisco, Robert Wilson's company, and the Iowa Theater Lab. Conference participants were housed in the same large fraternity house where the meetings and workshops were held. It was a cold February and there was no way to get away from each other. In typical theater fashion, everyone was behaving in very self-important ways. Each day different companies gave workshop demonstrations, and each evening there were performances. To keep my novice actors from freaking out in the company of professional artists, we met daily and worked on creating a skit based on a short story by Trungpa, "Report from Outside the Closet,"⁴³ which had been included in the conference's information packets.

I enjoyed being caught up in the whirl of the conference, away from home and baby for the first time, admiring everyone's work and worrying about my own presentation, fascinated by the Tibetan gentleman with the limp who seemed to show up everywhere, disrupting events, creating chaos, causing everyone's ego to inflate larger and larger, and yet not doing much of anything. At the same time as everyone seemed to be growing more and more crazy, it felt like quite a safe situation with someone at the helm deliberately allowing us to spin out of control within a loving, protective container. . . .

My company only felt comfortable with the people from the Mudra Theater Group, our hosts for the conference. They were Trungpa's students who had been training with him in performance exercises. We visiting actors and directors eagerly awaited their presentation scheduled for the end of the week, but they seemed unenthusiastic, embarrassed, and apologetic. In fact, they didn't seem to know exactly what they were going to do, or even why they had

43. This story is included in Volume Three of *The Collected Works*.

hosted the conference. One or another of them would mutter to me about the excruciatingly painful exercises that Rinpoche had them do. I got the feeling that it was devotion alone that kept them in the Mudra work.

The Mudra Group presented work on “sound cycles.” . . . These little poem-like things use Sanskrit and English words as well as breaking up words into individual syllables.⁴⁴ The emphasis is not on the content of the pieces but on using the whole body as the vocal chamber and on clear diction of the vowels and consonants, thereby letting the sound convey its own content.

Rinpoche was seated in front of the conference attendees. At his feet sat a disheveled young man with curly blond hair. During the course of the Mudra presentation on sound cycles he seemed to be crawling all over Rinpoche, singing off key, “Terrible person, I’m a terrible person.” Or perhaps it was “Terrible person, he’s a terrible person.” I was offended. He was either drunk, high, or crazy. I thought him inappropriate and disruptive. Why doesn’t someone remove him, I huffed. Rinpoche didn’t seem to mind.

During the question period someone asked what Rinpoche meant by the word *neurosis*. He replied that without neurosis there is nothing to work with. All art has both neurosis and its absence. This gives a lot of material and the possibility for relating to space. “It would be an extremely good and friendly gesture if tonight we would all agree that anybody involved with an acting situation or the public entertainment world is neurotic. Let us really believe in that. We are all somewhat fucked-up people. It’s an embarrassing thing to say, but it doesn’t seem to be my particular embarrassment.” I could feel tension heating up the room.

The drunken character continued to sing “terrible person.”

That afternoon the Iowa Theater Lab had demonstrated their work. I didn’t attend, but my actors reported that when the director cracked a whip and dictated commands, the actors meekly obeyed. As the evening’s discussion continued, this director started engaging Rinpoche in an argumentative dialogue. His point was that he thought of actors as the most sane people. “Some of us are greedy for life. Some of us grip it, some of us are deeply involved in grasping

44. According to Midal in *Trungpa*, Rinpoche asked David Rome and Ruth Astor to present the sound cycles at the conference.

at life. We love life.” He became increasingly agitated. “If our aim in life is to grab, then we shouldn’t disappoint ourselves,” he said.

Rinpoche responded, “If you grasp, you don’t get anything.”

“And what if we define ourselves as neurotic?”

“You get yourself, which is already neurotic.” (*Laughter*)

The director was infuriated; Rinpoche remained quite cool. The whole situation became almost unbearably electric. Rinpoche said, “You see, I’m just presenting a satirical approach to the game. I’m not presenting ideal sanity at all. Nobody can do that. There has been Christ and Buddha and Muhammad and all kinds of saviors who offered themselves up to us as targets to be attacked. And still the work goes on. Nobody really provided any alternatives at all. That seems to be the most exciting and beautiful theater of all. Christ didn’t make it. Buddha didn’t make it. Muhammad didn’t make it! This is monumental failure! It’s fantastic! The theater of life and death! As you see, we’re not particularly religious people and you might want to avoid people who meditate because we’re not particularly religious.”

Rinpoche stood up abruptly and shouted, “We just meditate, just for the hell of it!” Then he saluted smartly and stormed out of the hall. He did not seem to limp as he marched away.

Aside from “terrible person,” the room was silent.

Next morning when we got up, we discovered that the Iowa Theater Lab had struck camp and disappeared.

At this Mudra conference, I discovered the theater I wished to create and the way I wanted to train actors. It was as though a question I didn’t even know I was asking was answered. The question? Can there be a more human basis for developing performance than that which resides in talent, personality, and ego territory?⁴⁵

As Jean-Claude van Itallie noted in his remarks above, Robert Wilson and his company, the Byrd Hoffmann School of Byrds, presented some of their work in a performance at the conference. The piece they presented involved very slow, dignified movements. Andy Karr, a longtime student of Rinpoche’s and an early participant in the theater work, told me that Robert Wilson’s piece was “brilliant, nonconceptual theater. Fif-

45. “Memories of the Mudra Theater Conference,” Lee Worley, November 2002. Lee notes that her quotations are from a transcript of the Mudra Theater Conference talk given by Chögyam Trungpa on February 19, 1973.

teen years later, we would have had nothing but admiration for this non-conceptual performance art. But at the time, we couldn't handle the space. You have to remember that Rinpoche's students were almost all very young. The average age was around twenty-three. So we were like children, in some sense."⁴⁶ The Byrd Hoffmann troupe had placed a large bowl of apples and oranges in the middle of the audience, to be consumed as refreshments during the performance. Rinpoche's students took the idea of "audience participation" one step too far and began rolling pieces of fruit around on the stage and otherwise interrupting the normal course of the performance in a way that was disrespectful of the space that Wilson and his troupe were trying to create. As Andy Karr told me, "After the first piece of fruit rolled out onto the stage, all hell broke loose." According to Midal's description in *Trungpa* and confirmed by both David Rome and Andy Karr, Rinpoche was quite unhappy with his students' boorish behavior. Since there was nothing to be done, however, he himself took an orange, peeled it, and ate it.

