

BUDDHA'S SMILE

ARTWORK LABELS

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Buddha's smile presents episodes from the story of Buddha, and examples of his multitude of incarnations, through historical and contemporary works of art from across Asia. This exhibition is akin to the Buddha's Flower sermon in the way it transmits the tranquillity and wisdom of Buddhist philosophy through silent energy. Like the sermon it requires no language and can be acknowledged by the viewer with a simple smile.

At the Flower sermon, Buddha's followers gathered in a small circle to hear him talk. Rather than deliver verbal teachings, however, on this occasion Buddha simply held up a flower and did not speak. Those in attendance were confused by this unusual act, except for the disciple Mahākāśyapa who smiled in acknowledgement of Buddha's silent transmission of wisdom and instructions to gain enlightenment.

Historical records note that the flower Buddha held was a lotus with its stem attached, still dripping with mud. In Buddhism, the lotus represents the human spirit that rises through day-to-day struggles, symbolised by the sediment and mulch found at the bottom of the pond. In a process similar to meditation, the lotus bud finds its way to clearer waters, finally breaking the surface of the pond and blossoming toward the sunlight and clarity of enlightenment.

Exhibition essay available at ngv.melbourne/essay

Budai

Budai, or Pu-Tai, originated as a Chinese folkloric character and is a deity usually identified with or seen as an incarnation of Maitreya, the future Buddha. According to Buddhist tradition, Maitreya is a Bodhisattva who will appear on earth in the future, achieve complete enlightenment and teach the pure lessons of Buddhism.

Figures of Budai are some of the main Buddhist forms found in China, where he appears as a deity of wealth and good life. In Japan Budai became known as Hotei, the god of good fortune. He is almost always shown with a full belly and smiling or laughing, hence his nickname the 'Laughing Buddha'. Budai is poor but content, and carries only a few possessions in a cloth sack. He represents generosity, wisdom and kind-heartedness, and is often depicted entertaining or being followed by children.

Budai's role as a popular deity in China has seen many forms representing him produced throughout history, including fine white porcelain figures during the late Qing dynasty and the inexpensive plastic or plaster ornaments of more recent times. Artist Liu Xiao Xian has created a mosaic-like effect by covering one such contemporary Budai with tiny images of Christ to create a fascinating mixture of popular iconography.

CHINESE

Budai

late 19th – early 20th century Dehua,
Fujian province, China
porcelain

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939

4327-D3

LIU Xiaoxian

Born China 1963, Australia 2000–

Our Gods, Laughing Buddha

2000 Australia

digital (lemda) print on aluminum, edition 2/3

Collection of Liu Xiaoxian, Sydney

Stories of the Buddha

The *jatakas*, stories of the Buddha's 547 previous incarnations, provide the richest source of imagery in South-East Asian Theravada Buddhist art. The last ten *jatakas*, each of which illustrates a key virtue, have been particularly influential. Scenes and characters from *jataka* stories appear in all media, including textiles, paintings, sculptures, film and television.

The Thai/Lao scroll on display depicts the *Vessantara Jataka*, the story of the penultimate incarnation of the historic Buddha Shakyamuni as Prince Vessantara. The narrative illustrates the virtue of charity, and this type of scroll painting is paraded in the annual Bun Phra Wet ceremony held in north-east Thailand and Laos to celebrate the anniversary of Prince Vessantara's return to his kingdom.

Cambodian *ikat* textiles, known as *pidan*, were traditionally used in various temple contexts. This *pidan* illustrates the birth of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha. The baby appears three times in the lower register of the cloth, beneath the feet of his mother, Queen Maya. Sometimes the allusion to Buddha's life story is less apparent, as in the detailed patterns covering the Burmese betel boxes on display. They are decorated with the *nan-dwin* (king at court) design, often interpreted as a court scene from one of the last ten *jataka* stories.

