

Artist Statement

Lee Sun-Don

If my painting could make Buddha dharma more accessible to people and much easier to be appreciated, this would be beautifully enough.

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 of painting in the world through the published portfolios, marveling at the skilful strokes that surpassed even the angels' and at the techniques that brought to life even the finest details of the subjects, I felt as if the viewers and the artists belonged to two separate worlds. They seemed to present an air of cold magnificence and a look of aloof pride constantly shown in the gaze of an aristocrat. I was humbled, and only wished to stay away at a respectful distance.

The Buddhist cultivation, however, has brought to me astonishing changes, if not wonders. Since the time when I drew the first “totem” – the fundamental image of all the phenomena and all the energies of the universe – on a piece of serviette more than a decade ago, I have transformed quite dramatically. Starting from July of 2007, not only did I hold an exhibition of Totemic Energy Oil Painting in Taiwan; daringly enough and truly honored, I also accepted invitations to present my totemic artworks around the world, including Milan, Rome, Paris, London, Los Angeles, New York, Moscow, Singapore, Kyoto, Beijing and Shanghai. Even just within the year of 2008, I had won forty or so honorable recognitions in international juried expositions, including a Grand Prize awarded by The World and Universal Academy in Netherlands. I especially felt privileged to be granted membership by numerous international-celebrated art societies, such as the 1754-established Britain Royal Society for the Encouragement of Art, Manufactures & Commerce, best known as RSA.

It was March 2006 when I began to literally paint with oil. My original intention was pure and simple: I just wish that through the manifestation of painting, the Buddha dharma that I have come to realize and been enlightened with can be easily comprehended by my disciples. The canvas for me in the first place was merely a “medium” for transmitting the Buddhist doctrines! Being the Third Patriarch of Buddhist Forshang, it is my calling to exhaust all means through which the thousands of disciples coming to my lectures every week could better understand and realize their own Buddha nature. Incidentally, one of the means that came to my mind happened to be “painting as embodiment of Buddha dharma.” Beyond expectation, my “painting as embodiment of Buddha dharma” has attracted great attention ever since, from Taiwan to all over the world. To me, it is more of inspiration than pride. I am deeply moved and grateful.

“If my painting could make Buddha dharma more accessible to people and much easier to be appreciated, this would be beautifully enough – a beautiful way to glorify the Buddha.” And this is what I have been telling myself everyday; it is also the ultimate momentum that keeps me painting!