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VISION BY NAOKO TOSA & NGUYEN TUAN

Naoko Tosa · Nguyen Tuan

VISION 悟

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Naoko Tosa / *Sanctuary 9 "Creatures"* / Limited Edition Print / 2012

Nguyen Tuan / *Sleeping Buddha* / 73 x 20 x 26 cm / 20 kg / Ceramic / 2011

Naoko Tosa

Japanese media artist Naoko Tosa has an interesting way of expressing her thoughts on spirituality. With the help of modern technology, she computes age-old Japanese tradition and culture into artworks that express the search for inner peace and a quiet state of mind. In this unique approach, her work conveys a strong sense of silent bliss as well as a powerful sense of dynamism found in the origins of Japanese Zen and the indigenous practice of Shinto-ism.

Born in 1961 in the leafy city of Fukuoka, Tosa has derived much of her inspiration from all aspects of nature. Using diverse and mixed techniques from photography, digital software, video art, augmented reality art to installation pieces she has amalgamated these into her belief that there is an artistic concept that different cultures all over the world are connected universally as one in one collective higher consciousness to transcend differences. In essence, Tosa believes that thought, especially in the creative realm, transcends culture, heritage and time.

In fact, she has integrated this belief in a very modern way - by marrying concept to computer in a approach she terms "Cultural Computing". In doing so, she has created a new future for art that she hopes will lead to many more possibilities and potential.

When art and science comes together in an exquisitely beautiful manner, it is sure to be the work of artist Naoko Tosa.

Tosa-san is truly in a unique position to reconcile the differences between tradition and technology as well as relate the past to the future. She has a doctorate in Art and Technology from the University of Tokyo and has spent 2 years as a fellow artist in the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Currently, she serves as a professor at the Kyoto University, a leading research-oriented institution known for producing several Nobel Prize laureates.

Her works can be sighted in many locations worldwide like the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the American Film Association and International Berlin Film Festival New Media Division. Her progressive approach towards combining art and science has led her to also win awards like the Best Paper from the IEEE International Conference on Multimedia in 1996 as well as a second prize for Nabi Digital Storytelling Competition of Intangible Heritage, organised by UNESCO in 2004. As well, she has received research funding from government agencies and corporations such as famous game company Taito Corp, in order to advance her search, through art and image, for spirituality and the answers in this modern age.

MAD & Naoko Tosa

MAD: Could you tell us a bit about the process of you becoming an artist and your influences?

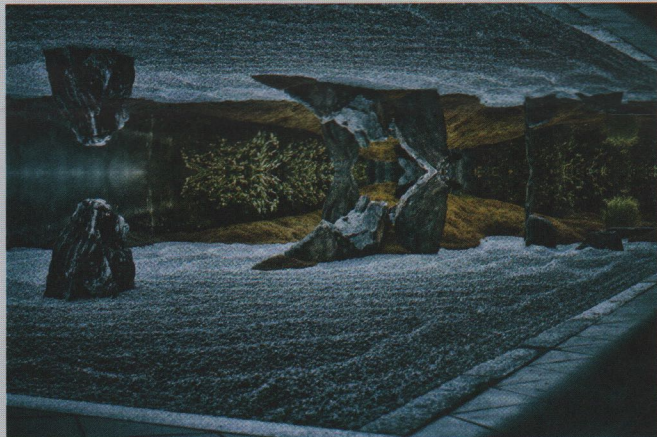
Tosa: When I was a high school student, I was very much inspired by Surrealism represented by Dali et.. I was very interested in the concept to make invisible to visible.

MAD: How did you got into the unique position of learning art with science? Could you tell us your motivation behind this?

Tosa: My undergraduate study was graphic design, modern art, film and video. However, as I wanted to “make invisible to visible” using new technology I came to be interested in technology. Therefore my graduate study and PhD study was computer science.

MAD: Can you give us your outlook on how the study of art and science mimics or influences each other. Do you think the two contradicts or complements each other?

Tosa: Yes, these two complements well each other. Art can inspire us and promote us to make new technology and vice versa.



Naoko Tosa / *Sanctuary 6 “Power”* / Limited Edition Print / 2012

MAD: In terms of technology and creative expression, how and where do you think this will evolve in the near future?