KHMER

Ceremonial hanging and covering

Pidan

19th century, Cambodia
silk, dyes (weft ikat)

Purchased, 2006

2006.280

BURMESE

Betel-box

Kun-it

mid 20th century, Burma
lacquer, bamboo

Gift of John McCarthy in memory of Edwin and Margot McCarthy
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2012

2012.37.a-d

BURMESE

Betel-box

Kun-it

mid 20th century, Burma

lacquer, bamboo

Gift of John McCarthy in memory of Edwin and Margot McCarthy
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2012

2012.50.a-d

BURMESE

Betel-box

Kun-it

mid 20th century, Burma

lacquer, bamboo

Gift of John McCarthy in memory of Edwin and Margot McCarthy
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2012

2012.63.a-d

BURMESE

Betel-box

Kun-it

early 20th century, Burma
lacquer, bamboo

Gift of John McCarthy in memory of Edwin and Margot McCarthy
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2012

2012.46.a-d

Kun-it are cylindrical lidded boxes used for storing the ingredients required in the preparation of a chewable betel portions, known as quids. They are essential items of hospitality in a Burmese home – the equivalent of a tea or coffee service. Two internal trays hold chopped areca nut, various spices, lime paste, metal nut cutters and dry tobacco leaves. The bottom compartment is filled with heart-shaped betel-vine leaves. When the box is presented, visitors take a leaf, smear it with lime paste and wrap it into a quid around a slice of areca nut and selected spices, before chewing the contents.

BURMESE

Betel-box

Kun-it

mid 20th century, Burma

lacquer, bamboo

Gift of John McCarthy in memory of Edwin and Margot McCarthy
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2012

2012.59.a-d

Taa SAENGLAO

Thai-Lao c. 1903–07– c. 1980–82

Buddhist narrative scroll depicting the Vessantara Jataka

Pha yao Phra Wet

1958, Wang Tau village, Capital (Muang) District, Khon
Kaen Province, Thailand

watercolour and ink on cotton

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Asian Art, 2013

2013.933.a-b

The scroll shows scenes from the first two chapters of the final *jataka* story in which Prince Vessantara, the penultimate incarnation of Buddha, perfects the virtue of charity. The opening scene, entitled *Thotsaphon (10 Blessings)*, depicts the monk Phra Malai visiting Chulamunii stupa, which holds a lock of the Buddha's hair that he cut off when he renounced his aristocratic life to become an ascetic. The Buddha's rejection of his noble birth contextualises the royal setting of the Vessantara *jataka* and establishes the Buddha's precedent for Vessantara's charitable renunciation of his magical white elephant, jewels, and eventually his wife and children.

For kids

This painting tells the story of a prince named Vessantara who lived in Thailand a long time ago. Only the beginning of the story is shown here. When the prince was a baby, he was given a magical white elephant. The prince and his family wore gold jewellery and crowns with long points on the top.

Can you find the baby prince and his white elephant in the royal palace? Can you see the crowns?

BURMESE

Votive food container

Hsun-ok

early 20th century, Burma

lacquer, wood, bamboo

Gift of John McCarthy in memory of Edwin and Margot McCarthy
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2012

2012.67.a-b

Lacquer vessels of this type are used in Burma for carrying offerings to monasteries where they are presented to monks, thus earning spiritual merit for the donor. The trays inside hold a variety of food and donations, including rice, fruit, eggs, curry, condiments, quids of betel and cheroots. Most Burmese households would have owned at least one *hsun-ok*. Burmese lacquer wares are made of woven bamboo and/or wood coated with many layers of lacquer from the *Melanorrhoea usitata* tree and decorated in a variety of techniques, including incised patterns, relief moulding and sculpting.

Sopheap Pich

Cambodian, born 1971

Figure

2010

rattan, burlap, pigment and water-based paint

Collection of Mainland Art Fund, Melbourne

Figure is inspired by Sopheap Pich's experience of living in a Theravada Buddhist country traumatised by the brutal regime of the Khmer Rouge (1975–79). The work was inspired by a memory from his boyhood of the blood-splattered, demolished interior of a local Buddhist temple. Its unravelling, form mirrors the social disintegration and bloodshed of the Khmer Rouge era. Following time spent in refugee camps along the Thai border, the artist's family migrated to the United States in 1984, where Pich trained at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2004 he returned to Cambodia, and today lives and works in Phnom Penh.

