



静心学堂丛书

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# 禅意设计 「十二字箴言」

A Six-word Maxim Regarding the Practice of Chan Design

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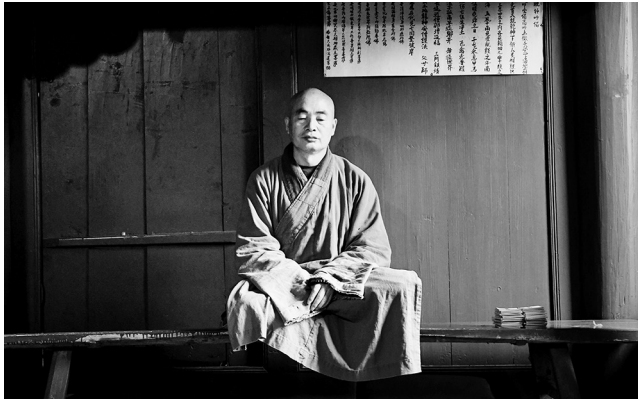
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# 缘 起

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艺术工作者都很关注自己的作品  
视之为思想、情感的外化  
殚精竭虑，不断创新  
但很多人没有意识到  
生命也是一个作品  
而且要用整个一生  
乃至生生世世去创作



什么是觉醒艺术？什么是禅意设计？我们知道，佛法的意义在于引导众生从迷惑走向觉醒，从某个角度说，这一智慧本身就是觉醒的艺术。也可以说，是艺术工作者在佛法智慧启迪下创作的作品，以此承载自己对法的理解和实践。

艺术门类众多，风格万千，简单划分的话，可分为传统艺术和当代艺术。在我看来，传统艺术更重视美，重视意境，而当代艺术更追求真，追求个性。

中国传统的绘画和书法特别强调“意”，有“意存笔先，画尽意在”“品格之高下，不在迹在乎意”之说。这个“意”就是思想高度，包括作者的立意、

作品的题材和呈现。在这些方面，佛法阐述的空性智慧，传递的出世超然，都能给创作者带来全新的视野和启发。

而当代艺术重在表达作者对人性、生命意义和世界真相的探究，并带着思考提出问题。画家高更的名作《我们从哪里来？我们是谁？我们往哪里去？》就是典型代表。这三问之所以引起那么多共鸣，是因为他直面了人生而有之的永恒问题。只要不解决，这些问题始终存在，始终令人不安，让人如无根浮萍一般，被轮回裹挟着，不知去向何方。

虽然艺术家们意识到了问题，但如果缺少大智慧，是无法认识人性，无法找到生命意义、透彻世界真相的。因为看不清，不仅找不到艺术的出路，也找不到生命的出路，最终落入虚无。事实上，这正是很多艺术家的困境所在。尤其因为艺术家特有的敏感，使他们更容易陷入其中，怀疑一切，痛苦挣扎。所以，与其说是艺术家们提出了问题，不如说是表达了自己的迷惑和无奈。

如何找到方向，走出困境？离不开佛法。这一智



我们从哪里来？

我们是谁？

我们往哪里去？



慧不仅引导我们看清生命真相，更重要的是，提供了改造生命的方法。关于这个问题，上午《金刚经》的讲座已经说得很清楚，现在侧重从创作角度和大家聊一聊。

艺术工作者都很关注自己的作品，视之为思想、情感、艺术追求的外化，殚精竭虑，不断创新。但很多人没有意识到，生命也是一个作品，而且要用整个一生乃至生生世世去创作。这个作品是无意识的信手涂鸦，处处败笔，还是经过缜密设计、倾心打造的精

品？相信每个人都希望自己是后者。怎样才能提升生命品质，成为更好的自己？同样离不开佛法智慧。这也是本次论坛探讨“觉醒艺术与禅意设计”的意义所在。只有把创作主体搞定，才能像改良土壤那样，为作物生长源源不断地提供养分。

那么，觉醒艺术与禅意设计有哪些特点？关于这个问题，我曾提出十二字方针，即无我、无相、无限、出世、寂静、超然。以下将围绕这几点，谈谈我的思考。

# 一、无 我

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我们要经常问问自己  
我是谁？究竟什么代表着我  
问一问，就会发现  
很多貌似理所当然的追求，其实很无谓  
很多拼命想要抓取的东西，其实抓错了  
既然很无谓，既然抓错了  
自然不必为此患得患失  
耗费一生光阴



说到无我，有人会担心：这是否定我的存在吗？  
我该何以自处？凡夫最大的特点是在乎自我，除了生存，基本都在为自我的重要感、优越感、主宰欲努力。但要追求并维护这三种感觉，何其辛苦！从自身来说，会因三种感觉得不到满足而受挫；从人际关系来说，则会因“谁最重要，谁更优越，谁能主宰”引发是非和纷争。我们想一想，人生的种种烦恼，从名利到地位，从家庭到事业，哪一样不是因为和这些感觉挂钩，才给我们带来压力和痛苦？

文艺复兴后，西方人本主义思潮盛行，崇尚个性解放，追求个人价值。到近现代，对自我的张扬更达

到极致，“唯我至上”大行其道，但人们反而越来越茫然，越来越找不到自己。为什么我们会在崇尚自我的过程中迷失？这就需要看清，我们所追求的，到底能不能代表“我”？

佛法告诉我们，人有两种障碍：一是所知障，即认识存在的障碍，使人看不清自己，看不清世界；一是烦恼障，是由错误认识而导致的。因为看不清，就会本能地向外抓取，把种种不是我的东西当作是“我”，从而带来烦恼。我们想要认识自己，找回自己，就必须放下我执。所以无我不是否定色身的存在，而是否定对自我和世界的误解。只有去除这些不是“我”的部分，才能破迷开悟，去伪存真。

如何通达无我？禅宗修行中，是让学人参话头，参“我是谁”，参“父母未生前本来面目”。在我们通常认定的对象中：名字是不是我？身体、想法、身份……是不是我？通过分析可以认识到：这一切都是会败坏的，和我们只有暂时的关系。《楞严经》中，是通过“七处征心、八还辩见”来认识自我。相关内容不在此一一展开，但最后有一句非常关键：“诸可