Tosa: For me science/technology and creative expression are connected all the time. Since a long time ago, the Greek term “Techne” expresses the meaning of both technology, craftsmanship and creativity.

MAD: Could you share with us what your next project is going to be about?

Tosa: I will focus my new artwork that will be exhibited in Japanese Pavillon at the next EXPO 2015 held in Milan.

MAD: Can you describe yourself in 3 words?
Tosa: Naoko Tosa. Artist. Science artist.

MAD: What is the most valuable lesson you’ve learnt in life through your art?

Tosa: I have learned a lot through my life. Life gives the most valuable lesson to me.



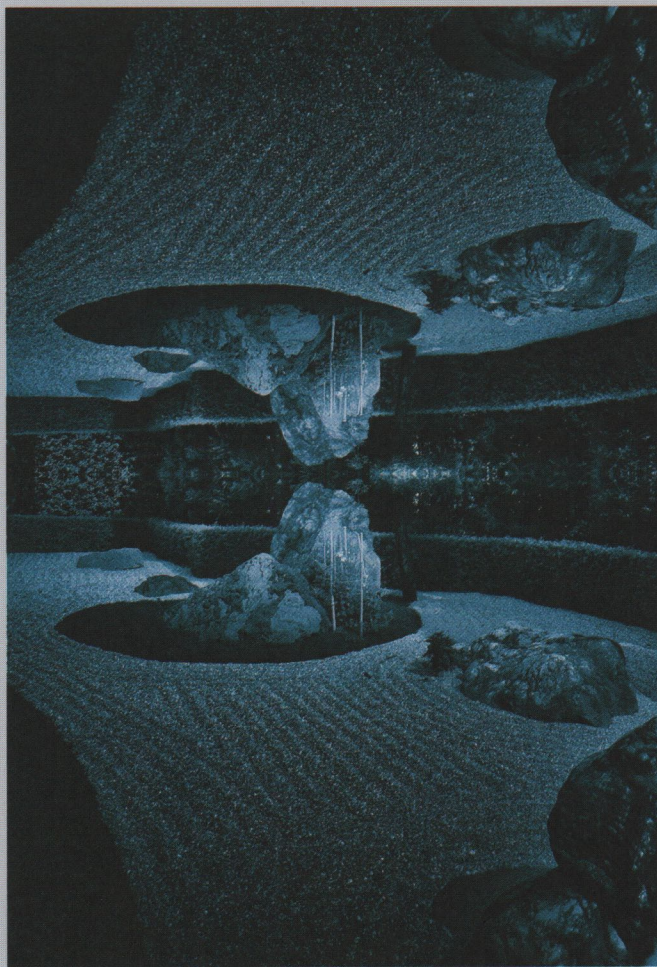
Naoko Tosa / *Sanctuary 3 “Floating”* / Limited Edition Print / 2012

土佐尚子

当科学与艺术以一种精致而美丽的方式相遇时，这肯定是土佐尚子的作品。

日本媒体艺术家土佐尚子以一种有趣的方式来表达她对精神性的想法。透过现代科技的帮助，她将历史悠久的日本传统放进自己的作品里头，来诠释内在平静与心灵之安定状态的追寻。在独具一格的思考下，她的作品蕴含了根源自日本禅宗与神道主义之具体实践的过人活力与强烈的宁静幸福感。

一九六一年生于充满绿意的福冈，土佐尚子的创作灵感多从自然的不同层面而来。运用多元而混合的手法，像是摄影、数位软体、录像艺术，将实境艺术扩展为装置作品等，她成功地将自己相信有一个更高的集体意识可以超越彼此分歧，并且连结世界



Naoko Tosa / *Sanctuary 9 “Creatures”* / Limited Edition Print / 2012

上不同文化的艺术概念给集成起来。土佐尚子认为，就本质上而言，思想，特别是在创意范畴，可以超越文化、传承与时间。

事实上，她以一种非常现代的方式集成了这样的信念——透过结合电脑科技，她称之为「文化运算」的概念来完成。在这样的作法下，她为艺术创造了崭新的未来，并期许能引导出更多潜在的可能。