Japanese Bodhisattva

Early Japanese Buddhist art displayed Chinese influences; however, these two Bodhisattvas from the Heian period (794–1185) display distinctly Japanese characteristics, including gentle facial features with long, arched eyebrows extending to a thin nose, downcast eyes and subtle smiles. They are adorned in the flowing robes and crowns of nobility, and their outstretched hands would have originally held small vases containing lotus flowers – symbol of Buddhism. While the example with broader shoulders and a rounder face dates from the mid Heian period, the smaller *Shō-Kannon Bosatsu* dates from the late Heian period.

Shō-Kannon Bosatsu displays stylistic similarities to the famed flying Bodhisattvas at Byōdō-in Temple, Uji, created by the eleventh-century Buddhist sculptor Jōchō. Jōchō is credited with establishing a unique style of sculpture with distinctly Japanese characteristics, as opposed to the Chinese-influenced sculptural styles that had been the convention prior to this time. The figure, standing on a lotus flower, is surrounded by a halo of swirling lotus plant motifs (*karakusa*). At the top of the halo there is a disc inscribed with the Sanskrit character Sa that refers to saintly, sacred and virtuous qualities, and which designates this figure as *Shō Kannon Bosatsu*.

JAPANESE

Bodhisattva

Kannon

Heian period (794–1185) Japan
lacquer on Cypress wood

Felton Bequest, 1961

334-D5

JAPANESE

Bodhisattva

Shō-Kannon Bosatsu

Heian period (12th century) Japan
lacquer, gilt Cypress (Hinoki), crystal

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO
and Maria Myers AO, 2011

2011.118

Tibetan Buddhist teachers

Buddhism reached Tibet in the seventh century CE and developed under royal patronage and the auspices of visiting Indian teachers. Tibet adopted an esoteric school of Buddhism derived from Indian Tantrism. Known as Vajrayana Buddhism, it emphasises the role of the teacher, or *lama*. The teacher's guidance is considered crucial for a Buddhist devotee to navigate the world of the senses and gain spiritual insight to achieve enlightenment. Consequently, *lama* imagery plays an important role in worship. Through meditation focused on images of teachers, such as this sculpture of Padmasambhava or the painting of Tsongkhapa, the devotee may receive the same benefits as those granted in the presence of the living master.

The eighth-century Indian monk Padmasambhava is the best known of the early Buddhist teachers in Tibet. He incorporated the practices and beliefs of Indian Buddhism with those of indigenous Tibetan spiritual beliefs, and provided the basis for the earliest of the major Tibetan religious orders, the Nyingma.

Tsongkhapa is one of the fathers of Tibetan Buddhism and the founder of the Gelug tradition which emphasises monastic discipline as the ideal basis for religious education and practice. The events of his life and associated monasteries and deities are portrayed in this painting.

TIBETAN

The life of Tsongkhapa

18th century, Tibet

opaque watercolour and gold paint on cotton

Gift of the O. F. Semler family in memory of O. F. Semler, 1955

1533A-D4

The central figure in this large biographical *thangka* (painting) is Tibetan Buddhist teacher, author and founder of the Gelug order of Tibetan Buddhism, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419). He and his disciples established the important monasteries of Ganden (1409), Drepung (1416) and Sera (1419) which appear in the painting. Tsongkhapa is considered to be the spiritual father of the Dalai Lama lineage and an incarnation of the bodhisattva Manjushri, who is shown to the left of the central figure. Tsongkhapa appears numerous times, receiving gifts from emissaries, delivering a sermon within a large monastery, teaching, travelling in a coracle and meditating.

For kids

This painting shows many scenes of the life of Tsongkhapa, an important Buddhist teacher who lived in Tibet 700 years ago. He is the large figure in the centre with a blue halo, dressed in orange robes with beautiful gold patterns. He appears many times in the painting – shown teaching, praying, meditating and making offerings. As a young man Tsongkhapa travelled all over Tibet to study with different teachers.

