Discussion on Buddhism and Arts

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“In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.” — Mao Tse Tung

“All our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants, and soldiers; they are created for the workers, peasants and soldiers and are for their use.” — Mao Tse Tung

“[Our purpose is] to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind.” — Mao Tse Tung

When the idea for this journal became clear, our excitement throughout the Buddhist university culture was elevated. This is a topic that many people wanted and often communicated to me, for a conference or journal topic. Certainly, we want to see the reaction from the wider scholarly Buddhist community of authors, pertaining to any interest in the various arts. We can confirm that there is interest in Buddhist-related arts, even though the submissions for this particular volume didn’t reach the caliber or thematic expectations we were hoping for, we do think it opens a wide door for an academic-conversation. We are inspiring the academic converstation.

The editor envisioned articles about ancient or decades-old temple-murals, contemporary Buddhist art, Buddhist inspired music or movies, Buddhist inspired architecture seen outside of temples, perhaps articles dealing with monastic-regulations which can inspire weightless (the art of maintaining a physically strong body), topics dealing with mythology, and just anything falling under the expansive rubric of various

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Is there some disappointment that the aspiration was not met: of course; however, we have a nice collection of articles that have been submitted for your consideration — serving as an offering from the Buddhist academic community to you, the dear student or reader of Buddhist studies. Preliminary feedback was great, but the actual submissions were few. We will take a critical, yet constructive, look at all of the articles, in brief, below:

Sritantra’s article, initially confused the editor: the editor was fixated on the yoga-construction of the paper, thinking it was about stretching exercises for improving the flexibility of someone’s body — indeed a hot topic amongst adults; but in fact the paper deals with the proof that there are deeply rooted historical or cultural foundations for the Hindu-Buddhist hybrid form of religion that is practiced by millions in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the article was reassessed, and we found value in this article which details or chronicles animist culture towards today’s modern expressions of morality and associated values. The author is discussing inscriptions, statues and panels — today we see these items in museums and classify these relics as art, so the paper fits into the thematic journal under an examination of words from ancient texts and associated art. Some academic articles on Khmer-inscriptions actually depict the object with the inscription⁴, but Sritantra doesn’t provide any visual evidence⁵, so we assume his references are correct.

Sritantra’s well-researched document highlights the brahmanistic foundations of Khmer-history and Khmer-culture: detailing Siva-worship and Siva’s transformation into a Buddhist Bodhisattva. He enquires into the real religion of the Khmer kings — a difficult construction to assemble, and ponders into the real meaning of a religion and the principles of Buddhism? The article meanders and weaves through the history of early-Thailand, using outdated sources that have been cleared up in later publications, but this distraction of using only foreign sources for information can be excused, and actually provides a window for additional scholarship to build up or clarify points in later work. We take notice of the tone of the article which seems to condemn or issue harsh impressions of historical-events — examples of such language occur in the discussion over the creation of the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya sect. There are actual books published by Mahamakut University Press which illuminate the creation of the sect; and there is an obsolete discussion pertaining to the term of Theravada, which was clarified in the How Theravada is Theravada? publication, edited by Peter Skilling. Sritantra quotes a Skilling online-quote from 2006, but Skilling has a later document⁶ written in 2009, and a book⁷ published in 2012 — expounding on the issue.⁸ Another text was published in 2010 that also discusses the subject.⁹ The sole point of this critical assessment is to suggest that the argument could be clearer if the new information was