在调和传统与科技之间的差异，乃至於过去与未来的关连，土佐尚子确实已经站在了一个独特的位置上。她不但拥有东京大学艺术与科技专业的博士学位，还曾在麻省理工学院高等视觉研究中心担任客座艺术家达两年之久。她如今任教于京都大学，并主持一个曾培养出多位获得诺贝尔桂冠殊荣的研究机构。

她的作品可以在多个举世闻名的地点见到，像是纽约现代美术馆、美国电影协会、柏林国际影展等等。



Naoko Tosa / *Sanctuary 11 “Lotus”* / Limited Edition Print / 2012

MAD 与 土佐尚子

MAD: 可以聊一下妳是如何成为艺术家，以及妳所受到的影响为何？

土佐： 当我在高中就读时，就深受超现实主义艺术的启发，像是达利。我对「将不可见的变成可见」的概念相当感兴趣。

MAD: 是什么特殊机缘让妳去学习艺术与科技？可以告诉我们背后的动机吗？

土佐： 我大学本科学习的是平面设计、现代艺术、电影跟录像。但当我想要运用新的科技「使不可见的成为可见」时，我开始对科技产生兴趣，所以后来我的硕士、博士研究就变成了电脑科技。

MAD: 妳可以说说妳怎么看艺术与科技两者的学习会如何模仿或影响彼此吗？

土佐： 没错，这两者可以很好地填补彼此的不足。艺术可以激发我们，并且促进科技的发展；反之亦然。

MAD: 妳愿意跟我们分享你接下来的创作计画吗？
土佐： 我将会专注在即将於米兰登场的2015世界博览会代表日本馆展出的作品上面。

MAD: 妳可以用三个词汇来形容自己吗？
土佐： 土佐尚子、艺术家、科学艺术家。

MAD: 透过你的艺术，什么是妳在生命学习到最宝贵的一课？

土佐： 我从生命中学到许多。生命为我上了最宝贵的一课。

Nguyen Tuan

In a divine moment on the mountain, a young sculptor catches sight of a familiar face.

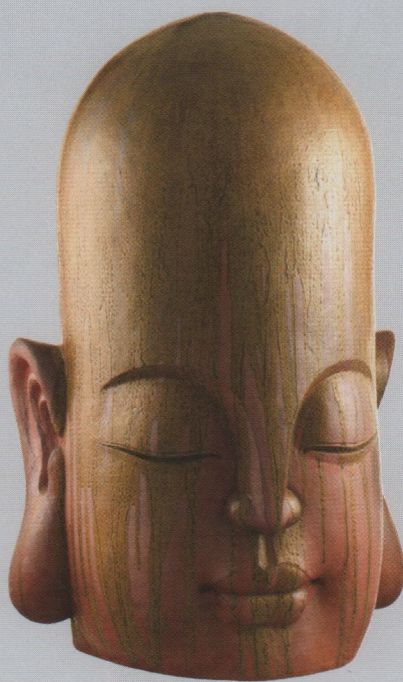
There have been many charmed moments in Vietnamese sculptor Nguyen Tuan's life. Moments that advanced his trajectory into a respected artist who is merely under 30 years of age. Even as a child, he developed a strong affinity towards his materials, constantly playing with mud and clay. After studying ceramic sculpture at the local Hanoi University of Industrial Fine Arts, he went on, in two swift years after graduation, to show at various venues around Hanoi. His highly emotive and instinctive knack for molding clay and manipulating ceramic into graceful and sensual figurines were quickly discovered when he held



Nguyen Tuan / *Monk At Play 3* / 40 x 40 x 66 cm / 35 kg / Ceramic / 2011

his first solo foray at Hanoi's Museum of Fine Arts. In 2010, he also received recognition outside of Vietnam like a Young Creative Award at Onggi Expo in Ulsan Korea.