还者，自然非汝；不汝还者，非汝而谁？”告诉我们：凡是可以被解构的，只是存在的假相，是一种假我。只有最后那个没什么可解构的、不生不灭的存在，才是真正的“本来面目”。

我们要经常问问自己：我是谁？究竟什么代表着我？问一问，想一想，就会发现，很多貌似理所当然的追求，其实很无谓；很多拼命想要抓取的东西，其实抓错了。既然很无谓，既然抓错了，自然不必为此患得患失，耗费一生光阴。

我们的很多痛苦都来自期待，希望家庭永远美满，希望事业长盛不衰，希望身体青春常在……事实上，这一切都是无常变化的，和我们只是短暂的一期一会。只有看清真相，才不会建立期待，由此带来不必要的痛苦。所以说，无我是帮助我们认识自己，找回自己。

在禅意设计中，无我对我们有三种意义。



第一，无我有助于践行深层环保。

西方人本主义思潮的重点是人类中心论，认为世间万物都是为人服务的。在这一思想基础上，人类为了获取利益，可以不惜一切代价，这是导致生态破坏的根源。而佛法认为人类和世界是一体的，即依正不二。此外，中国天人合一的思想、印度梵我一如的思想，都是把人和世界当作整体来认识，对自然心存敬畏和感恩。所幸的是，西方有识之士也已认识到这一问题，提出生态中心主义，把人作为生态环境中的重要因素，而不是一切。但如果认识不到无我，这种转变可能只是流于形式，是以一种温和、可持续的方式，



让万物更长久地为我所用。本质上，仍是对自然的掠夺而不是和平共处。只有放下对“我”的执著，认识到众生的平等、万物的相生，才能真正建立生态中心主义的观念。具备这种认识，有助于我们设计出更环保的建筑和产品，与自然和谐相处。

## 第二，无我有助于转换设计理念。

因为以自我为中心，很多设计师的作品并不是从利他出发，而是要彰显自我的重要感、优越感，标榜自我的特立独行，与众不同。这样的作品或许能取得某种意义上的成功，但也使得今天的世界光怪陆离。因为每个人都希望自己的声音被听见，结果汇聚成巨大的噪音。这就必须在定位上加以调整。比如从建筑来说，本身也是一个用品，是生活、工作的场所。所以在设计时，应该从生态环境和客户需求出发，与环境友好相处，让用户身心安乐。身安是处理好空间关系，心安则是要营造文化氛围。只有放下自我的表现欲，立足于同理心和利他心，才能让作品与众多缘起和谐相生，用自己的专业能力造福社会。

### 第三，无我有助于各方面的沟通。

很多设计师和客户沟通时感觉很痛苦，原因是什么？除了文化、审美、立场等方面的差异，关键还在于我执。因为活在自我感觉中，以各自的经验、立场、利益为中心，难以理解彼此，从而造成甲乙双方的交流障碍。认识无我，是让我们走出自我的感觉，学会倾听并换位思考。只有真正理解对方的需求和想法，在尊重的基础上，带着利他心去做，同时善巧地帮助他提升品位，才能使沟通变得顺畅，同时也为自己带来创作空间。

## 二、无 相

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我们能看到什么样的世界  
和认识世界的六个渠道有关  
这些渠道就是眼根、耳根  
鼻根、舌根、身根和意根  
正是它们  
决定了我们能看到什么世界  
而不是世界决定了我们有什么认识



设计是有相的，不可能说我们设计了一个建筑或产品，大家看不到。既然有相，为什么又讲无相？《金刚经》的讲座中说到，佛法所说的空，并不是否定现象的存在，而是引导我们以缘起的智慧看世界。一切的存在，从设计到实物，都是作者的想法，加上各种外在条件构成的。离开这些由内而外的条件，有没有作品的存在？

经典物理学认为有不可分割的基本物质元素，并由这些元素造就世间万物。但现代量子力学认为，基本元素的存在是不确定的，可能显现为粒子，也可能显现为波。它以什么方式存在，和我们对它的认识有

关。所以说，一切现象都没有固定不变的特质——你的认识，决定了世界的存在。

这也告诉我们，每个现象都有无限的可能性。我们对很多问题的认识，是带着自己的习惯、经验和设定。去除这些附加条件，每个有限的当下，都蕴含着无限的可能。佛教所说的空和无相，正是去除我们对世界的设定和执著，还事物以本来面目。

对存在现象的认识，会对我们产生两种影响。正确认识，可以导向真理，导向智慧；错误认识，则会导致烦恼，导向轮回。何去何从？关键在于怎么看。每个人都执著自己的所见并信以为真，却不知道自己正戴着有色眼镜，不知道所见一切其实是被自己加工过的。佛教所说的空，并不是否定事物的存在，而是要空掉我们对世界的错误设定。只有认识无相，才能摆脱有限的束缚，在每个有限的当下体认空性，体认无限。

《六祖坛经》的修行纲领，是“无念为宗，无相为体，无住为本”。无念为宗，是让我们体认虚空般无念的心体。我们现在的心像云彩一样变化不定，且



念念无常，处处住相。但在云彩背后，还有如如不动的虚空，是超越一切相的。

无相为体则是告诉我们，心不以任何相的方式存在。禅宗会采用追问的方式认识自己：我们每天忙这忙那，忙得天昏地暗，是谁在指挥这一切？我们常常陷入情绪，时而心花怒放，时而痛不欲生，是谁在制造这一切？我们想尽办法摆脱痛苦，却力不从心，难以改变这种喜怒无常的癫狂状态。

现代人最大的困扰是心静不下来，做着这个想着那个，被手机控制，被游戏控制，被购物控制……甚至失去了休息能力。问题在于，很多人根本不知道自

己为什么会这样，所有这一切似乎都是在不知不觉中发生的。

如何改变这种状态？就要学会观察自己的心。佛教中，这种训练包括止禅和观禅。止禅是培养心的专注力，通过呼吸、佛像等所缘，让心系念于此，逐步稳定。当心得以安住，就会开始明晰，使本具的自性光明产生作用，照见妄念的来去和生灭。就像水，从动荡变得宁静时，就能恢复照物功能。《心经》的“观自在菩萨行深般若波罗蜜多时，照见五蕴皆空”，正是说明这种观照的智慧。