⁵ As an example of more visual evidence: http://dharma-documentaries.net/banteay-srei
⁸ A review of the text by a notable commentator/scholar can be found here: http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/314876/ - by Prof. Chris Baker
⁹ See: Prapod Assavavirulhakarn: The Ascendancy of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010), see the discussion from Chapter 6, pp. 149-183
available to the author. While he is not incorrect, a better assessment could have been achieved. All readers are urged to review the *How Theravada is Theravada?* text (itself, a wonderful work of not only scholarship but includes quality paper and pictures of various things that are being discussed in the text), and are additionally urged to write articles respectfully, according to the decisions made by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in 1950 to formally adopt the term Theravada, renouncing the use of Hinayana. Any author writing about the term Hinayana after 1950 may be writing the term in a derogatory manner – and may wonder why this term is edited out and replaced by respectful terminology. The IABU utilizes the respectful terminology, mandated by the 1950 proclamation. For years, the IABU has been replacing the derogatory term from contributions, we continue to see the term from scholars, and continue to emphasize the need for the cessation of the term. Millions of people across South and Southeast Asia do not consider their version of Buddhism to be some insignificant method for seeking an ultimate aim. Buddhism is about purification and living properly, not about insulting others. We as scholars can be more artful in our future message, messages which should resonate well with the masses of people who are reading and examining those future contributions for Buddhist Studies. Here are the covers of the useful books, in the possession of the editor, texts that were formerly taught in his Research & Literature in Thai Buddhism course, at MCU:

Likewise, the author has portions of the article that recycles opinions (although through his analysis) from other authors, rather than looking at the concerned-documents; for instance, when discussing the Sangha Act of 1902, there is no real reference to the actual document – it’s just an assessment of the perceived fall-out or repercussions. Sure, changes occurred after the 1902 pronouncement, in 1941 and in 1962, but these changes pertain towards the changes in the national structure of government – which mandated a change in the Sangha to be governed in a similar way.

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10 The issue can be read here, and anywhere else where the documentation is preserved: http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma3/theramaya.html & http://ibc.ac.th/faqing/node/76
11 Again, more work on the issue can be read here: http://www.myanmarnet.net/nibbana/twin01.htm - What is Theravada, by Muang Kyauk Seinn, 1998.
12 Documentation can be found online, if the actual text cannot be purchased or reviewed for research: http://www.thai buddhism.net/pdf/admin_thai_sangha.pdf
There are new demands within Thailand for a new Sangha Act to follow the changes that have occurred after the Military Coup of 2014, led by General Prayuth Chan-Ocha. What we do have in this article are generalized mentioning of sacred matric-syllables and associated philosophy, and only little about any actual movements or form of yogic-practices; we have body-segments associated with cosmic-principles represented through textual interpretations. The author himself ponders (and speculates) if any of this is within the realm of reality? In the arts, we are allowed a freedom and a variety of interpretations. We don’t have to agree on the perception of an object, and we can differ in our perspectives of some subject – we have an aesthetic even through our politics and art. Art assessment is ideological. Some people may interpret a statue of the Buddha sitting under the coiled Naga in one way, while another thinks nothing more of the image than the base-level presentation, rather than any re-presentation. The particular value that we can gain from this piece is that indeed our Buddhist culture is influenced by the traditions that preceded ours, and it is from those traditions that our own Buddhist traditions emerged away from it. Today, we are left with this sort of hybrid/syncretic idealism – and scholars are still sorting out the ideas, and Sritantra’s article assists with further clarity and validation for the aesthetic aimed towards. We hope you find value in his interpretation of history and the associated philosophical ideas.

Jana Igunma’s article on the depiction of foulness meditation in Thai manuscripts suggests that this was a common practice in Buddhist Thailand, and backs up the claim with centuries-old manuscripts found in the British Museum. Recently, several scholarly texts also published photographs from the last century featuring evidence of temples where dead-bodies are brought and cut into pieces, and left for the vultures to devour. However, with the coming of European-powers arriving into the nation and other social-complaints against sanitation/diseases, the practice faded away, and the vultures disappeared. Igunma suggests traditional burial methods changed in the 18th century – a move from burial towards letting animals and nature to take care of the dead in the ways that occur naturally – as illustrated below. There is nothing really mentioning the practice of cremation by fire and the dearth of burial grounds in Thailand. In former-days, villages were more connected to the forest, whereas now we are more connected with concrete, and green-spaces (the natural environment) are reserved or set aside as protected areas rather than utilized areas.