Many of the theater people who attended the conference were infuriated by the disrespectful behavior of the Buddhist students, although David Rome reports that Robert Wilson himself "took the whole thing in stride." There was a confrontational meeting the day after the performance, and some of the visiting theater people threatened to leave. (Based on remarks from Lee Worley and David Rome, it's quite possible that this had more to do with the Iowa Theater Lab people than anything involving Robert Wilson and his group.) On behalf of his students, Rinpoche remained unapologetic. He gave a very powerful talk on the problems of egotism among artists. Andy Karr reported that, in this talk, Rinpoche connected very strongly with many of the people there. Jean-Claude van Itallie says of Robert Wilson's piece and the "furor" that unfolded around it:

I think Andy Karr's and David Rome's descriptions of the Bob Wilson performance are fairly accurate. It took Bob several days to prepare his piece. He was, as always, very serious about it, working behind closed doors. Watching the piece after being kept waiting for several hours, the meditators were shocked. Some giggled. A few booed

46. All quotations of Andy Karr from a conversation with Carolyn Rose Gimian, October 2002.

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rudely. They didn't know what to make of what they were seeing. The piece was slow, visually beautiful, and devoid of story. Rinpoche was respectful toward the work. If he was angry at his students, he didn't reprimand them in front of the theater people. Indeed, as David Rome and Andy Karr point out, he instead delivered a lecture to the theater people about ego. I felt that everyone, including Rinpoche, enjoyed shocking the others by what he or she said, wrote, or performed. This was theatrical in the best sense—we shocked each other's preconceptions of the world.⁴⁷

Toward the end of the conference, in addition to presenting the sound cycles, Rinpoche's students built a huge newspaper installation that was divided into a number of rooms. Participants made their way through this maze, and in each of five rooms they encountered a person who represented one of the buddha families and who would, if supplicated properly, answer questions. Rinpoche himself was in one of these rooms. David Rome told me that "he was somewhere in the middle of the maze, maybe toward the end, just sitting in a simple chair in the middle of a newspaper room, saying nothing."⁴⁸

Jean-Claude van Itallie commented:

I remember the newspaper maze pretty much as you describe . . . Rinpoche sitting in an armchair toward the end of the newspaper room. . . . Sitting in his chair, he said nothing if you asked him nothing. People didn't expect to see him there—he was a surprise. He said, "I'm curious if people will speak to me." He was ready to answer anything anyone asked. He was being a fortuneteller, but you had to ask him a question to find that out. If anyone asked him anything, they were the exception. Most people passed through the newspaper room respectfully and asked Rinpoche nothing.⁴⁹

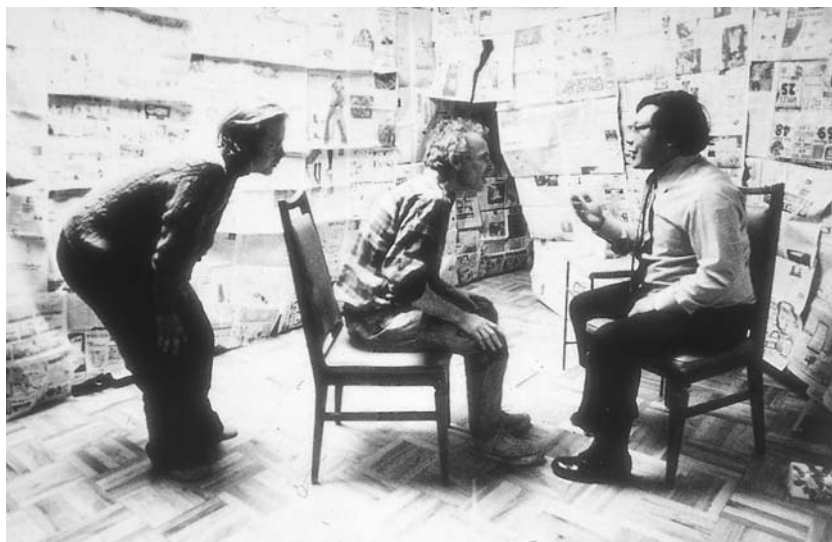
The day after the conference ended, Rinpoche introduced the first series of Mudra Space Awareness exercises, which became the foundation for the theater work done by his students for many years. The exer-

47. E-mail from Jean-Claude van Itallie to Carolyn Rose Gimian, November 2002.

48. E-mail from David I. Rome to Carolyn Rose Gimian, October 2002.

49. E-mail from Jean-Claude van Itallie to Carolyn Rose Gimian, November 2002.

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*Chögyam Trungpa and students encounter one another in a newspaper maze in 1973.
Mudra Theater Conference in Boulder, Colorado.*

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. FROM THE COLLECTION OF
SHAMBHALA ARCHIVES.

cises involve assuming various postures and then intensifying the space around oneself. Very slow, deliberate movements and intensified breathing may also be part of an exercise. Rinpoche described his motivation for introducing these theater exercises as follows: “The problem in acting is not being able to relate with the space which surrounds the body. In other words, the problem is in the relationship between the projector (which is the actor in this case) and the projections (which is the audience). Unless we are able to develop a sense of sympathy with ourselves and a sense of sympathy with space, there is a tendency to become hostile and feel a need to impress the audience.”⁵⁰ He also described the approach to intensification as follows: “In order to learn to relate with space we have to learn to intensify the body and build intensive situations as much as possible. Can you just try to feel the space around your