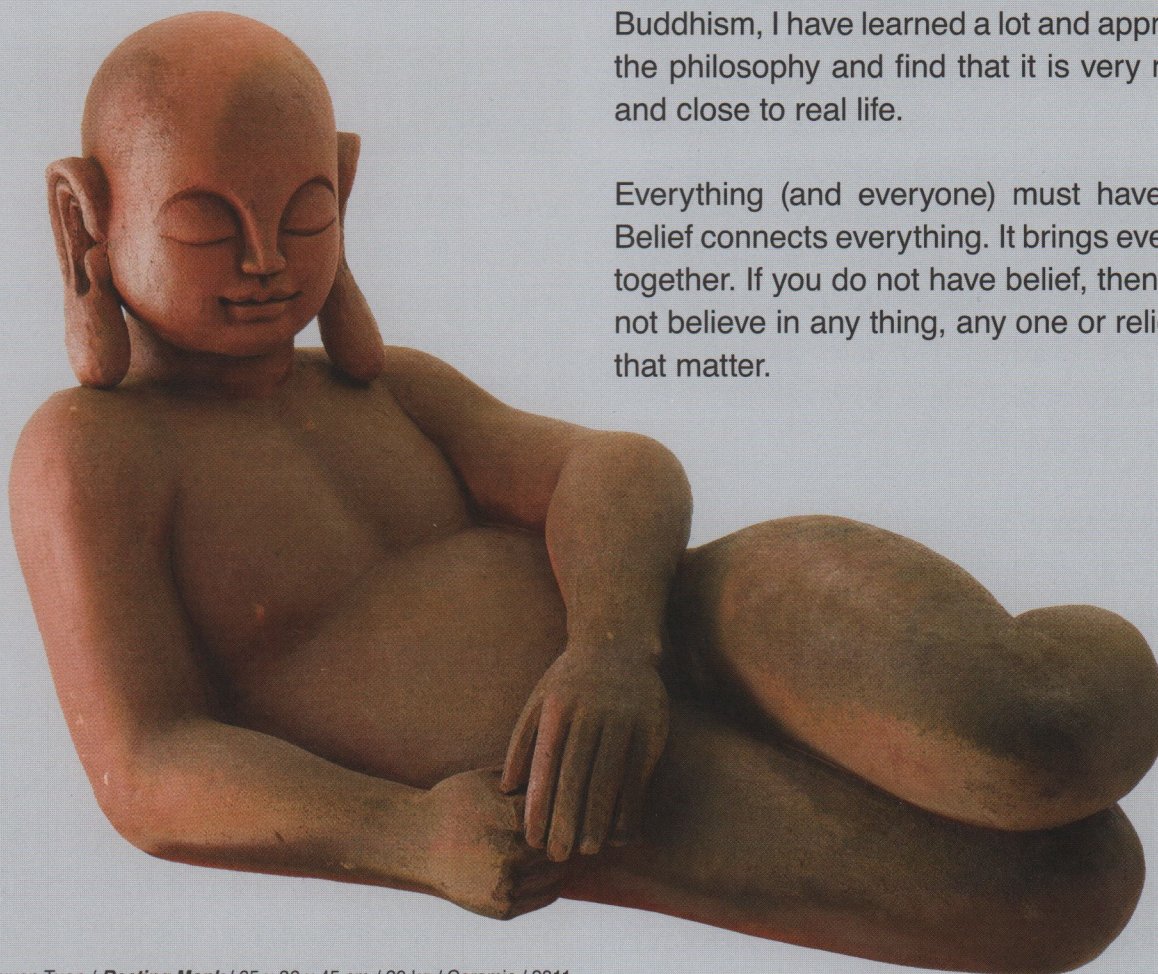
In fact, it was yet more moments of realisation and personal experience that led Tuan towards his most recent collection which is a departure from his former sculptures inspired by Eros and sensuality. It was at the point when he had started looking for his own sense of spiritual peace. He was invited to head up Mount Yen Tu to join in a modest restoration project by the temple up there. The sights, sounds and smells left a deep impression on Tuan. He was struck by the light but immense sense of bliss and quietude. "When I worked at Mount Yen Tu, I heard the sound of the prayers and the wooden bell, being struck by the monks. The clear mountain air smelled of incense. Working in this pure air with the Buddhist atmosphere, I suddenly thought about my life in the city and



Nguyen Tuan / *Wisdom (L)* / 50 x 50 x 80 cm / 40 kg / Ceramic / 2011

the chaotic meaningless of everyday life that is reflected by the verses of the nuns imprinted at the ancient temple of Non Nuoc which says - Modern Life is like a chaotic game -the deeper we look at it the more dirty it seems. Evil thoughts are defeated by early pagoda bells. The malevolent heart is being broken by the noon prayers."