See, for instance: Kamala Tiyavanich: The Buddha in the Jungle (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p. 222, Figure 3.3

http://www.thai-blogs.com/media/vultures.jpg  - the site of this practice was at Wat Saket, now in Bangkok.
Bodies just cannot be tossed in forested areas today – this is considered a crime. We must abide by modern burial/cremation/funeral-laws, or in some cases whatever the last-wish of the deceased is, if it is considered legally appropriate. In modern Buddhist temples, a person’s dead-body is put into a coffin (wooden or metal box), and it is opened for monks and family members to consider and meditate on characteristics of death and decay for a short time, before being placed into the incinerator.

The two above photos are from the pre-cremation of the editor’s mother-in-law, who recently transitioned into her next life. Village children ordained as samanera (Buddhist monk-novices) to transfer merit to her body, with the aim that she attains a heavenly realm, as her final or next destination, for her next life.

Flowers are arranged artfully and thoughtfully. Cremation-coffins are designed artfully. Food is always placed on decorated plates and arranged artfully - to offer to Buddhist monks presiding over cremation ceremonies. We, the Buddhist masses, think about symmetry, we think about geometric arrangements – often without much thought.

Moreover, beyond the specters of death, we have the actual art preserved in the manuscripts, most of which is without a name of an author, but with interesting styles and patterns that deserve an additional examination. Jana meticulously goes through these ancient manuscripts and highlights the importance of not just the art, but the messages preserved – and preserving this art for future examination. In the days before widespread literacy, temple-art and images drawn in manuscripts served as additional methods for educating others, when words couldn’t affectively function, readers could describe the images in their own regional language to convey to the villager listening to the sermons. Often the images were drawn skillfully enough to articulate the accompanied message.
Likewise, we have other people who draw from being inspired and are glad to contribute their labor and art for notable causes. Mr. Dan Jenkins is one such artist, now residing in Thailand, but can create numerous styles of work, here working on a mural, his meticulous wood-work on Thai-style spirit-houses, and other illustrations.  

Other Buddhist and culturally-inspired artists, such as Mr. Atipong Padanupong blend culture with modernity, elaborate arts with contemporary living, and through his illustrations and paintings, captivates audiences with his intricate details:

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16 If you wish to contact and commission Mr. Dan Jenkins, for any sort of illustrations or word-work, please contact him via his Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/dan.jenkins.31?fref=ts
These artists, Dan Jenkins and Atipong Padanupong are very different from one another, one is American working within Thai culture, and Khun Atipong is Thai but mixes Thai tradition (such as the Ramayana Epic Tale) with Tibetan accents. Both artists do fascinating work, and if you consider commissioning pieces of art, perhaps you will choose a spirit house from Dan Jenkins or a beautiful piece by Atipong. Imagine a Buddhist temple painted by Khun Atipong Padanupong. It would rank as a masterpiece for Buddhism.

Beyond illustrative art, is the audio form of art. Mr. Ofosu “Born Infinite” Jones-Quartey, has injected the American form of hip-hop, with Buddhism, since beginning his musical-career in 2002, releasing his first album in 2004. His videos often feature Buddhist imagery, and effectively uses Buddhism to convey his intended messages.¹⁹ He’s honored on wall-murals across his hometown of Washington D.C., this particular mural is found on U St., between 13⁰ Street and 14⁰ Street:

⁻¹⁷ As he describes from his own Facebook Page: “Hanuman, the great monkey warrior, was one of the most illustrious characters in Ramakien (Thai version of Ramayana). In this scene, he ventured down to the demon Maiyarap’s subterranean world through various gateways guarded by supernatural beings, one of which was his own illegitimate half-fish-half-monkey son, Matchanu, born of the mermaid Suwanmatcha. In this playful composition, the actor playing Hanuman was battling two giant mosquitoes, while the child playing Matchanu was distracted in the background. The mermaid Suwanmatcha from the previous act peeked from behind the curtain against the set’s dramatic backdrop, the lotus pond with black crocodile, a hint representing of Maiyarap.” See, Mr. Atipong’s work, and for commissioning inquires, please send a private message, to purchase any pieces: https://www.facebook.com/Atipong-Padanupong-743204035798845/

¹⁸ A drawing of Atipong Padanupong, found on another friend’s Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152247925052004&set=t.717807128&type=3&theater

¹⁹ Born I Music’s Youtube Channel can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/user/bornimusic/videos
Also, apart from making deeply lyrical and conscious hip-hop with Buddhist inspired lyricism, he is also creating a Buddhist-inspired jewelry-line, which he hopes will inspire mindfulness to the wearer and the observer. Ofosu is also a dedicated and sought after meditation teacher, across the United States of America. He gives meditation talks in schools, through Minds Incorporated, across the country, and is an influential meditation teacher at the Insight Meditation Community of Washington DC, a teacher for the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California, and the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts. He often attends and presents academic articles at the United Nations Day of Vesak Conferences.