我们要审视自己，看看心在哪里，在身体以内，还是身体以外？心到底什么样子？其中有什么？当观照力生起，我们就能看到，心像虚空般无形无相，不在内也不在外，也就是祖师所说的“觅心了不可得”。虽然不可得，同时又了了明知，不仅能照见五蕴身心，还能照见尽虚空遍法界的一切。这个无相、无限、无所不知的心体，正是心的本来。

佛教认为，我们能看到什么样的世界，和心有关，也和认识世界的六个渠道有关。这些渠道就是



眼根、耳根、鼻根、舌根、身根和意根，正是它们，决定了我们能看见什么世界，而不是世界决定了我们有什么认识。六根面对的世界，佛教称为六尘，分别是色、声、香、味、触、法。六根认识六尘的过程，会产生六识，即眼识、耳识、鼻识、舌识、身识和意识。

这些影像会留在内心，成为影响我们认识世界的心理力量，《楞严经》称之为“前尘影事”。学佛，就是要通过智慧审视，把这些念头和情绪一一空掉。否则就会掉进去，成为心念牢笼的囚犯，被烦恼和负面情绪所折磨。当心回归虚空般的状态，什么念头都奈何不了你，因为虚空是无法装入牢笼，也无法被束缚的。体会到无相的心体，我们才能超然物外，自在无碍。

在禅意设计中，空和无相对我们有三点启发。

第一，无相可以打破有限的设定和执著。

多年来，我们接受了相关的教育和文化传承，并在从业过程中形成自身的经验和能力。这些既是吃饭的本钱，也是某种局限。因为一旦贴上“我”的标签，我们会执著自己的知识、经验、能力，觉得这些特别重要，特别优越，特别胜人一筹。如果停留于此，就会形成条条框框，逐步失去创造力。无相的智慧，不是要把经验和能力空掉，而是把我执空掉。当我们有了开阔的视野，开放的心态，创作中就不会受限于自己的习惯和设定，还能进一步打破行业乃至文



化传承中的习惯、设定和局限。现在有句话叫“脑洞大开”，其实无相才是彻底打开，不拘一格，不为任何成见所缚。

第二，无相有助于打破二元对立，构建和谐关系。

比如在建筑设计中，要处理好人的关系、建筑的关系、环境的关系。如果不在三者间取得平衡，而是过度张扬自我，只关注建筑本身的呈现，就可能破坏和谐。因为建筑不是孤立的，而是众多缘起中的一部分，需要从整体看待建筑、环境和使用者之间的关系。现代商业重视生态构建，做设计也是同样，要重视环境和社会的生态，处理好彼此依存的关系。这么做的前提，就是打破二元对立的思维，由无相而能天人合一，物我两忘。

第三，无相可以打破固有设定，开启生命的无限性。

如果生命始终停留在有限的层面，由此产生的灵感也是有限的。当我们在念头的当下，体会到念头背后虚空般的心，创作灵感才会源源不断。因为这样的心是没有滞碍的，可以有无穷妙用。

### 三、无 限

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活着的意义究竟是什么  
佛法告诉我们  
生命中除了有限的层面  
还有无限的层面  
如果没有这样的答案  
我觉得人是很难自处的  
所以对无限性的追问  
可以开阔视野  
让我们找到生命的意义所在



世界包括有限和无限两个层面。我们多半活在有限的层面，追逐五欲六尘、名闻利养，而哲学、宗教是探讨无限的层面。

有限的层面包括时间和空间。从时间来说，体现在有始有终。比如人生的几十年，包括一切生命的存在，都有开始有结束。短的朝生暮死，长的百千万年，相比地球的存在，实在微不足道。但即使地球、太阳系、银河系的存在，乃至天文数字般漫长的时光，也不过是无限中的一个过程。

生从何来，死往何去？在有限的生命之外，究竟是什么样的存在？那些巨大的未知是什么？如果生命

没有无限性，只是从生到死的片段，哪怕能活亿万年，在究竟意义上，也是没有价值的。虽然当下的存在有其价值，但从结果回望的话，如果宇宙都要毁灭，现前这一点价值，能否和终将毁灭的虚无相抗衡？如果不探讨生命的无限性，不找到答案，我们是无法安然活着的。

从空间来说，人的存在同样微不足道。在浩瀚宇宙中，银河系是微不足道的；在银河系中，太阳系是微不足道的；在太阳系中，地球是微不足道的……更何况，每个人只是地球七十多亿人口之一。面对动辄几十亿、乃至百千万亿光年的时空，不知大家会不会有发狂的感觉？因为宇宙实在太大了，作为蝼蚁般渺小的个体，活着的意义究竟是什么？

但佛法告诉我们，心的本质就是宇宙的本质。生命中除了有限的层面，还有无限的层面。如果没有这样的答案，我觉得人是很难自处的。所以对无限性的追问，可以开阔视野，让我们找到生命的意义所在。

怎么认识无限的心？我们生活在中国，在家面对的是柴米油盐、生活压力；出门面对的是车水马龙、





水泥森林；头顶那片天空也被高楼切割，被雾霾遮蔽。在这样的环境中，心很容易被封闭。视野有多大，决定了我们的心量有多大。包括环境的视野，也包括知识的视野。古人说“读万卷书，行万里路”，你的眼界拓宽了，胸怀乃至生命也会被拓宽。更重要的，则是通过修行得来的对真理的体认，这是世间任何知识不能比拟的。

佛教中，普贤菩萨被称为“大行”，在他所发的十大愿王中，每个行为都建立于无限的所缘，每一愿的对象都是“所有尽法界虚空界，十方三世一切佛刹极微尘数诸佛世尊”及无量众生。虚空是无限的，菩



萨的大愿和广行也是无限的。佛教关于无限的另一个表达是十方三世。十方代表空间，为东、西、南、北、东南、东北、西南、西北、上方、下方；三世代表时间，为过去、现在、未来。庄子说的“四方上下为宇，古往今来为宙”，也是以空间和时间来说明宇宙。

我们每做一件事，都要以无限的空间和时间为对象，建立这样的视野，才能和佛菩萨的心行相应。事实上，心本来就像虚空一样，但因为执，因为认知的局限，使我们的世界变得很狭隘。小到只有一个人、一个家庭，或是一个企业、一个地区，最多就是民族、国家、世界。即使心怀世界，在宇宙