50. As quoted in Midal, *Trungpa*. From unpublished Mudra Theater transcripts in the Shambhala Archives.

body? Pull your muscles as if space is crowding in on you. Clench your teeth and your toes. . . . Very strange to say, in order to learn how to relax you have to develop really solid tenseness. You can breathe out and breathe in but don't rest your breath, just develop complete intensification. Then you begin to feel that space is closing in on you. In order to relate with space you have to relate with tension."⁵¹

In some of his earliest talks introducing the Mudra Space Awareness exercises, Rinpoche also spoke about how they related to particular vajrayana or tantric teachings: "A lot of the exercises are sort of maha ati yoga practices. They are related to the Four Torches. Actually, the maha ati [practice I'm talking about here] doesn't talk about space; it talks about wind or air. The first one, the wind of karma, is related with muscles, and intensification of limbs. So, in other words, your limbs are related to as kind of tools to grab things with, which is connected with karma's volitional action. If you relate with the wind of karma, which is that creation of space within your muscles, you relate with the space or the air which is contained within the muscles. The second one is related with creating space through the eyes and has to do with the wind of emotions or kleshas. The third one is the wind of body. It is connected to the earth and the four elements. The last one is called inner luminosity. It is connected with brain and heart together, which is something very subtle."⁵²

Altogether, there is a great deal of subtlety and profundity in the theater work that Chögyam Trungpa introduced. Little has been written about this work, and for this reason, this introduction to Volume Seven has gone into considerable detail to provide information about the events that form the background to the few theater-related publications that are included in *The Collected Works*. Chögyam Trungpa's work in this area put him in touch with the leading figures in the American avant-garde theater and show yet another way in which he brought together teachings from the vajrayana tradition of Buddhism in Tibet with the most modern developments in an artistic field. One hopes that in the near future more information on this fascinating aspect of his work will be published.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 186, quoting from a presentation of Intensification Exercises, February 24, 1973, unedited transcript.

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In 2001, Naropa University published a book on Lee Worley's theater work, *Coming from Nothing*, which includes an introduction to some of the principles of Mudra Space Awareness. Lee is planning to edit a book of Chögyam Trungpa's plays and some of his talks on space awareness, accompanied by interviews or reflections by theater people who have been influenced by Rinpoche's work. Joanna Rotte, a playwright and director who teaches at the Villanova University, is also interested in working on the book. Joanna never met Trungpa Rinpoche, but in the last ten years she has become familiar with his plays, and in the summer of 2000, she adapted one of Rinpoche's best-known dramas, *Prajna*, for the Philadelphia Fringe Festival.

Volume Seven of *The Collected Works* includes the original version of *Prajna*, which was performed for the first time during the summer session at the Naropa Institute in 1974. Subsequently, the play was published in *Loka: A Magazine of the Naropa Institute*.⁵³ Andy Karr, who directed *Prajna* when it was performed at Naropa, wrote an introduction in *Loka* to the play. He explains that it "is based on the *Heart Sutra*, a distillation of the voluminous *Prajnaparamita* (Perfection of Wisdom) literature, which is central to Mahayana Buddhism."

The other play included in Volume Seven is *Proclamation*, which was performed by the Mudra Theater Group at a Midsummer's Day festival in 1980. This play combines elements from both the Buddhist and the Shambhala teachings. Interestingly, both *Prajna* and *Proclamation*—one of the last plays that Rinpoche wrote—include recitations of the *Heart Sutra*, an intriguing hint that his theater work may have had an ongoing connection to exploring the interaction between form and emptiness, which is so central to the *Prajnaparamita* teachings of the mahayana.

53. Naropa provided a ground for Rinpoche to explore many of his interests in the arts. From its inception, the Institute brought together a remarkable group of artists working in many different disciplines. It was a fertile environment that nurtured artistic creativity. Throughout the early summer sessions, there were many performances of dance, music, and theater, and many exhibits of visual art. In addition to being a situation where Trungpa Rinpoche's work could be exhibited and performed, Naropa also provided a venue for Rinpoche to present his ideas on dharma art. In 1975, as mentioned above, he presented the long seminar "Tibetan Buddhist Iconography," which was not about symbolism in Tibetan art per se, but rather an exploration of much more primordial issues of symbolism and perception—very much in the spirit of exploring the five buddha families that he presented in the Milarepa Film Seminar. Many of the chapters in *Dharma Art* are based on the iconography seminar at Naropa. Later, when Rinpoche began to present dharma art seminars, Naropa became a main venue for those events as well.

It would seem that Rinpoche was not primarily interested in exploring characters or their stories in his plays, but much more interested in exploring the space in which dramas arise.

Volume Seven, as mentioned earlier, also includes an article that appeared in 1980 in the *Vajradhatu Sun*, excerpted from a talk given by Rinpoche in 1973 about his view of theater. The article, “Basic Sanity in Theater,” may well have been given in connection with the 1973 theater conference itself. Here, Chögyam Trungpa says that “in order to perform, we have to relate to reality.” He talks about learning to coordinate speech and body and discusses combining “the bodhisattva and yogic practices in our theater work.” He also mentions an idea to create a school to pursue this training in theater, which he says would be “another kind of retreat practice, in fact.”