After spending time and learning from the monks, he returned to his everyday city life with a sense of peace, it was then that Tuan realised his search for the definition of happiness lay right before him. He saw it in the faces of ordinary people. "...I suddenly could see Buddha's image in the ordinary people awaiting at the bus stop or the labourers waiting for work on the street. When I saw the little boy in my pottery studio during his intermittent sleep, I could see it as well as in the shape of the rural woman in the pottery village where I am working or in the smiling faces of brothers and friends that I love, having food together. I saw many beautiful things around me that I could not see clearly before. Everything came up in a



Nguyen Tuan / *Resting Monk* / 65 x 36 x 45 cm / 20 kg / Ceramic / 2011

sound and bright way. This was my inspiration for the following series of terracotta sculptures."

Before then, the artist could only relate to spirituality and the philosophy of Buddhism in a manner that was far removed from personal experience and as a lofty and remote religion. His ability to see how it could resonate intimately with those closest to him led him to create a collection in ode to the image of Buddha. The figures are not so much intended to spread the word of Buddha, but more to reflect Tuan's discovery that peace, joy and happiness lies in the mien of mankind.



Nguyen Tuan / *Half Face Buddha* / 60 x 30 x 25 cm / 10 kg / Ceramic / 2011

MAD & Nguyen Tuan

MAD: Could you tell us about your childhood and how it has influenced your art?

Nguyen: I was born in a small town in the midland of mountainous areas of northern Vietnam where there is beautiful scenery, heritage and cultural temples. The landscape here has given me a peaceful life and a beautiful spirit. I do not know when but ever since I got in touch with my deeper emotions, I began my journey with art.

MAD: Would you describe yourself as a spiritual person?

Nguyen: I'm not a religious person or religious at all, but I love Buddhist culture, its teachings and Buddha images. Because going into Buddhism, I have learned a lot and appreciated the philosophy and find that it is very relevant and close to real life.

Everything (and everyone) must have belief. Belief connects everything. It brings everything together. If you do not have belief, then you do not believe in any thing, any one or religion for that matter.

MAD: How does spirituality and art influence each other. What do you think is their relationship?

Nguyen: The images of Buddha influence my art deeply. Through the image of Buddha, I want to speak out about human condition - the problems we face, as well as the society in which we live. I also want to express my feelings about human values and also my concern that people have forgotten or neglected the importance of love and compassion between people. Success and wealth are fleeting. Buddhism espouses compassion, empathy and humanity, and that is eternal.

MAD: What sort of materials or forms do you like to work with?

Nguyen: Ceramic is my favourite material. Since childhood, I had played with clay. I enjoy the experience of working with clay. It is unpredictable due to its composition. When it is burned, the final product is also unpredictable. It is a fascinating material.

MAD: What is your outlook on the sculpture and art scene in Vietnam?

Nguyen: Art is never fixed. Each period has a concept and reflects the thinking of the age. I am borrowing the image of Buddha and reflecting them in my art as a way to describe life and to bring the wonderful teachings of Buddhist philosophy closer to people. I want to dispel the notion that Buddha is only for worship!

阮 团

在山上一个神圣的时刻，一个年轻的雕塑家看见一张熟悉的面孔。

在越南雕塑家阮团的生命里，出现过多次让人著迷的时刻。这些时刻推动著他向前迈进，使他不满三十岁就已经成为一个颇受到各界尊重的艺术家。当他还是稚龄孩童时，在一直玩着泥巴和黏土的同时，便展现了他对於材料细腻的瞭解与掌握。在越南境内的河内工业艺术大学修习陶瓷雕塑并取得学位后，很迅速地在短短两年的时间，他的作品已在河内各地随处可见。在河内当代美术馆的首展当中，他高度感性与本能地掌握捏塑陶瓷的诀窍，使之转化为优雅而感性的塑像迅速获得各界认同。在2010年，他更获得「蔚山世界瓷器文化博览会」所颁发的「青年创意奖」而开始扬名海外。