Art can also be in the form of artifacts and religious-sermons, for instance, here is archival editions of the late President of Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization, The Most Venerable Dr. Maha Phong Samaleuk’s work on the Vessantara Jataka20:

20 Photos are used, courtesy of Venerable Sayadaj Ekaggacitto, of Wat Ongtue, Vientiane, Laos: https://www.facebook.com/sayadej
Although the work appears to be stamped, there is a construction process and additional efforts that go into preserving and presenting palm-leaf manuscripts, an art form in itself.

The art of Mr. Poldej Worachat, a former diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Kingdom of Thailand, features circular techniques and he often uses Buddhist ideas to create his images. If you are interested in his art, comic-book illustrations and other works, as seen below, he can be commissioned for book illustrations and exhibitions.²¹

²¹ For commissioning Poldej Worachat, please contact him via his Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/poldej.worachat?fref=ts
The creation of art can also be done on digital platforms. One such artist is Professor Sompan Promta, of Thailand, one of Thailand’s leading Buddhist philosophers. Apart from writing great authoritative academic works, he creates digital renditions portraits and landscapes; but his work is very interesting, and often inspired by Buddhism. He often illustrates portraits and landscapes:

Returning now, to the contents of the 5th IABU Journal: Professor Dipti (Mahanta) Vissuddhangkoon discusses the art of Thailand’s Chokchai Tukpoe. This article features the images and discussions on the interpretations of those images in the Buddhist or social context. She mentions that Chokchai illustrates or creates his art for the sake of some purpose, not art for the sake of art, but contextual-art with transformational value. According to another document, this Isan School of Art produced art for life’s sake. Within this school of arts, they express localism (Isan)

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22 For commissioning and purchases of Prof. Sompan Promta’s books, please contact his Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/wannee.wannee.77
23 See, p. 86 of Visual Art for Life’s Sake: Constructing Identities of Esan Artists (multiple authors) - http://dean.foa.swu.ac.th/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ZXBfnnZWknk%3D&tabid=5628&mid=10062
and Nationalism (the Thai ideology), and globalization. She also incorporates wisdom from the venerable Ajahn Chah, a famous forest-monk from Thailand, and expresses the common appreciation for dhammic-principles, espousing the world-transcending viewpoints of both. More of Chokchai’s art can be seen which expresses Buddhist principles. The first piece here is entitled: Please Give Me a Title (2009). We can see that it is a representative of a figure from a bygone era where civil servants might have begged their way up the social ladder and wanted Royalty to grant them privilege through a greater-name or a title to be bestowed upon the civil-servant. The image is scrawled on a waded-up piece of paper, perhaps illuminating that a title may not be worth the paper it’s printed upon. What is in a name? What is in a title? Is it the character of the person that is judged, or just what name is being put on the placard? Too many people will beg and do corrupt actions, just to crawl up in social mobility.

The mixed-media work, despite or regardless of each piece’s title, is difficult to interpret, perhaps each shape and color, or material used from certain places is for a particular function, having a certain aim or aspiration. Chokchai calls this piece below, Enigma of Dharma, and we may have to peel away the layers to fully comprehend it:

Chokchai Tukpoe’s work can be describes as using art as a form of meditation, in a sense fulfilling the aim of Art for Life’s Sake, the idea of the Isan School of Art (a style and peer-group movement, featuring over a hundred different artists). He may put his pieces together without thinking, because any thought may lead to an unknown, so refraining from thought is knowing. He emphasizes that his work is Buddhist-inspired. Here is a different piece, similar to the one Prof. Dipti uses in her paper given to a previous conference, and re-published here; Chokchai takes another look on