After the theater conference in 1973, it does not appear that Chögyam Trungpa had a great deal of ongoing contact with the American avant-garde theater world. Jean-Claude van Itallie did arrange a meeting between Chögyam Trungpa and Peter Brook, which took place at Shantigar, Van Itallie’s country residence near Charlemont, Massachusetts. Rinpoche’s relationship with Van Itallie was an enduring one; in 1977, Rinpoche spent most of a year on retreat at Van Itallie’s house. There was a second theater conference in 1974, but Rinpoche and his Mudra theater students conducted this event as an in-house training, without the avant-garde guests. Some of the “guest” performers in 1973 had, in any case, become Rinpoche’s students, Lee Worley being one of the most prominent examples.⁵⁴

54. A brief description of a later foray that Rinpoche made into spontaneous theater seems warranted before leaving the discussion of his work with theater. As discussed above, Allen Ginsberg talked quite a lot about Rinpoche’s spontaneous approach to composing poetry and how that affected Ginsberg’s own work. During a month-long teaching visit in New York in 1976, Rinpoche composed spontaneous plays, which took place late at night, usually at his residence, when he had to take medication before retiring for the night. Rinpoche would mimic seppuku, or ritual suicide, which ended with him taking his pills and seeming to collapse and die from having ingested poison. I happened to witness one of these plays in Boulder in the summer of 1976. That evening—and every evening that these plays took place—David Rome was the narrator of these spontaneous dramas. In fact, he was more precisely the translator, for Rinpoche would hold forth as though he were speaking Japanese—but since he didn’t speak the language, he was just mimicking sounds he was familiar with, from Japanese movies and other situations. David would provide spontaneous translations of this pseudo-Japanese oratory. David writes: “To my knowledge, the seppuku performances were all in NYC in February 1976, and then just one took place at the Kalapa Court in Boulder to show people [what they

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There were also a number of theatrical elements, or what might more properly be called pageantry, in the many ceremonies that Trungpa Rinpoche developed over the years, particularly in connection with his presentation of the Shambhala teachings in the last ten years of his life. Perhaps this is why he did not write plays during those years—he had other outlets for structuring the interplay of space and form within the context of presenting his work. In a sense, he was choreographing culture and society.

CALLIGRAPHY, FLOWER ARRANGING, AND
DHARMA ART INSTALLATIONS

We come now to the consideration of Chögyam Trungpa’s work in the areas of calligraphy and flower arranging and how he eventually combined these elements with his overall interest in design, resulting in the dharma art installations that he created. Although Rinpoche had begun creating calligraphies and brush and ink paintings while he was still in England, there is no information on when he first took up this discipline as art or whether he received any formal instruction in it. Throughout his seventeen years in America, he created many hundreds if not several thousands of calligraphies. As David Rome mentions in his excellent introduction to *The Art of Calligraphy: Joining Heaven and Earth*, “Rinpoche’s calligraphies were almost always done for some specific purpose.” He often created a calligraphy as a birthday or wedding gift. Many calligraphies were done to hang on the walls of his meditation centers, or dharma-hatus, and he personally calligraphed the names given to students when they took the Buddhist refuge and bodhisattva vows. In Tibet, he would have studied handwriting as part of his education. There, calligraphy was done with a bamboo pen. In the West, Rinpoche adopted the use of Japanese brushes and sumi ink. Brush and ink, as David Rome notes, gave him more fluidity and play in his art. Surely, too, Rinpoche’s interest in brush painting was a reflection of his personal encounters with Japanese calligraphers. In 1970/71 when he first met Suzuki Roshi,

were like]—probably the one you saw.” I found the whole experience quite perplexing and hair-raising—and needless to say, quite dramatic. When Rinpoche “died,” he really seemed to have lost consciousness, and I was worried that a doctor should be called—until he revived himself.

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Rinpoche also was introduced to Kobun Chino Sensei, a master of Japanese calligraphy as well as a master of Zen. Later, Rinpoche shared interests in dharma and calligraphy with Taizan Maezumi Roshi, the founder of the Los Angeles Zen Center and a master calligrapher. In the 1980s, Rinpoche became a great friend of Shibata Kanjuro Sensei, a Japanese master of kyudo, or archery, who is also an accomplished calligrapher. Rinpoche encouraged his students to study kyudo with Sensei and included him in many Shambhala gatherings, where Rinpoche presented advanced teachings and invited Sensei to teach as well.

The majority of Rinpoche's calligraphies are of Tibetan and Sanskrit letters, words, and phrases. He also studied the kanji, or Chinese ideograms, and he did a number of calligraphies of kanji in the 1980s, particularly when he calligraphed terms connected with the Shambhala teachings, such as the phrase "Great Eastern Sun." He also did a few calligraphies of English words and some abstract brush and ink paintings. David Rome reflects on how Rinpoche's calligraphy evolved:

Just as his poetic voice, which at first was imitative of both Tibetan and British traditional modes, released into something much freer and more idiosyncratic after his arrival in North America, so Rinpoche's use of brush and ink became progressively bolder and more original. (*The Art of Calligraphy*, p. 173)

As time went on, Rinpoche began to incorporate demonstrations of calligraphy into the dharma art seminars that he taught. Volume Seven of *The Collected Works* includes a series of these calligraphies, done using an overhead projector at a seminar in 1978, which were reproduced and published in the *Shambhala Sun* in 1992 with a commentary on heaven, earth, and man. *The Art of Calligraphy* contains beautiful reproductions of some of Rinpoche's finest calligraphies. Volume Seven includes the introductory material from the book, an essay by Rinpoche on heaven, earth, and man, some of the back matter from the book, and a selection of the calligraphies.