中也是微不足道的。

如何认识无限？佛法为我们提供了两种修行方式。一是以无限的时空和众生为所缘，这样的观修，有助于撤除狭隘的设定，使心回归本来状态。二是由观照力加以审视，超越有限、对待的心，直接认识无限。所以，佛教所说的无限不是纸上谈兵，而是可以通过禅修抵达的。

在禅意设计中，无限对我们有两点启发。

第一，通过对无限的认识，打开心量，理解空的美。

心和境是相互影响的，尤其对凡夫来说，很容易心随境转。当我们只见眼前种种时，内心会有太多东西想要表达，表现在设计上，往往夸张、繁杂、一味堆砌。在这样的环境中，心会更加紧绷、拥挤而狭隘。而禅意作品多半采用减法，以简约干净的空间，帮助我们领略空的内涵。进而由境的空，导向心的空。

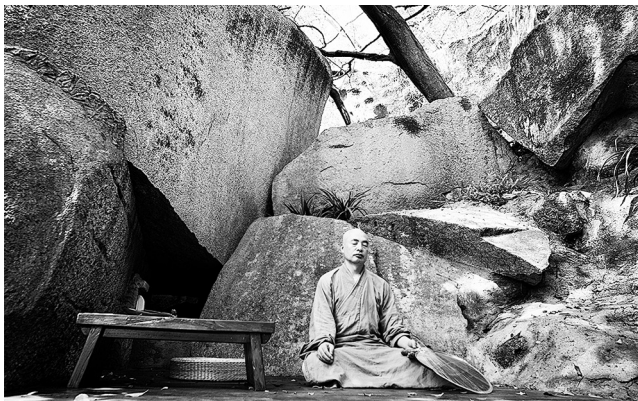
## 第二，把有限和无限统一起来。

作品本身是有限的，如果心局限于此，往往使作品成为孤立的存在。只有去除设定和边界，才能向外延伸。从建筑来说，中国人很善于借景，把建筑作为整体环境的一部分来营造。让人在有限的空间感受无限的世界，同时又在无限的视野中体现创作的巧思。这种有限和无限的融合，能够以小见大，内外融通，对开拓设计思路有很大启发。

## 四、出 世

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佛教的出世解脱之路  
是透彻人生真相后的自觉选择  
是对轮回之乐主动舍弃  
至于入世，则是出于慈悲而不舍众生  
发愿帮助众生共同出离  
在具体实践中  
必须以出世心行入世事  
是对出世的提升而非背离



出世和入世，是说到佛教时绕不开的话题。中国传统的儒家比较入世，当然也有出世的部分，以隐士文化为代表。但这是偏于无奈的出世，所谓“邦有道则仕，邦无道则隐”，是抱负无法施展时退而求其次的选择。而佛教的出世解脱之路，是透彻人生真相后的自觉选择，是对轮回之乐的主动舍弃。至于入世，则是出于慈悲而不舍众生，发愿帮助众生共同出离。在具体实践中，必须以出世心行入世事，是对出世的提升而非背离。这就注定两者的精神气质完全不同。

儒家的关注点主要局限于当前社会，而佛法修行是立足于十方三世，通过闻思修树立正见，进而以空



性慧审视世间，看到五蕴身心的无常、幻有，看到名利得失、荣华富贵的虚假本质，看到“一切有为法，如梦幻泡影，如露亦如电”。具备这样的认识，一方面可以本着菩提心积极入世，化世导俗；另一方面也能看到，所做一切不过是水月空花，从而不陷入对我的执著，对事的执著。哪怕做再多事，也不会觉得“我做了多少，多了不起”，不会因此造成负担。这是把出世和入世有机结合起来，在积极入世的同时，保有出世的超然。

在禅意设计中，出世对我们有两点启发。



第一，入世的设计是做加法，如果一味追求外在形式，难免造成偏差。

比如以媚俗为接地气，以怪异为创造力，以奢华为高大上。这些设计非但不能给人以美的享受，还是对大众审美的误导。出世的设计则是做减法，在满足功能的前提下，以简约、朴素、低调的风格来呈现，让人少欲知足而不是刺激物欲，让人向内关注而不是向外追逐。在今天这个喧哗浮躁的物质社会，尤其需要这样一股清流。



第二，入世的设计是满足自我需要，会增长欲望和世俗心。

现代社会不断鼓动欲望，在带来满足的同时，也让人疲惫不堪。所以越来越多的人开始放下物质享乐，追求返璞归真的生活，追求有品质、有禅意、有内涵的生活，让这颗向外驰骋的心得到休息。作为设计师，只有关注生命内在，才能创造出让人安顿身心的作品。这样的设计既不媚俗，不随俗，还能超越世俗，净化人心，从而满足高层次的精神需求。

## 五、寂 静

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我们常常讲加持力  
从某种意义上说  
不仅三宝有加持力  
艺术创作也能传达“加持”  
是一种让人产生共鸣的精神力量  
我们带给大众的  
是正面加持，还是负面加持  
是带来安静，还是引起躁动



寂静是代表作品蕴含的境界，传达的气息。平常人对寂静的了解偏向外在，指没有喧嚣、噪音的安静环境，但佛教所说的寂静，主要指内心安宁。佛教中，常和寂静相连的两个字是“涅槃”，即涅槃寂静。

什么是涅槃？就是息灭内在躁动。我们内心总有各种妄想、情绪、烦恼在翻滚，此起彼伏，波涛汹涌。尤其是生活在网络时代的人，时刻被铺天盖地的资讯冲击着，控制着。即使想要睡了，还在习惯性地刷着手机；想静一静，还在控制不住地胡思乱想。一旦失去休息能力，就会使身心失去休养生息的充电机会，疲惫难以恢复，躁动难以缓解。



怎样才能静心？佛教戒定慧的修行，就是一套次第清晰、经过两千多年无数实践证明的有效方法。通过持戒不造恶业，使生活简单健康，避免不良外境的干扰；通过修定制心一处，使内心趋于安定，让烦恼没有活动机会；通过观照审视内在身心和外在世界，最终开启智慧，证悟实相。当狂乱的心得以平息，我们就会感受到生命内在的寂静和欢喜。