25 This is a mixed-media piece, entitled: 50 Years Peace of Thai - http://www.rama9art.org/artisan/artdb/artists/home.php?p=profiles&name=Chokechai%20Tukpoe
26 http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-uVnhPY66qhg/VJeoGV1jm3I/AAAAAAAAI2k/u-AtYCeK6ps/s1600/5.jpg - more mixed-media art of Chokchai Tukpoe.
27 http://rama9art.org/artisan/2003/june/chokchai/work01.html
a similar idea. All of these pieces are dark, in a forest, and illuminate a monk’s kuti, his dwelling or meditation-hut. The images appear as a mirage in a forest, maybe meeting it unexpectedly? Seeing a house through the trees is an odd concept, usually trees are not transparent, and objects cannot be seen behind something blocking them. Again, in some art, literalism cannot be the deciding factor for interpretation:

The Phe Bach, Ven. Thich-Nguyen-Sieu, Edward Bureau collaboration on the *Art of Living According to Spiritual Leaders*, suggests five ideals that are deeply entwined with nature, for living a better life. They discuss the origins of religion and how it sets up the five points: flexibility, continuity, resiliency, patience, and unattachment – illustrated as living like: bamboo, river, tree, earth and clouds. Although this short article is simple, it conveys expressions that can be taken up for deeper considerations. For instance: bamboo is often a feature in Asia-style art, particularly in art inspired by the ecology of Northeastern Asia, where Mahayana Buddhism flourishes. Presenting a piece of art, such as this, could have been helpful, having nearly every component expressed in the article:

The article by Prof. Vibha Upadhyaya is an extensive survey of the archeological remains of ancient Buddhist places in Rajastan, India. She chronologically traces all of the Asoka-edicts and textual references to real places in Rajastan, and what sect/variation of Buddhism was practiced at that location. She discusses the foundation of the various major sects, still practiced today: Theravada,

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31 [http://www.chineseartnet.com/Aisingioro/Yunjia/NYJ7a.jpg](http://www.chineseartnet.com/Aisingioro/Yunjia/NYJ7a.jpg)
Mahayana, and the Vajrayana versions of Buddhism. She discusses some of the basic core doctrines of the sects, and supposes that Theravada Buddhism takes ten qualities of a layman as ideas for propagating as a system to follow, but according to the Tipitaka, there are numerous other principles that would make Buddhism a stronger system that contains four assemblies of adherents. Some illustrations are given; but if updated photos were given and arranged into the text when and where that place was mentioned, the reader could take more from the article and have a better experience with the extensive compilation of source-data. From these textual relics, inscription and other evidence, people can ascertain what type of Buddhism was practiced in the days when the mentioned sites were thriving centers of Buddhist culture, before being laid into waste and ruin from various circumstances. Likewise, Prof. Anand Singh discusses temples found around the Ganges River system, and the article could have benefited readers better with the inclusion of some images; but if we are more concerned, we can run internet searches for images of these places, at our convenience.

The final piece is a contribution detailing Banaras Hindu University’s Buddhist and Pāli Studies Program. As a member of the IABU, the IABU is happy to present what this school offers to Buddhism and Buddhist studies in general. The piece also presents some of the struggles and difficulties that the program faces, in a country that has seen its support of Buddhism become victim to partiality. Leadership is an art; teaching is an art; arts can be a greater factor in the education of our university-level youth and students. If our universities cannot gain your support, we may not have any remaining Buddhist Studies programs, universally. This is an issue that the IABU is taking seriously, and is one reason of many that the IABU exists.