The essay from *The Art of Calligraphy* is a major statement of how Trungpa Rinpoche applied the principles of heaven, earth, and man to the creation of art and also how he incorporated the principles of the four karmas into his artistic work. Volume Six includes material on the four karmas presented in an early public seminar. In Volume Seven, the

discussion of the four karmas is, at least for this reader, somewhat mysterious in terms of their application to art, but the discussion of the four principles in and of themselves is quite down-to-earth and helpful. Rinpoche describes the first karma, pacifying, as “the cooling off of neurosis . . . gentleness and freedom from neurosis . . . pure and cool.” He describes enriching as “the absence of arrogance and aggression”; magnetizing as “overcoming poverty”; and destroying as “destruction of laziness.” He uses the four karmas to establish the ground, or the basic space, of the diagrams he creates, and then places the heaven, earth, and man principles within that ground. He also discusses how the principles of heaven, earth, and man apply to the development of discipline in art—and in life. He presents discipline here as an outgrowth of the artist’s understanding of space and its relationship to the artist’s point of view. He introduces another principle fundamental to his presentation of dharma art: that genuine art arises out of and encourages the synchronization of body and mind. The principle of harmony within oneself as the ground of art leads in the final section of the essay to the discussion of how harmony can manifest in society, as Great Eastern Sun vision, based on the rising sun of wakefulness rather than the setting sun of ignorance and indulgence.

As explained earlier, Chögyam Trungpa was a student of flower arranging in England in the 1960s, and in learning this discipline he would have worked directly with the principles of heaven, earth, and man, which is used to describe the different aspects of Japanese flower arrangements. During his years in the United States, Trungpa Rinpoche continued to practice ikebana, incorporating into his arrangements the principles of the five buddha families as time went on. He was particularly fond of using pine branches and chrysanthemums to make massive arrangements. Over the years, he had a number of exhibits of his arrangements and gave demonstrations of his work as part of dharma art seminars and in other contexts. Eventually, he moved from isolated arrangements to the creation of dharma art installations that transformed the entire space in the gallery in which his flower arrangements were placed. In “Art of Simplicity: ‘Discovering Elegance,’” an interview in connection with an installation he did in Los Angeles at the LAICA Gallery in 1980, he said “Art should have its own environment altogether, its own entire world altogether, which beautifies the world, basically speaking.” The evolution of Rinpoche’s work with ikebana, from iso-

lated enterprise to enlightened culture, is discussed in the following comments sent to me by Ludwik Turzanski, who worked with Rinpoche in Colorado. Turzanski was a professor in the art department of the University of Colorado from the early 1970s until Rinpoche's death in 1987. Ludwik Turzanski writes:

Working with Rinpoche . . . on dharma art is still very vivid in my mind and indeed in my heart as well. . . . Rinpoche and I discussed art the first time we met when he first arrived in Boulder. We found that we both admired the Japanese esthetic. Rinpoche was later to comment, when founding the Naropa Art Department, that an ideal work of art might encompass the Western sense of daring, the Tibetan appreciation of color, and the Japanese understanding of space.

A few months after we met, Rinpoche called me to find some branches for him in the mountains when he wanted to do an ikebana arrangement. . . . I was called upon to personally assist Rinpoche in this way with his flower arranging after that time. I was to serve him in this capacity, joyfully, for the rest of his life.

[In the early 1970s] I invited Rinpoche to do a project with my art students at the University of Colorado in Denver. After some discussions of the unfeasibility of finding enough flower-arranging equipment for everyone, we came up with the idea of "object arrangements" instead of using flowers. This idea worked so well that it later became the main exercise of the Dharma Art seminars.

Around 1973, I arranged for a show at the Museum of Fine Arts Gallery at CU Boulder. Rinpoche did his first really large flower arrangement, and my students and I did smaller free-form arrangements of objects and flowers.⁵⁵

Another exhibit was arranged around 1975 for Rinpoche at the Emmanuel Gallery on the CU Denver campus. This was the first of the "environmental installations" which Rinpoche was to do in subsequent years several times in Boulder, again in Denver, and also in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The environmental aspect of these shows had to do with the fact that that whole gallery environment was considered as a unique space for the flower arrangements, working together, to articulate. Later, this idea was to be formalized into

55. Slides of these arrangements are housed in the Shambhala Archives.

an entrance room, a kitchen, study, tenno room,⁵⁶ Buddha room, warrior room,⁵⁷ and other spaces.

As the scope of this new project began to emerge, it became abundantly clear that one or two assistants working with Rinpoche, as in the past, would no longer be sufficient. So Rinpoche asked me to put together a group—"The Explorers of the Richness of the Phenomenal World"—to assist in this exhibit. Then came months of planning, design, and preparations. Mats, containers, and unique branch holders in many sizes were experimented with and built. Rocks, branches, vases, flower sources, etc., were researched. The Explorers were organized into departments and teams. Thus a framework emerged which was to serve as the basis of the skillful means not only for this but also for all subsequent shows. It was all very adventurous and exciting.

The Denver exhibit was the first time Rinpoche's artistic work was publicized to the general public. Although seemingly a bit shy when the show first opened its doors, Rinpoche showed great delight when a number of flower arrangers and artists came to the opening and wanted to meet the artist and chat. He and we thought that it was a splendid show.

[In 1974] Rinpoche held his first art seminar at Padma Jong in California, and there seems to have used the phrase "dharma art" for the first time publicly to describe his unique vision for an open-hearted and genuine art based on appreciation and nonaggression.⁵⁸

After this, the two separate events—the environmental flower in-

56. As interpreted by Chögyam Trungpa, the tenno room was a room in which formal meetings or discourse were conducted. There were tatami mats on the floor, where everyone participating in a gathering would be expected to sit. There were usually several calligraphies or Japanese brush paintings on display, as well as a flower arrangement and a few precious objects, such as a Japanese tea bowl or tea set, arranged for effect.

57. The Buddha room was, I believe, a room dedicated to meditation, while the warrior room was a room in which antique Japanese weaponry and armor were displayed. As interpreted by Chögyam Trungpa, the warrior room might have been the ancestral shrine of a Japanese samurai family.