在禅意设计中，寂静对我们有两点启发。

## 第一，审视作品传达了什么气息。

很多人观看弘一大师等高僧大德的书法时，会感到宁静的摄受力；而观看一些当代作品时，则会觉得心浮气躁。事实上，书画界早就把“有没有火气”作为评价作品的重要标准之一。所谓火气，其实就是浮躁，是作者心境的外化。在创作时用的是什么心，会通过作品传递出来。

所有艺术创作都和作者本身的状态有很大关系。在某种意义上，作品其实是作者的另一种存在，是作者精神气质的投射，故有“字如其人”之说。从量子力学的角度，一切现象并不是客观的存在。我们能看到什么样的世界，是自身业力系统和认知模式决定的。我们的所知所见，既蕴含着世界的能量，也蕴含着自己的认知模式。所以我们在观察世界时，并不是单纯的观察者，同时也是参与者。观察者尚且有这样的作用，何况创作者？艺术家本来是创造精神食粮的，如果我们带着浮躁、功利的心，作品必然心浮气躁，急功近利，那就是在制造垃圾食品。这是特别需要反思的。

第二，我们希望通过禅意作品传递寂静的力量，前提是自己要有禅心，对无我、无相、无限有所体会。

我们常常讲加持力，从某种意义上说，不仅三宝有加持力，艺术创作也能传达“加持”，是一种让人产生共鸣的精神力量。我们带给大众的，是正面“加持”，还是负面“加持”？是带来安静，还是引起躁动？这些在很大程度上取决于创作者。只有提升自身修养，才能给社会提供健康的精神产品。



## 六、超 然

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所谓超然

一方面是放下思维定式

解放思想，轻装上阵

一方面是离开舒适圈

尝试更多的可能，不被名利所捆绑

当然这些都是通常意义上的超然

究竟的超然

是对生死的超越，对轮回的超越



超然物外，坐看云起，是很多人向往的境界，但这并不是想一想就能做到的。如果我们不放下内在的执著、烦恼和压力，即使想要超然，也是力所不及的。怎样才能拥有超然的心？西方强调个性解放，主要是为了解除制度、信仰、传统的束缚；而佛法所说的解脱，是让我们解除错误观念及执著形成的束缚，解除内心的迷惑和烦恼。否则的话，即使拥有外在的一切自由，我们依然会作茧自缚。所以超然必须以智慧为前提，只有看清世间真相，放下一切执著，不以物喜，不以己悲，才会有坐看云起的心境。

从另一方面来说，很多艺术家都会遇到创作瓶

颈。尤其是有了一定成就后，这种难以突破的关口，尤其让人焦虑。越焦虑，就越是难以突破。怎样超越困境？除了技艺的提升，还离不开超然的心态。所谓超然，一方面是放下思维定式，解放思想，轻装上阵；一方面是离开舒适圈，尝试更多的可能。更重要的，是不被名利所捆绑。如果一心只想争名夺利，本身已和艺术不相应了。当然这些都是通常意义上的超然，究竟的超然，是对生死的超越，对轮回的超越。

在禅意设计中，超然既体现了作品的气质，也反映了作者的人生境界，对我们有以下两点启发。

第一，作品不是为了张扬自我，否则就不可能超然。

如果作者太看重自我，一心想要张扬自我，突显自己的与众不同，本身就是一种贪嗔痴，必然会非常辛苦。事实上，这正是很多艺术家的痛点所在。只是因为有了一层艺术的包装，似乎让这种贪嗔痴有了某种隐蔽性和合理性。但不论它的表现形式是什么，其本质依然是烦恼，是带来痛苦的源头。

第二，在设计中不媚俗，不落俗，否则就不可能超然。

当然，这并不是不考虑大众需求，只顾自娱自乐，而是在入世时保有出世的超然，让作品以自然、自在的方式存在，不增不减，不偏不倚。不论设计还是艺术创作，都是要为众生服务的，但这种创作必须来自生活又高于生活，随顺世间又超越世间，才能不被贪嗔痴所转，为社会创造真正有营养的精神财富。



以上，是对“无我、无相、无限、出世、寂静、超然”的解读。这十二字箴言既是禅意设计指南，也是一种生命境界。有道是“功夫在画外”，这个功夫是什么？通常是指全方位的文化修养，但我觉得，还应该包括对人生意义的思考，对世界真相的审视。如果离开这两点，文化修养就会流于表面，流于知识和技巧。

当我们发心走向觉醒，把设计作为践行十二字箴言的过程，这样的艺术创作，就不局限于一种“艺”，一种“术”，而能成为载道之器。所以我们讲到禅意设计，不仅要从专业角度和表现方式来思考，激发创作灵感，更重要的是学习佛法智慧，提升生命境界。只有打造优秀的生命作品，成为最好的自己，才是真正有价值的。









A SIX-WORD MAXIM  
REGARDING THE PRACTICE  
OF CHAN DESIGN

Master Jiqun

Translated by MPI Translation Center

Lectured at the Awakening Art and Chan Design Forum,  
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## INTRODUCTION

What is Awakening Art? What is Chan Design? As we know, the significance of Buddha Dharma lies in leading all sentient beings to awaken from their delusions. In a certain sense, this wisdom itself is the art of awakening. In other words, Awakening Art refers to the creations crafted by artists under the inspiration of Buddhist wisdom, bearing their understanding and practice of the Dharma.

There are many kinds of art with myriad styles. If divided simply, art can be classified into traditional art and contemporary art. From my perspective, traditional art attaches more importance to artistic conception and expression of beauty. Contemporary art, on the other hand,

pursues authenticity and individuality.

Chinese traditional painting and calligraphy place particular emphasis on the “intention” or “idea.” As the saying goes, “The idea is present before the first stroke of the brush, and when the last stroke is placed, the idea shines through.” Moreover, “The quality of an artwork lies not in the technique but the idea conveyed.” This “idea” refers to the profundity of perspective, including the creator’s conceptions and intentions, the theme of the work, and the way of presentation. In these aspects, both the wisdom of emptiness expounded in the Buddha Dharma and the transcendence it conveys can bring a new vision and inspiration to artistic creators.

