

## Artist Statement

### Lee Sun-Don

*If my totemic energy artwork could make Buddhist doctrines more accessible and much easier to be appreciated, this would be quite a beautiful way to honor the Buddha.*

I had always believed that I was denied the opportunity to become a painter. It was not that I disliked painting. Rather, often times when I looked at the masterpieces in the world through the published portfolios, marveling at the skilful strokes which surpassed even the angels', and at the techniques that brought to life even the finest details of the subjects, I was humbled. I only wished to stay away at a respectful distance.

The Buddhist cultivation, however, has brought to me the astonishing changes, if not wonders. It was 1998 when I drew, for the first time, what I visualized in deep meditation on a piece of serviette—an illustration of the origins of the universe—and created my first "totemic energy painting." Totem is the states of harmony and of balance of cosmic energies. Totemic painting is to use line and color to capture and embody the universal energies in art form—the painting itself therefore also emanates mystical power, the so-called "totemic energy."

Now, no more than a decade, I have been heralded as the pioneer of Totemic Energy Oil Painting. Especially starting from July of 2007, not only did I hold an exhibition of my totemic energy artwork in Taiwan, my hometown. Daringly enough and truly honored, I have also accepted invitations to hold totemic exhibitions around the world, including Milan, Rome, Paris, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai, and Adelaide (Australia). The recognitions I received from the international art circles are totally beyond my expectation. I could hardly believe such resplendent episode of my life, which seems to pop up nowhere. To me, it was more of a startle than a pleasant surprise. I was deeply moved and grateful than feeling proud.

It was March 2006 when I began to literally paint. My intention for practicing painting was pure and simple: with the assistance and manifestation of painting, I wish that the Buddha dharma that I have come to realize and been enlightened with could be easily comprehended by my disciples. Being the Third Patriarch of the

Buddhist Forshang, it is my calling to glorify Buddha's teaching and bring awareness to the Buddhahood that resides within each one of us. As a Buddhist mentor, it is also my responsibility to exhaust all means to help the thousands of disciples coming to my lectures every week to better understand the Buddhist doctrines, and through which, to realize their own Buddha nature. Painting, or specifically totemic painting, happens to be one such means, among others—a means to unfold Buddha's wisdom and compassion, to disclose the true meanings of life, and to illuminate the path to enlightenment.

"If my totemic energy artwork could make Buddhist doctrines more accessible and much easier to be appreciated, this would be quite a beautiful way to honor the Buddha." As a Buddhist practitioner and artist, this is what I have been telling myself everyday; it is also the ultimate momentum that keeps me creating.