Can you find the picture of Tsongkhapa on one of these journeys, in a boat crossing a river?

TIBETAN

Padmasambhava

19th century, Tibet
gilt copper alloy

Presented through The Art Foundation

AS23-1982

TIBETAN

Tea bowl with stand and cover

19th century, Tibet
soapstone, silver, gilt

Purchased, 1979

AS43.a-c-1979

TIBETAN

Prayer wheel

18th–19th century, Tibet

silver, gilt, turquoise, metal, wood, bone

Purchased, 1979

AS11.a-b-1979

TIBETAN

Prayer beads

Mala

early 20th century, Tibet
wood, cotton string

Purchased, 1929

3043-D3

Buddhist prayer beads, or *mala*, are mainly used in Mahayana Buddhist practice to count prayers and incantations during worship, breaths while meditating and the number of prostrations performed. Prayer beads are also an attribute of some Buddhist deities, notably Avalokiteshvara. The number of beads varies, although 108 is a traditional number – representing the 108 human passions or defilements that impede progress towards enlightenment. The beads may be made from various materials and are worn as necklaces or bracelets.

TIBETAN

Prayer beads bracelet

early 20th century, Tibet

wood, pigment, metal, silk thread, cotton string

Felton Bequest, 1923

2448-D3

Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattvas are individuals filled with compassion who, rather than enter nirvana after attaining enlightenment, remain in the life–death cycle to redeem other unenlightened souls. Taking different forms and playing many roles in the Buddhist pantheon of deities, they are considered to be incarnations of the historical Buddha. Avalokiteshvara, the Lord of Compassionate Glances, is the patron deity of Tibet and is displayed here with Tim Johnson's mesmerising space-scape featuring Buddhist and popular culture icons. The deity's many arms and heads are characteristic of tantric iconography of Tibet and Nepal; his drapery and hands reflect Chinese influences; and his physical features are derived from Nepalese and Indian sculpture. When Avalokiteshvara beheld the suffering of the world he was filled with such compassion that his head multiplied to form eleven heads, and 1000 helping arms and hands sprang from his body. In the palm of each hand appeared an eye of infinite vision, seeking out and assisting those in need.

TIBETO-CHINESE

Avalokiteshvara

17th–18th century, China

gilt-bronze, semi-precious stone, pigment

Felton Bequest, 1966

1485-D5

For kids

Bodhisattvas are very powerful. They watch over people and help them when they are in trouble or suffering. Not all Bodhisattvas look the same. This one has eleven heads and a thousand hands with an eye in the middle of each one, making him very helpful. Beside him there are two other Bodhisattvas – one with a crystal in his forehead and the other with only two hands.

In what other ways can you see that they are different?

Tim JOHNSON

Australian born 1947

Imitating art

2005 Sydney

synthetic polymer and metallic paint
on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Victorian Foundation
for Living Australian Artists, 2005

2005.425.a-i

Amida Buddha

Amitābha, or Amida Buddha, is the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Limitless Life. Presiding over a heavenly paradise and promising salvation for all worshippers, he became the most popular deity in Japan from the tenth century onwards. Meditation and the recitation of sutra encouraged practitioners to visualise Amida in his heavenly paradise. When meditating, followers would use painted scrolls, murals and sculptures of Amida. These show him either seated on a lotus flower waiting for devotees to enter paradise, or in the standing pose raigō ('welcoming descent'), descending to fetch his devotees on their passing from this world and personally transport them back to paradise.

This group of Amida Buddhas includes small shrines for travel or the home, larger sculptures for temples, and paintings. In each of the visualisations, Amida features an extended lobe on top of his head to accommodate his advanced understanding of the truth; large ears that allow him to hear all people in need; folds on his neck that indicate compassion for all people; and tightly curled hair that symbolises wisdom and spiritual awakening. The rose-coloured crystal set amidst his curly hair emits rays of light, displaying his supreme knowledge, and a spiral of white hair on his forehead represents his love and affection for humanity.