58. Padma Jong was a rural practice center located in northern California, which was intended to become a contemplative center for the practice of the arts. One of the early students Rinpoche met in California in 1970 was Jerry Granelli, a jazz percussionist and composer, who found the land and was instrumental in the establishment of Padma Jong. Granelli also helped organize and taught in the music department at Naropa for many years. In 1974, Rinpoche taught a seminar entitled "Art in Everyday Life" at Padma Jong; in 1975, he conducted "The Dance of Enlightenment" seminar there.

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stallation and the dharma art seminar—were combined into one and presented together in well-publicized and well-attended weekend events in Boulder, Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The events were organized and put together by a combination of the Boulder Explorers as well as new Explorer recruits from the Dharma center where the seminar and exhibit were being held.

The regular format for these three-day seminars consisted of talks (usually with slides) by Rinpoche, meditation practice, discussion groups, and hands-on workshops involving object arranging and related exercises. The meditation sessions, discussion groups, and workshops were conducted by senior students (Allen Ginsberg once presented a poetry workshop utilizing the principles of heaven, earth, and man) after they received instructions and demonstrations from Rinpoche himself. These were certainly marathon events for Rinpoche as well as for those of us who assisted him. But he seemed to relish being involved in it all, and his energy never flagged. Working with him and watching him was an extraordinary one-taste experience of exhaustion, letting go, and pure joy.

These seminars were attended by professional artists, filmmakers, musicians, and poets as well as people just interested in the arts, or simply by the person of Rinpoche himself. The grand finale of these events was the opening of the Installation with Rinpoche in attendance.⁵⁹

This vivid memoir allows us to appreciate how Rinpoche's exhibitions developed from modest displays to great undertakings—in a way that seemed characteristic of so many things he was involved in. *Expansive* and *all-inclusive* are words that come to mind to describe his passion to include the environment and other sentient beings in his work with dharma art.

Volume Seven of *The Collected Works* includes the only formal talk on ikebana that Rinpoche is known to have given. At the end of 1982, Rinpoche and some of his students decided to form a society for the practice and appreciation of flower arranging. He named the group "Kalapa Ikebana," Kalapa being the name of the capital of the Kingdom of Shambhala. Students in the group studied flower arranging with various

59. E-mail communication from Ludwik Turzanski to Carolyn Rose Gimian, May 16, 2002.

teachers of ikebana. Rinpoche was not their primary instructor, but he met from time to time with the group, demonstrating arrangements and critiquing student work. In 1983, the group started the *Kalapa Ikebana Newsletter*, a quarterly that was published for a number of years.⁶⁰ “Perception and the Appreciation of Reality,” Chögyam Trungpa’s first and only public address on the subject of ikebana, appeared in the Winter 1984 issue.

At this point in the discussion of Rinpoche’s ideas about art, it should hardly seem surprising that he opened his talk by saying that the topic was “perception and the appreciation of reality.” He then spoke about some obstacles to creating a work of art, specifically thinking that one lacks talent or that one’s upbringing hasn’t prepared one to make an artistic statement. Rinpoche challenges the idea that an unusual talent is needed in order to create art. He says that “everyone who possesses the appreciation of sight, smell, sound, feelings, is capable of communicating with the rest of the world.” This is the basis for artistic discipline, including the discipline of flower arranging. Turning more specifically to the particular school of flower arranging in which he was trained, Rinpoche comments that the Sogetsu School in Japan “does not only pay attention to flower arranging, but also it pays attention to sculpture and to creating an environment out of a variety of things.” This gives us a clue as to how the discipline of ikebana itself contained the seed of the larger dharma art installations that Rinpoche undertook.

Volume Seven also includes two interviews conducted in connection with a major dharma art installation that took place in 1980 at the LAICA Gallery in Los Angeles. This installation was called “Discovering Elegance.” Similar to what Ludwik Turzanski described above, the exhibit consisted of a number of rooms created and arranged by Rinpoche and his assistants, containing flower arrangements and calligraphies done for the installation. In these two interviews, Trungpa Rinpoche also expands the definition of dharma art. He describes it as “the principal way we are trying to create enlightened society.” He also talks about working with chaos as a means of discovering harmony. Here, we begin to see how all of Trungpa Rinpoche’s activities as an artist come together with his role in proclaiming the buddhadharma and the Shambhala teachings in

60. Karen Hayward, the founding editor of the newsletter, kindly sent me a complete set of copies for use in preparing *The Collected Works*.

the West. The way or path of the artist and the way of the bodhisattva and the warrior once again seem to converge in the same broad highway of wakefulness and working for the benefit of others.

Also included in Volume Seven, “Art and Education” is another article that echoes this theme. It is based on a public talk at the Naropa Institute in 1979. Here, Rinpoche describes how many of the principles of art that he articulated were reflected in and applied to the overall approach at Naropa. Here he says, “Art is environment. Education is the mind which relates with that environment.” He says that art has to do with creating a bigger world: “The kind of art we are talking about tonight is big art.”

Without photographs or access to the exhibits themselves, it is difficult to visualize the spaces that Rinpoche created in the dharma art installations. One wishes an illustrated catalogue had been prepared for at least one of them. The Shambhala Archives does have extensive photographic documentation of some of the exhibits, especially the installation at the LAICA Gallery, and the documentary film *Discovering Elegance*, referred to above in Baird Bryant’s description of his work with Chögyam Trungpa, shows us the process of creating that installation, along with discussion of the principles of dharma art. None of these materials, however, form part of *The Collected Works*, so much must be left to the imagination of the reader.