As a final thought: art is for interpretation by the masses. Lately, government agencies think they know better than the broad masses of citizens. Governments decide to ban movies or censor movies that they determine to be sensitive. One recent example of censoring art is the Thai movie: “Arbat” – a movie featuring scenes that are objectionable to some Buddhists with an ideological agenda - claiming in their defense:
the movie doesn’t uphold principles of Dhamma or the established values of Thai society.32 One headline reads: Should movie on Buddhism be banned for disclosing the truth?33 What has actually happened, rather than cleaning up the corruption in the Buddhist temples, the easier target for social-outcry is against the actor playing the role and the director of the movie. One criticism about the movie is the scene where the monk touches the women, in an apparent act of intimacy:

The audience should be able to think for themselves, and learn what is right or wrong about what they are viewing. The role of art is to make people think, to make them face some emotion. People in society, the Buddhist laity, should become more familiar with the Buddhist texts. The National Office of Buddhism would rather censor a monk touching a woman – a violation that everyone already knows, but keep scenes where peta (hungry ghosts) are present and haunting. This seems like another battle of science over mythology; or mythology over science. Learned Buddhists know what happens to monks when violating the patimokkha. Let violations be punished when exposed and brought to the sangha-forum where acts are scrutinized. The vinaya-texts teach us how to behave in a forum where an accused is brought before the accuser.36 The movie does not destroy Buddhism37, rather it was designed to bring these issues into the public-debate, to get people to think about right and wrong. Now an agency is taking away the right of the people to think for themselves? Several years ago, controversial art, sparked a protest:

32 http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/727352/ministry-bans-arbat-film-for-blasphemy -
33 http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/should-movie-on-buddhism-be-banned-for-disclosing-the-truth-the-
  nation
34 http://www.straitstimes.com/sites/default/files/styles/x_large/public/articles/2015/10/15/filmone.jpg?itok=S-
pgKY3O
35 https://buddhistartnews.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/14430114371443011709l.jpg
36 See: https://www.academia.edu/1363482/Aparagathasamganika - by Dr. Dion Peoples
37 https://buddhistartnews.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/horror-film-may-destroy-buddhism-activists-warn/#more-
  16205
38 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IK15Ae01.html
Monks protested the exhibit and apparently the image itself was destroyed, according to the article. While the art was designed to get people to think about what is right and wrong – ideological forces are taking the rights away from the people to think for themselves, and force the interpretation that they themselves determine to be correct, as the public-position, without asking the silent majority. Special interest groups are boosting up and promoting a false reality. Censoring art is another way at muting whistleblowers and those concerned with the true values of Buddhism found in the Tipitaka of Theravada Buddhism. The issues or representations of crows are not viewed the same way in other Buddhist cultures, where a crow brought on an auspicious circumstance.

There are new organizations springing up in some Buddhist nations, like Knowing Buddha Organization (http://www.knowingbuddha.org/), and the 5000s organization (www.5000s.org). Their posters can be seen in many tourist places:

Knowing Buddha is an organization that is promoting the proper use of the Buddha as represented in material form. They are against the use of the Buddha in places that serve alcohol and are against images of the Buddha used in music videos. Sri Lanka bans international artists from their country if tattoos or other uses of the Buddha is determined to be inappropriate.