The contemporary artistic works focus on expressing the artists’ exploration of human nature, the meaning of life, and the truth about the world and on posing questions with reflection. French artist Paul Gauguin’s masterpiece *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* is a classic representative. The

reason that these three questions have resonated so deeply is that Gauguin confronts the eternal questions inherent in human life. As long as these problems remain unsolved, they will always be there, always troubling, and binding us in cyclic existence like floating weeds not knowing where to go.

Although artists are aware of these problems, without profound wisdom, it is impossible to understand human nature, find the meaning of life, and gain a thorough understanding of the truth about the world. Because they are not able to see clearly, they cannot find the way out of both art and life and eventually fall into nihilism. In fact, this is the dilemma faced by quite a number of artists. That is because the distinctive sensitivity of artists makes it easier for them to get caught up, doubt everything, suffer and struggle. So it's less about the artists posing questions, and more about them expressing their own confusion and helplessness through their works.

So, the question is how can we find our way out of this

predicament? Certainly, we cannot do this without the Buddha Dharma. The Buddha's wisdom not only guides us to see life as it truly is, but more importantly, provides us with the means to transform it. As for this matter, I have made it very clear in the lecture on the *Diamond Sutra* this morning. Now, I would like to talk about it from the perspective of artistic creation.

Artists devote a great deal of attention to their work. They view their works as the externalization of their thoughts, emotions, and artistic pursuits, and they rack their brains to strive for continuous innovation. However, many people have not realized that life is also a work that takes one's whole life and even many lifetimes to craft. Do we prefer this work to be a piece of an unconscious doodle full of mistakes or a meticulously designed and elaborately crafted masterpiece? I believe all people expect their work to be the latter, but how can we improve the quality of life and become a better version of ourselves? Undoubtedly, we cannot accomplish this without the wisdom of the Buddha Dharma. This is also why we are



going to explore “The Practice of Awakening Art and Chan Design” in this forum. Only by getting the subject of creation done right can we continuously provide materials for the creation of our works, just as farmers improve the soil so as to provide a constant supply of nutrients for the growth of crops.

So, what are the characteristics of Awakening Art and Chan Design? Concerning this question, I have proposed a six-word maxim: No-self, Formlessness, Infinity, Transcendence, Tranquility, and Detachment. Next, I will talk about my ideas regarding these points.

# I

## NO-SELF

Speaking of the term “no-self,” some may worry: Is this a denial of the existence of “I”? How should I posit myself? The most distinct characteristic of ordinary beings is their concern for the self. Beyond mere survival, their efforts are largely driven by the need for feelings of self-importance, superiority, and dominance. But how hard it is to pursue and maintain these three feelings! In terms of personal experience, people frequently get frustrated when these three feelings are not satisfied; in terms of interpersonal relationships, people fight over “who is the most important, who is superior, and who can be in charge.” Let’s think about it, from fame and wealth to

status, from family to career, aren't they all causing us afflictions, pains, and stresses once they are involved with these feelings?

After the Renaissance, the trend of Western humanist thought prevailed, advocating individual liberation and pursuing individual values. In modern times, the expression of individuality has reached its peak, and the ideology of "me-first" has become rampant. Yet people felt more and more at a loss. They could not find themselves. So, why do people get lost in the process of self-worship? This requires us to see clearly whether our pursuits can represent "I" or not.

Buddha Dharma tells us that human beings are born with two kinds of hindrances: one is cognitive obstacles, which prevent people from seeing themselves and the world clearly; the other one is afflictive obstacles, which are caused by wrong understanding. When we cannot see clearly, we instinctively grasp outward, taking all kinds of things that are not "I" as "I," thus causing ourselves

troubles. If we want to know ourselves and rediscover ourselves, we have to let go of our attachments. Therefore, no-self is not to deny the existence of the physical body but to deny our misunderstanding of ourselves and the world. Only by eliminating these parts that are not “I” can we eradicate all delusions, attain enlightenment, discard the false, and realize the truth.

How shall we gain a thorough understanding of no-self? In the practice of Chan Buddhism, it is by asking spiritual practitioners to contemplate the topics of inquiry like “Who am I?” and “What was my original face before my birth?” Among the objects that we perceive, does the name represent me, or does the body, mind, or identity represent me? Through analysis, we recognize and realize that all of these are corruptible and only have a temporary relationship with us. In the *Shurangama Sutra*, the nature of self is elucidated through “seeking the nature of mind in seven ways and discerning the emptiness in eight returnings.” I will not go into the details here, but there is a crucial sentence at the end of the paragraph: “That

which can be returned to other sources is clearly not you; that which can be returned nowhere is none other than you.”<sup>1</sup> It reveals to us that whatever can be deconstructed is only an illusion of being – a false self. Only the last state of existence, which is not deconstructible and neither arises nor ceases, is the true “original face.”

We need to frequently ask ourselves: “Who am I? What ultimately represents me?” By asking and pondering repeatedly, eventually, we would realize that many of our seemingly reasonable pursuits are senseless; many of the things we desperately want to grasp are actually the wrong ones. Since these pursuits are senseless and we grasp the wrong things, we do not have to worry about gains and losses for these things or even spend our whole lives chasing them.

Many of our afflictions come from the expectations that

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1. *The Shurangama Sutra*, (CBETA, T19, no. 0945, p. 111, b9-10), translated by the Buddhist Text Translation Society, in *The Shurangama Sutra - Volume One: A Simple Explanation by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua* (2002), 414.

our family will always be happy, our careers will be prosperous forever, and our bodies will stay youthful forever. In fact, all of these things are impermanent, and they only stay with us temporarily. Only by seeing the truth clearly can we not build up expectations and go through unnecessary sufferings. Therefore, no-self helps us not only know ourselves but also find ourselves.

In the practice of Chan design, no-self has three implications.