Scrolls
Left to right

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha

late Edo period (19th century) Japan
ink on paper

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha as disguised Christ figure

late Edo period (1600-15–1868) Japan
pigments, ink on paper

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

This unusual depiction of Amida Buddha, painted in a style known as *Akita ranga*, remains a mystery to Japanese scholars. *Akita ranga* was a short-lived school of painting in a Dutch style (*ranga*) that started in the feudal domain of Akita during the late eighteenth century. Amida Buddha's characteristics of curly hair, a simple robe, spiral of white hair on his forehead and jewel in his hair are all clearly visible. This Amida's face is distinctly European in appearance, which suggests that this painting could be a disguised portrait of Christ, created in times of Christian persecution and a shogunate ban on Christian iconography.

Sculptures
Top to bottom

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha

Amida Nyorai

Heian period (12th century) Japan
lacquer, gold and pigment on Cypress (Hinoki), crystals

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO
and Maria Myers AO, 2010

2010.3

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha

late Edo period (19th century) Japan
lacquer, gold and pigment on Cypress (Hinoki)

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

Portable shrines

Left to right, top to bottom

Portable shrines

Zushi – portable Buddhist shrines – were made for devout Buddhists to have in their homes and take on their travels. Produced in many different shapes and sizes, these small shrines could be packed into luggage, tucked into clothing or attached to one's body. *Zushi* are usually black lacquered on the outside and gilded inside; when their hinged doors are opened, the deity is revealed, bathed in the golden light. One example here displays the Buddhist symbols of lotus leaves and blossoming flowers on the inside of its doors

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha portable shrine

Late Edo period (19th century) Japan

lacquer, gold and pigment on wood, metal

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha portable shrine

Late Edo period (19th century) Japan

lacquer, gold and pigment on wood, metal

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

JAPANESE

Amida Buddha portable shrine

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JAPANESE

Amida Buddha portable shrine

Late Edo period (19th century) Japan

lacquer, gold and pigment on wood, metal

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

KOREAN

***Amitabha Buddha, Bodhisattvas and
Taoist scholars***

(20th century) Korea
ink and pigments on linen

Gift of Ian and Barbara Carroll, 2016

Guanyin

Guanyin, or Guanshiyin, is one who hears the sounds or prayers of the world. He is portrayed wearing the sumptuous flowing costume of an Indian prince, seated in the elegant pose of 'royal ease'. This large sculpture of Guanyin would have originally been seated in a temple altar, painted in gold and bright colours and surrounded by colourful fabrics and vases of flowers. The elegant scroll painting depicts Guanyin sitting under a pine tree at the base of a seaside cliff, possibly at his home of Mt Putao, surrounded by a moonlike halo.

Known as a God of Mercy, Guanyin was a popular image of worship, and many devotees furnish their homes with a small shrine displaying a finely crafted porcelain figure of the deity. A variety of styles were produced during the Ming and Qing Dynasties in China's porcelain producing areas of Longquan, Jingdezhen and Dehua, as well as in Europe by established institutions such as the Chelsea Porcelain Factory. Although mass-produced, these figures have a unique character. Whether sitting or standing on a lotus flower or rock, or floating on clouds, Guanyin is consistently shown with flowing robes, elegant hand gestures and a benevolent expression.