VISUAL DHARMA

In addition to its main focus—Chögyam Trungpa’s activities as an artist and poet—Volume Seven features three essays in which Chögyam Trungpa comments and reflects on Buddhist iconography and art, not as inspiration for Western art, but as traditional disciplines in their own right. *Visual Dharma: The Buddhist Art of Tibet* presents his long introductory essay to a catalogue that accompanied an exhibit of Tibetan Buddhist art at the Hayden Gallery at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1975. (The illustrations from the catalogue and the commentary on the specific items pictured are not included here.) Here Rinpoche discusses traditional elements in Tibetan Buddhist iconography and how they are expressed in Tibetan Buddhist thangka paintings and rupas, or religious sculptures of important teachers and deities. “Em-

powerment” is taken from the liner notes to an album presenting recordings of Tibetan sadhanas, or religious liturgies, performed by His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa during his first visit to America in 1974. Rinpoche talks about the significance of the ceremonies themselves as well as about the ritual instruments and music that are an integral part of the ceremonies. “Disciples of the Buddha” is an in-depth interview with Rinpoche, conducted by Robert Newman and included in Newman’s recent book by that title.⁶¹ Rinpoche discusses the meditative realization that can be seen in the I-chou Lohans, Chinese statues of the disciples of the Buddha, which Rinpoche felt were powerful expressions of the meditative state of mind. He arranged to have a silkscreened banner made of a photograph of one of the lohans, to be used as an example and inspiration to students practicing meditation in the Shambhala Training meditation program.

Jean Thies, a longtime student of Rinpoche’s, provided recollections on how the Visual Dharma exhibition came about and her experiences working on the exhibit:

Sometime in 1973 a bunch of us were crowded into Rinpoche’s bedroom at Tail of the Tiger [now Karmê Chöling]. Rinpoche said that he had been asked to do an exhibition at the Hayden Gallery at MIT and asked who might be interested in working on it. I jumped at the invitation.

In the Spring of 1974, after some research, we made a list of possible lenders. Rinpoche came to the East Coast and we went on a trip. We went to Doris Wiener’s gallery, the Newark Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Purchase College, Jacques Marchais, William Wolfe, and Yale. We saw many possibilities and started to assemble lists of what could be used. We also saw Jane Werner’s collection in New York City. Karl Springer saw John Gilmore Ford in Baltimore and contacted some others. I had other sources as well, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

By the early fall of 1974, a list of thangkas and rupas had been made, and we narrowed it down to what would be appropriate. Photos were acquired, we got the necessary permissions, etc.

61. Robert Newman conducted this interview with Trungpa Rinpoche in the 1970s, but his book *Disciples of the Buddha: Living Images of Meditation* was not published until 2001.

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A number of us assembled at the 1974 Vajradhatu Seminary that fall. During the last part of the seminary our group spent part of each day with Rinpoche at his house. A slide would be projected, and Rinpoche would talk about it. Karl Springer, Sherab Chödzin Kohn, Larry Mermelstein, and I were there—and others who escape my memory.

Rinpoche used the text of Lodrö Thaye's *Treasury of Knowledge*, which has a chapter on Tibetan art: styles, methods, etc., which he referred to. The catalogue was created along with his marvelous introduction. Basically, the catalogue was written by Sherab with the lenders providing the measurements of the pieces, as well as me measuring some with a ruler. We also made a wonderful poster of a White Tara thangka from the Southampton, N.Y., museum for the exhibition.

To say the least, this was the richest and most wonderful time with Rinpoche. We worked every day. When it was over, and Karl and I were going out the door of Rinpoche's house, Karl said, "It will never be this good again." It was a precious time for us.

Things progressed, and when it came time to mount the exhibition, I went to many of the lenders, picked up the pieces, and drove them to Cambridge. The staff at the Hayden mounted the exhibition and Karl and I made our comments as to placement, sequence, etc. The opening was in the spring of 1975. The Boston Dharmadhatu presented a "Dharma Festival"—a week of various events. The opening was delightful, to my memory. Bruce McDonald, the curator from the Hayden, was totally great as was his assistant.

For me, it was the beginning of my education in Asian art. I had never really looked at a thangka before, and I became very interested in the art, particularly from the viewpoint of iconography. In retrospect, we now know a lot more about Tibetan painting and sculpture. Rinpoche knew what he was looking at but he was not an art historian. Nevertheless, his introduction remains an important document on the relation of the art of spirituality and practice.⁶²

As in so many other areas of his artistic involvement, Chögyam Trungpa used this artistic undertaking as an opportunity to create a learning environment for a group of students. Jean Thies's description of

62. E-mail communication from Jean Thies to Carolyn Rose Gimian, April 2002.

the group energy involved in working with him is reminiscent of other times described by his students in this introduction: Ludwik Turzanski talking about the Explorers of the Phenomenal World creating dharma art installations with him, Lee Worley and Jean-Claude van Itallie describing the theater conference, and Johanna Demetrakas and Baird Bryant speaking about the Milarepa Film Project. Rinpoche was often unwilling to describe himself or focus the attention on himself as “the artist.” This was not because he lacked confidence in his abilities but because he regarded the identification of oneself in that way as limiting and somewhat ego-enhancing. In relationship to these group undertakings, he also hesitated to emphasize his role as the artist. In discussing the dharma art installation at the LAICA Gallery, Rinpoche commented, “I don’t consider myself as an artist, per se, at all. I don’t regard myself as the author of this exhibition, obviously, but I feel very good about it, nonetheless. I am more proud of and pleased with the people around me, who have created the environment, than I am with myself.” Clearly, this ability to delight in including others in the artistic enterprise was part of this man’s genius. When one reads the memoirs of the students who worked closely with him, one gets the impression that he created huge artistic “happenings” for people—events where people’s perceptions and frameworks were immeasurably enlarged.

As we conclude Volume Seven, dealing with art and artistic process, and move to Volume Eight, which presents Chögyam Trungpa’s teachings on the Shambhala path of warriorship, we will also see a progression in Rinpoche’s life and thought, as he became more and more interested in linking art with culture and society. One can easily see this in the movement from creating individual works of art, such as calligraphies and flower arrangements, to the interest in creating larger environmental installations. Beyond that, however, Rinpoche was interested in a much bigger project: he was interested in dharma art as a force in the creation of culture and society—and not just any society but an enlightened society. In a sense, he was taking the Japanese idea of *do*, or art as a way, beyond even its understanding in Japanese culture. He was essentially saying that art can create a world.