### **1. No-self can help us practice deep environmental protection.**

The focus of Western Humanism is anthropocentrism, which holds that everything in the world serves people. Based on this ideology, human beings can do whatever it takes to gain benefits. This is the root cause of ecological destruction. However, the Buddha Dharma holds that human beings and the world are one and an integral whole. Direct and circumstantial rewards are not

separate. In addition, the Chinese idea of “the harmonious Oneness of Heaven and Humanity” and the Indian idea of “Unity between Brahman and the Self” are all about seeing human beings and the world holistically and having a sense of awe and gratitude towards nature. Fortunately, insightful people in the West have recognized this problem and put forward the idea of ecocentrism, which regards people as an important factor in the ecological environment, but not everything. However, without recognizing no-self, this transformation might merely be superficial, serving only to extend the use of all things for one’s own benefit in a gentle and sustainable manner. In essence, it is still a plunder of nature rather than a peaceful coexistence with nature. Only by letting go of our attachment to “self,” realizing the equality of all living beings, and understanding the mutual growth of all living things can the concept of ecocentrism be truly established. This awareness helps us design more environmentally friendly buildings and products that are in harmony with nature.

## **2. No-self can help us transform our design concept.**

Many designers come up with works that are centered on their own benefits, but not for the sake of others. They want to highlight their sense of importance and superiority in their works, thereby flaunting their uniqueness and extraordinariness. Such works may be successful in a sense, but they also make the world varied and complicated today. People all want their voices to be heard, which ends up making a lot of noise. This needs some reconsideration in purposes and functions. For instance, in terms of architecture, a building is not only a commodity but also a place for living and working. Therefore, when designing a building, designers should take the ecological environment and customer needs into account so that the building can be eco-friendly and users can obtain a peaceful body and mind. A peaceful body is achieved through building a great spatial relationship. A composed mind is attained by creating a decent cultural atmosphere. Only by relinquishing from expressing ourselves and bearing an empathetic and altruistic mind can our works



be in harmony with numerous dependent arisings and our professional capability benefit the society.

### **3. No-self can strengthen our communication with all sides.**

Many designers have trouble communicating with their clients. Why? Besides the differences in culture, aesthetic, and standpoint, the main reason lies in our self-attachment. Because we all live in our sense of self and we are all centered on our own experiences, positions, and interests, it is difficult for us to understand each other, thus causing communication barriers between each other. Understanding no-self is about getting us out of our feelings and learning how to listen and how to put ourselves in others' shoes. Only by truly understanding the needs and ideas of others based on respect, can we design with an altruistic mind while sensibly improving their artistic tastes. Thus we can communicate smoothly and bring ourselves more space for creation.

## II

### FORMLESSNESS

Design has form; it's impossible to design a building or a product that no one can see. Since everything has a form, why am I here talking about formlessness? In the lecture about the *Diamond Sutra*, I explained that the concept of emptiness in the Buddha Dharma does not negate the existence of any phenomenon but leads us to appreciate the world with the wisdom of dependent origination. All the existence, from design concepts to real objects, is made up of the designers' ideas plus various external conditions. Without these inward and outward conditions, can a work still exist?

Classical physics believes that there are indivisible fundamental physical elements and that these elements make up everything in the world, whereas modern quantum mechanics holds that the existence of fundamental elements is uncertain, which may appear as either particles or waves. What form it takes depends on how we perceive it. Therefore, all phenomena have no fixed quality – our perception determines the existence of the world.

This also tells us that every phenomenon is full of infinite possibilities. Our understandings and perceptions of many topics come with our habits, experiences, and preconceptions. Without these additional conditions, every finite present moment contains infinite possibilities. The concepts of emptiness and formlessness in Buddhism are to remove our presuppositions and attachments to the world and return things to their original appearances.

Our understandings of the phenomenon of existence have two effects on us. Correct understandings lead us to

truth and wisdom whereas wrong understandings lead us to afflictions and cyclic existence. What path to take? The key lies in how we look at it. People cling to what they see and believe it to be true, without acknowledging that what they see through colored glasses has been processed by themselves. The concept of emptiness in Buddhism is not to deny the existence of things, but to empty our false assumptions about the world. Only by understanding the concept of formlessness can we get rid of the fetters of finitude and realize emptiness and infinity in each finite present moment.

The guiding principles of the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* are “Non-thought is the tenet; Formless is the essence; Non-abiding is the fundamental.” “Non-thought is the tenet” unveils to us the mind’s void nature, free from the confines of thought. Our minds change unpredictably as clouds. Every thought is impermanent, and the mind dwells in appearances everywhere. However, behind the clouds, there is something as still as the void, which is beyond all forms.

The principle of “formless is the essence” tells us that the mind does not exist in any form. Chan School of Buddhism teaches spiritual practitioners to understand and recognize themselves by using the method of investigating in detail: We are busy all day long. Who is controlling all this? We frequently got caught up in emotions, sometimes bursting with joy, sometimes being overwhelmed with sorrow. Who is creating all this? We have been trying our best to eliminate pain and suffering. Yet we are still powerless when faced with our moody and crazy states of mind.

The biggest trouble with modern people is that they cannot calm their minds down. While they are doing one thing, they often think of another. They are controlled by smartphones, games, and desires to go shopping... even to the degree that they have lost their ability to rest. The problem is that many people do not know why they are like this. All these seem to be happening unconsciously.

How can we change that? First, we must learn how to observe our minds. In Buddhism, this kind of spiritual training includes Samatha (calm meditation) and Vipassana (insight meditation). Samatha aims to cultivate the mind's power of concentration by fixing the mind on an object of meditation such as the breath or an image of the Buddha so as to gradually stabilize the mind. Once the mind is able to abide peacefully, it will become so clear that the brightness of our intrinsic nature emits its effects, and it will realize the coming and going and the arising and ceasing of our delusive thoughts. The mind is like water. When the turbulence quiets down, it returns to its reflective state. The first sentence in the *Heart Sutra*, "Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, when practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita, perceives that all five skandhas are empty," illustrates the wisdom of such contemplation.

We have to take a close look at ourselves and examine where our minds are. Is the mind inside or outside the body? What is the mind like? What is inside of the mind? When the power of contemplation arises, we see the mind

is as shapeless and formless as the void, neither inside nor outside. As many Buddhist masters have perceived, “The mind is nowhere to be found.” Although the mind is nowhere to be found, in the meanwhile, it knows perfectly well. The mind can see not only the Five Aggregates, the body and the mind, but also everything that fills the entire space and pervades all Dharma Realms. This formless, infinite, and omniscient essence of the mind is the very original appearance of our minds.