事实上，还存在著更多瞬间的实践以及私人的经验，引领著阮团走向与他原本从情意中汲取灵感全然不同的新系列创作。这样的转捩点，源自他决定寻找自身心灵的平静。他受邀前往炎图山去参与一座寺庙的修复计画，当地的景观、声音跟味道都让他留下了相当深刻的印象。他也深深感动於巨大的宁静与幸福当中：「当我在炎图山工作时，可以听到信徒的祈祷、僧人敲击木钟的声响；山上清澈的空气如闻淡淡幽香。在这样纯净且充满佛教氛围的环境下工作，我顿时思考到以往的城市生活、混乱失序又无意义可言的日常种种，早在岷港宁平的古老庙宇中所

印制的尼姑经文中反映出来——现代生活就像是一个混乱的游戏，当我们看的越深就会发现它越丑陋，只有晨钟可以来对抗邪恶、午祷能够打破怀有恶意的。」



Nguyen Tuan / *Inspiration* / 36 x 36 x 90 cm / 30 kg / Ceramic / 2011

每天与僧人坐在一块，然后带著平和之感回到他的城市生活，在在使阮团体认到长久以来他寻找幸福的定义，而最终的答案其实就在眼前，并且出现在一般民众的脸上。「……我像是突然可以在等待公车到来的一般民众，或者在街上寻找工作的劳工身上看到佛陀的形象。不论是那一名在我的陶艺工作室断断续续的打着盹的小男孩，为我所工作的陶艺村里的农家妇女，或者是我所爱的兄弟朋友，一起微笑享用食物的模样，他们都似乎都显露出佛陀的善意，似乎都成为了佛陀的化身。我看到自己身边围绕著许多美好的事物，这是我以前不曾清楚看见的。所有的事物都有声音，并且以明亮的方式朝我而来，这也成为我接下来一系列赤陶雕塑创作的灵感来源。」

在此之前，阮团只能以远离个人经验的方式，遥望看似高高在上的佛教精神哲学。如今，他得以与之亲近并产生深刻共鸣的能力，促使他创作出一个歌颂佛陀形象的系列作品。透过这些雕像作品，阮团并非意图想要传播佛陀的话语，而更多是反映他个人的发现：原来平静、喜悦与幸福其实都存在于人类的风采之中。

MAD 与 阮团

MAD: 阮团你好，可以跟我们谈一下你的童年生活以及它如何影响你的艺术吗？

阮团：我出生于越南北部山区之中的一个小镇，有著美丽的景致、流传已久的文化古寺。这里的风光赋予我平静的生活与美丽的灵魂，我不确定从什么时候开始，但当我被内心深藏的情感触动后，我开始了创作的旅途。

MAD: 你会把自己形容为一个精神性的人吗？

阮团：我并不是一个教徒或拥有信仰的人，但是我喜爱佛教文化，它的教诲与佛陀的形象。为了瞭解佛教，我学习到许多，欣赏其中的哲学，并且发现它与真实生活极为相关且相当贴近。

所有的事物（以及所有人）都必须拥有信念。因为信念连结了所有事物，它会让所有事物共同产生关系。如果你没有信念，那表示你不相信任何事情、任何人或宗教所可能带来的影响。

MAD: 所谓的精神性与艺术会如何相互影响？你认为两者之间的关系为何？

阮团：佛陀的形象深深地影响了我的艺术。透过佛陀的形象，我想陈述人类的处境——我们所面对的问题，和我们所处的社会环境。我同时也想表达我对於人类价值的看法和感觉，以及对於人们忽略或遗忘人与人之间的爱与同情，提出最深的关切。成功与财富都是短暂的。佛教奉行的同情、同理与人性，才是永恒不变的。

MAD: 哪一种媒材或造型是你最喜欢运用的？

阮团：陶瓷是最喜爱的创作媒材。从小时候我就开始玩黏土，并且乐在其中。它的构成是无法预料的，而当进入烧制过程时，最终的成品也同样无法预料，是一个充满魅力的媒材。

MAD: 你对於越南雕塑与艺术的发展前景有何看法？

阮团：艺术从不固定。每一个时期都会有一个概念，来反映时代的思想。我借用了佛陀的形象并且将之反映在我的艺术里头，借此来描绘生命，并且希望能让佛教哲学中美好的教诲能够跟民众更加亲近。我想要消除的观念是，佛陀并非单祇是让人们拿来崇拜而已。



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