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40 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9hazmsUxrM – David Guetta featuring Akon, has registered over 93 million views on Youtube.
There is also an endeavor to clear up art created by pornography companies. Many adult-entertainment or pornography production companies try to feature a Buddha-statue in their sets when filming movies featuring an Asian woman pornstar— as if just putting an image there qualifies as an authentic Asian scene. Sometimes the production-company neglects to utilize an Asian woman and uses a Hispanic woman instead—and utilizes a fake massage-parlor or some other contrived setting to generate a sense of calm and relaxation—as a therapeutic session. Many people could consider the adult-entertainment industry to be highly ignorant and racist, towards the diverse global ethnities with various religions or social guidance systems. I’m not going to reference the sites where these images are found, in order to inhibit additional traffic to those websites; but these representations of the Buddha are the sole-responsibility of the production-company, and are widespread from production-companies featuring Asian-themed pornography. Please maintain maturity and solely focus on the art of the placement of the Buddha-image and not the performance-actors. Moving from the top-left to bottom-right, comments follow: There is no need to have a Buddha-statue in the massage-parlor, nor is the Buddha-image suitable to hold a candle; the heads as art and object, the head should be reconnected to the body—in one case, the placement of two images on the coffee-table is ridiculous and unnecessary; and the other uses are just as arbitrary as determined by the set designer assembling the rooms):
What is one lesson to be learned from this. My personal lesson was taught to me over a decade ago, after meeting my wife; for instance, when meeting my wife, and making-love to my wife, she would never make-love to me in a room where there is a Buddha-image. She refuses when a Buddha image is present. She told me: “Not here...”, and of course I asked why? She taught me this cultural aspect of Thai Buddhism or enforces this perspective that is not gained from reading the Tipitaka. Although the Buddha-statue is stone, he is determined to be alive, since many Buddha-statues are charged with sacred power, as adherants believe. She, a very good and strong Buddhist woman, is fully conscious and respectful of Buddha images, and would never have sex in a room where there is a Buddha image. Likewise, no one would have sex in front of a monk or the Buddha. People take their togetherness to the confines of their own bedroom or other private location. It’s likely that these performance-actors are not Buddhists, are just being paid for their performance, and don’t mind if being shameless or disrespectful is part of the positions they are playing. I didn’t want to just put one or two images of the Buddha featured in a pornography set, more needed to be shown to highlight that this is widespread, and disrespectful to Buddhists. This is no isolated circumstance. Viewers of such forms of media may never learn the right way to present a Buddha-statue, and may never know what the proper altar-display looks like, so here is one form of a Theravada Buddhist altar:

The Knowing Buddha organization is doing good work, but more work needs to be done elsewhere to educate people on the proper uses of Buddha statues and other Buddhist works of art. Condemning missteps is one thing, but educating and presenting proper ways, and behaving properly is a true representation of Buddhist ideals, and often a proper contextualization may be necessary, or an apology or a retraction by the artist becomes necessary after they have been re-educated. Proper use and placement for Buddha-images should be taught to interior designers and architecture schools – or the related academic/professional genre - they should respect proper cultural ethics and morality, when replicating a scene. What was more shocking recently was the recent crime conducted where a Buddha-statue was used to stab an assailant. The flame-tipped head of the Buddha is like a weaponized spike.

Conclusion:

We have to be more conscious of our presentation of our Great Teacher – the Buddha Gotama. His words are contained in the Tipitaka. Buddhists need to read and examine the Tipitaka in order to know the contents for themselves. Our artists, knowing dhamma, would produce greater works that inspire the masses to embrace and perform better, in Buddhist ways. The articles, again, in this journal, speak on how Buddhism overcame a former tradition and prospered into a wonderful new culture – although it adapted some of the previous ways, in order to seamlessly move forward. Death rituals have been examined and illustrated, mixed-media art and other paintings have been illustrated and presented for the Buddhist-inspiration that the artist possessed to create the art. The art of seeing self in nature – an aspect of interdependence – this too was illuminated. Buddhist sites and educational-institutions also provide the rooms to learn more about Buddhist arts. Sites found in Rajastan possess artifacts, just as translated Khmer-inscriptions are artifacts – both of these types of ancient-relics can be examined in our Buddhist university classrooms so that we can learn more about our wealthy tradition and move forward with more dignity and wisdom as Buddhists. If our classrooms had access to these inscriptions, we can learn more and know more, and become wiser in our forward movements. We have to also learn about the ugliness of our civil-society and think for ourselves, and see through any attempts at censorship – censorship damages interpretation; someone else’s interpretation inhibits our own perceptions. The masses ought to know for themselves what is right or wrong, and don’t need dictated to, and are thus forced to accept an interpretation. The masses would never learn to manage their own affairs. Censorship is anti-democratic – people should be mature enough to handle what goes into their own sense-doors, and don’t need protected from an ideological-agency.

Thank you for your interest in our academic offerings, in this Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Universities. This is our 5th JIABU. We hope these offerings on various perspectives on arts – loosely stated, will be satisfactory. We welcome any response in article form, pertaining to anything stated or presented within these pages. Please be additionally attentive towards our future journals on the topic of Buddhism and Peace, and Buddhism and Philosophy. In conjunction with the 13th UNDV, for 2016, we will publish a special addition of the JIABU on Mindfulness. Enjoy, please, the 5th JIABU.