CHINESE

Guanyin

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period 1662–1722 Dehua, Fujian
province, China
porcelain, wood

Felton Bequest, 1921

2079-D3

CHINESE

Guanyin

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period 1662–1722 Dehua, Fujian
province, China
porcelain (Dehua ware)

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3733-D3

CHINESE

Guanyin

late Ming dynasty – early Qing dynasty (17th century)

Dehua, Fujian province, China

porcelain

Gift of J. T. Hackett, 1924

2592-D3

CHINESE

Guanyin

Ming dynasty 1368–1644 Dehua, Fujian province, China
porcelain

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939

4358-D3

CHINESE

Guanyin

Jin dynasty 1115–1234 Shanxi province, China
wood, pigments

Felton Bequest, 1939

4645-D3

CHINESE

Guanyin, snuff bottle

20th century China

ivory, ink

Gift of Miss G. Hay-Hendry, 1961

350-D5

CHINESE

White-robed Guanyin in a landscape

early 14th century China

pigments, ink on silk

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of the National Australia Bank
Limited, Honorary Life Benefactor, 1997

1997.94

CHELSEA PORCELAIN FACTORY, London (manufacturer)

English (c. 1744)–1769,

Guanyin

(1750–52) London, England
porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2010

2010.11

CHINESE

Guanyin

Ming dynasty – early Qing dynasty (17th century) –
Dehua, Fujian province, south-east China, China
porcelain (Dehua ware)

Felton Bequest, 1951

1102-D4

CHINESE

Guanyin

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period 1662–1722 Jingdezhen,
Jiangxi province, China
porcelain

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939

4301-D3

CHINESE

Guanyin

Ming dynasty 1368–1644 Longquan, Zhejiang province,
China

stoneware (Longguan ware)

Felton Bequest, 1926

2799-D3

Jizō

Jizō, or Kshitigarbha, is a Bodhisattva who assists the living on their path of salvation to paradise and is one of the most beloved of all Japanese divinities. Jizō's origins are associated with the Hindu goddess Prithvi, who personifies the Earth and is equated with fertility. When introduced to China and Japan in around the seventh century, Jizō took the form of a travelling monk thought to be based on a Korean monk of the same era, known as Gin-Chau-Jue. According to legend, upon Gin-Chau-Jue's death his body did not decay, and was subsequently gilded over and venerated as an emanation of Jizō.

Represented as a monk, Jizō holds a wish-granting jewel and long staff. The staff has six rings and can open the six gates between the realms of incarnation that humans must negotiate before reaching paradise. In Japan, Jizō is best known as the guardian and patron deity of children.

The notable feature of this Japanese Kamakura-period sculpture is the three-dimensionality of the flowing robes. In ceremonies, Japanese and Chinese monks wear exquisitely woven robes, known as *kesa*. These magnificent examples are woven with silk and gilt paper thread and display colourful peony flowers and Buddhist sutras.

JAPANESE

Monk's robe

Kesa

late Edo period (19th century) Japan
silk, cotton, gilt on paper thread

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

JAPANESE

Bodhisattva

Jizō Bosatsu

Kamakura period 1185–1333 Japan

wood, lacquer, gold paint, pigment, metal, glass

Felton Bequest, 1957

1736.a-d-D4

Jizō Bosatsu assists the living on their path of salvation to paradise. Represented as a monk, he holds a wish-granting jewel and a long staff. The staff has six rings and can open the six gates between the realms of incarnation that humans must negotiate before reaching paradise. These are the realms of hells, hungry ghosts, animals, demons, humans and heavenly beings. In Japan, stone statues of Jizō are a common sight, especially by roadsides and in graveyards. Traditionally, Jizō Bosatsu is seen as the guardian of children, in particular children who die before their parents.

JAPANESE

Monk's robe

Kesa

Meiji period, Taisho period (late 19th early 20th century)

Japan

silk, cotton, gilt on paper thread

Collection of Joan Gunn, Melbourne

Zen

Unlike other Buddhist sects, Zen is not a devotional religion with deities who assist the faithful to attain enlightenment, but rather helps followers achieve enlightenment through meditation on their own. In this sense it can be seen as the simplest form of Buddhism, and perhaps the closest to the historical Buddha's philosophy.

Zen's most important figure is Bodhidharma, known as Daruma in Japan, regarded as the twenty-eighth patriarch of Buddhism. According to legend, he travelled from India to China during the sixth century disseminating Zen practices. After meeting the Chinese Emperor, Bodhidharma crossed the Yangtzi River floating on a reed, as depicted on the Jingdezhen porcelain plate, and travelled north to Shaolin temple where he meditated in a cave for nine years. This act of determination to understand the true nature of enlightenment embodies Zen practice and is the subject of the historical hanging scroll and contemporary work by Takashi Murakami displayed here.