I asked one of the main designers who worked with Chögyam Trungpa over many years, Gina Etra Stick, quoted already above, to write about their design work together, to give some flavor of the

broader implications and the scope of his design work.⁶³ Gina's remarks help to tie together the various elements in Volume Seven and point us to the journey that lies beyond, in the Shambhala teachings:

. . . the Vidyadhara [Chögyam Trungpa] set about designing a world. In my opinion, this activity of design was not just limited to art in the conventional sense. This activity was absolutely pervasive: there was nothing outside of this umbrella. Like the peeling of an onion to reveal essence, the intrinsic goodness within every situation can be revealed, and everything is included in sacredness. Like a thangka, there is no shadow for dirty laundry: everything is illuminated. So, in other words, *any* and *every* embodiment of the sacred is dharma art: dharma art is the language of sacredness.

The Vidyadhara designed anything and everything, according to the structure and boundaries of sacred world, embodying what I think of as patterns of enlightenment, patterns of awake, patterns liberating the power inherent in conventional life. We designed heraldry, flags, banners, and brocade. We designed environments: shrines, buildings, gardens, parties. We designed ourselves from the inside (meditation) and out: uniforms, pins, precious jewelry, and clothing. The Vidyadhara devised events and rituals to bring mindfulness-awareness practice, or meditation in action, to how we move, walk, talk, sing, socialize: a ritual is the attitude of sacredness brought to events.

He designed institutions, businesses, and our “corporate structure” into embodiments of his sadhana—his song of realization—flipping conventional structures into vehicles for spiritual practice and awakening. As exhilarating as this was, it was also totally claustrophobic: the Vidyadhara's message was that there is no time off from sacred view. All situations of gathering, meeting, and socializing were demanding opportunities for invocation, transformation, practice, and waking up.

The design activity of the Vidyadhara was a major thread of his skillful means, teaching, and tireless effort to share with us his unique perception. . . . The goal of the Vidyadhara was not to create a perfect world. The goal was to create an environment that could accommodate and nurture the waking state of mind of the student warrior.

63. On this point, see also Judith Lief's introduction to *Dharma Art*.

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The goal, as has been said, was the path: to include everything we usually discard as “not spiritual” into the practice. Dharma art is an ongoing journey to recover our ability to see the extraordinary beauty and meaning *within* ordinary life.⁶⁴

I think of Volume Seven as a beacon, drawing people to an appreciation of Rinpoche as an artist. Many people who know him as a Buddhist teacher have no idea that he was involved in the arts at all. Yet this is a singularly important part of his contribution to dharma in America. *The Art of Calligraphy* is a wonderful showcase for his calligraphy, and *Dharma Art* brings together his ideas on art, artistic process, and aesthetics, but there is as yet no publication or other vehicle that fully captures and conveys the visual power and full expanse of his artistry. A coffee table book with full-color reproductions of his design work and dharma art installations would be a great step, along with quality color reproductions of his photographs. The completion of a film based on the principles of the Milarepa Film Project would also convey much more about Chögyam the artist, and further exhibits of his work and dharma art installations would both inform and provoke us to look further, not just at his work but more deeply into our own perception. For it is not purely to honor Rinpoche or to enshrine him as a great artist that additional offerings are called for. Rather, his work was intended to challenge us, to cheer us up, and to enliven our path through the world. It would be a great gift to many to see that his work is fully documented, so that it can be passed on, appreciated, and practiced in the future. In this regard, the work of his students is also extremely important. Those who studied closely with him need to be encouraged to discuss and show in greater depth what they learned from him and how they are now applying this in their own work.

In a sense, Chögyam Trungpa’s work as an artist was among the most revolutionary parts of his teaching. He truly believed that art can change the world. In this belief, he was focused not on the content of art but on how art can alter perception. If you can change the way people see the world, he taught, then they will change the world they live in. In essence, this is the premise of enlightened society. As he said in *The Art of Calligraphy*:

64. E-mail communication from Gina Etra Stick to Carolyn Rose Gimian, 2002.

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We would like to organize and create a decent society. We could be slightly, positively arrogant by even saying “enlightened society.” . . . You have a tremendous responsibility: the first is to yourself, to become gentle and genuine; the second is to work for others in that same way. It is very important to realize how powerful all of us are. What we are doing may seem insignificant, but this notion of dharma art will be like an atomic bomb you carry in your mind. (pp. 212, 215)

Chögyam Trungpa saw the transformation of society as the means to help others on a much greater scale, never ignoring the individual’s place or responsibility, as he makes clear in the quote above, but joining that with the larger needs of a good human society. Art played, not a tangential, but an absolutely central role in that view.

Having fully incorporated the view of artistic disciplines as a way of awakening, Chögyam Trungpa turned to art as one of the tools in the warrior’s arsenal of wakefulness. Similarly, we turn from the consideration of Chögyam Trungpa as an artist in Volume Seven to his role as great warrior-king in Volume Eight, another extraordinary chapter in an altogether extraordinary life.

One may understand this last chapter of his life and teachings more easily if one keeps in mind, not only his dedication to truth and beauty, but also the sense of play and humor that is so evident throughout his artistic enterprises. Chögyam Trungpa was a man who saw lots to cheer you up in the phenomenal world. One can see how much *joy* he took in the making of movies, the writing of plays, the stroke of calligraphy, the heaven, earth, and man of arranging space. He joined joy and sadness in this dance of delight and was able to share with so many others the self-existing sense of humor he found in everyday life. As an artist, he loved the broad smile of reality. As a Shambhala warrior, he showed that this smile has teeth! To that experience we turn our attention in Volume Eight.

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