Zen artists use powerful or whimsical brushstrokes to create calligraphy and images that express ideas considered 'beyond verbal explanation'. Examples here include the character for emptiness inscribed on the ceramic vessel by Yoon Kwang-cho, and Nakahara Nantenbo's line of novice monks collecting alms in the early morning.

NAKAHARA Nantenbo

Japanese 1839–1925

The stick of Nantenbo

1901 Japan

ink on paper

Lillian Ernestine Lobb Bequest, 2003

2003.685

The monk Nakahara Nantenbo took his name from the sacred Buddhist nanten tree, also known as heavenly bamboo. He cut a walking staff from one such tree before setting out on a pilgrimage with other Zen masters to wage Dharma (Buddhist truth). Nantenbo also used his nanten staff (*nanten-bo*) to discipline his disciples to meditate with a clear mind and to ponder Zen conundrums (*kōan*). Created with one expressive brushstroke, this piece of calligraphy symbolises the concept of sudden enlightenment discovered through intense meditation and mind-to-mind philosophical encounters. It reads: 'If you speak – (blows of) the *nanten-bo* / If you don't speak – (blows of) the *nanten-bo*'.

JAPANESE

Bodhidharma

late Muromachi period – early Edo period
(16th –17th century) Japan
pigment on silk

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3784-D3

Daruma (Bodhidaruma) is regarded as the twenty-eighth patriarch of Buddhism and is one of Zen's most important icons. According to legend, he travelled from India to China during the sixth century disseminating Zen practices. In paintings he represents insight and realisation – the mind of Buddha. He is almost always depicted as a half-body: according to a Zen saying, 'Daruma (truth) is so big that he can only be portrayed in a half body'. In this work Daruma appears to look directly at the viewer but his vision is much wider, taking everything in and missing nothing.

For kids

In Japan this old man is named Daruma. He was a simple and wise man who was bald, had a beard and wore a red robe. He travelled all the way from India to China where he decided to discover his true self by sitting in a cave and meditating for nine years. Although Daruma looks grumpy, he is actually thinking very hard to discover peace and happiness.

If you sit still, hold your hands in front of you and think as deeply as you can, what type of face do you make?

YOON Kwang-cho

Korean 1946–

Vase, Impermanence

1991 Korea

stoneware (Buncheong ware)

Purchased, 1992

AS2-1992

This vase by one of Korea's leading ceramicists features two characters inscribed in an energetic script by the artist's fingers. When combined, emptiness (無) and eternity (常) form the meaning 'impermanence' which is a fundamental aspect of Zen philosophy for the pursuit of enlightenment.

Takashi MURAKAMI

Japanese 1962–

Daruma the great

2009 Japan

silkscreen, woodblock print, platinum leaf on paper,
edition 11/30

Forthcoming acquisition to be purchased with funds donated by Maureen Morrissey, 2017

New acquisition

Takashi Murakami is one of Japan's most internationally recognised contemporary artists. *Daruma the great* is a powerful example of Murakami's portraits in the style of historical Zen brush and ink painting, infused with his trademark colourful contemporary Japanese *manga* aesthetics. Daruma's characteristic bald head, bushy eyebrows, large ears, piercing eyes and red robe are all indicated with great vitality. On the right side, in the tradition of Zen-ga painting, Murakami has energetically inscribed the title of the work, under which is a small self-portrait of the artist.

CHINESE

Dish with Bodhidharma crossing the Yangtzi on a reed

Ming dynasty, Tianqi period 1621–1627 Jingdezhen,
Jiangxi province, China
porcelain, enamel

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3739.a-b-D3

NAKAHARA Nantenbo

Japanese 1839–1925

Procession of monks

1921 Japan

ink on paper

Lillian Ernestine Lobb Bequest, 2003

2003.666.1-2