According to Buddhism, the world we see is closely related to our minds and the six channels of understanding the world. These six channels are respectively the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. They determine what kind of world we see. It is not the world that determines what kind of perceptions and understanding we form. Buddhism calls the world that our six sense organs face the Six Dusts (sensory fields), namely, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas. The process by which the six sense organs contact with the Six Dusts generates six kinds of consciousnesses, namely, the eye consciousness,

the ear consciousness, the nose consciousness, the tongue consciousness, the body consciousness, and the mind consciousness.

These images would stay in our minds and become a kind of mental force that influences our understanding of the world. It is called “the shadows of coarse sense-data” in the *Shurangama Sutra*. To study Buddhism is to use our wisdom to examine these thoughts and emotions and empty them. Otherwise, we would fall into the cage of the mind and become a prisoner there, plagued by afflictions and negative emotions. When the mind returns to a state as vast as the void, then no thoughts can touch us, for the void is too vast to be bound or put into a cage. Only by realizing the formless essence of the mind can we become detached, unobstructed, and perfectly at ease.

In the practice of Chan design, emptiness and formlessness inspire us in three ways.



**1. Formlessness can break the limiting preconceptions and attachments.**

Over the years, we have received relevant educational and cultural lineages and developed our own experience and capabilities during work. These are our breadwinning assets, but they also set limits for us. Because once something is labeled as “mine,” we would cling to our knowledge, experiences, and abilities and consider these particularly important, superior, and extraordinary. If we stop and stay there, we will be tied down by conventions and gradually lose our creativity. The wisdom of formlessness is not to empty our experiences and abilities, but to empty and eliminate self-attachment. When we possess a broad vision and an open mind, we will not be limited by our own habits and presuppositions in the creative process. We can further break these habits, preconceptions, and limitations in the industry and even cultural lineage. At present, there is a popular saying called “mind-blowing.” In fact, formlessness is the ultimate imaginative richness, not sticking to one pattern, and not bound by any stereotypes.

## **2. Formlessness can help us break the binary opposition and build harmonious relationships.**

For instance, in architectural design, it is necessary to establish a great relationship with people, architecture, and the environment. If we do not strike a balance among the three but instead show off and focus only on the presentation of the building itself, then harmony may be destroyed. Because architecture is not isolated but part of numerous dependent arisings, we need to view the relationship between the building, the environment, and the users. Modern businesses value ecological construction, and so does design. We should attach great importance to the ecology of the environment and society so as to establish a good interdependent relationship. The premise of doing so is to break our binary oppositional thinking. Through the realization of formlessness, eventually, we can integrate ourselves into nature, and forget both the outside and inside world.

**3. Formlessness can break preexisting conceptions and unlock the infinity of life.**

If life remains in a finite scope, then the inspiration generated is also limited. Only by realizing the void nature of the mind as thoughts occur can our creative inspirations flow continuously. Such a mind is unobstructed and can be of infinite wondrous uses.

# III

## INFINITY

The world has two dimensions: finite and infinite. Most of the time, we live in a finite dimension, pursuing the Five Desires and the Six Dusts, seeking fame and fortune, while philosophy and religion explore the infinite dimension.

The finite dimension includes time and space. In terms of time, it is reflected in the fact that everything has a beginning and an end. For example, the lifespan of human beings is only several decades, and the life of all living beings has a beginning and an end. For those short-lived beings, from the cradle to the grave is but a day's

journey. For those long-lived beings, their lifespan may be millions of years. However, when compared with the time that the Earth has been around, their lifespans are too insignificant to mention. However, even the existence of the Earth, the Solar System, and the Milky Way galaxy, along with any astronomically long durations, are merely fleeting processes within the vast expanse of the infinite.

Where were we from before birth, and where are we going after death? What kind of existence is there outside the scope of a finite life? What are those great unknowns? If life is not infinite but merely a fragment from birth to death, then it is worthless even if we can live for billions of years. Although the existence of the present has its value, if you look back at the end of the universe, can this value compete with the annihilation that is destined to come? Certainly, we cannot live peacefully without exploring the infinity of life and without finding the answers.

In terms of space, human existence is also insignificant. In the vast universe, the Milky Way is insignificant; in the Milky Way, the Solar System is insignificant; in the Solar System, the Earth is insignificant. Not even to mention, a person is only one of more than seven billion people on Earth. Contemplating spacetime which is tens of thousands of billions of light-years can make us go crazy. If the universe is so big and we are as small as ants, what exactly is the meaning of our lives?

Nevertheless, Buddha Dharma tells us that the essence of the mind is that of the universe. In addition to the finite dimension of life, there is an infinite dimension. Without such an answer, I think many people would not know how to position themselves. Therefore, the questioning of infinity not only broadens our horizons but also allows us to find the meaning of life.

How can we understand the infinite mind? We live in the city. At home, we face daily necessities and life pressures. When away from home, we face an incessant stream of

vehicles and a cluster of high-rise buildings and large mansions. Even the sky above us has been cut by tall buildings and obscured by haze. In such an environment, our minds are easily closed. The size of our vision determines that of our minds. The vision we are talking about here includes that of the environment and knowledge. As the ancients said, “read ten thousand books, travel ten thousand miles.” When our vision is broadened, so are our minds and lives. What is more important is the realization of truth attained through spiritual practice, which is incomparable to any knowledge in the world.

In Buddhism, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is hailed as “Great Conduct.” In his ten vows, each practice is built on infinite perceptual objects. The objects of each of his vows include “all Buddhas and World Honored Ones, as numerous as fine motes in all Buddha lands in the ten directions and the three periods of time, to the exhaustion of the Dharma Realm and void,” along with innumerable sentient beings. The void is infinite, and so are the Bodhisattva’s great vows and virtuous deeds. The infinity

in Buddhism is also reflected by the infinite space and time. The ten directions represent space – east, west, south, north, southeast, northeast, southwest, northwest, and up and down; the three periods of time represent time – past, present, and future. Zhuangzi’s depiction of “the four directions, heaven, and earth are called ‘Yu,’ whereas the infinite time since ancient times is named as ‘Zhou’” also illustrates the universe in terms of space and time.

No matter what we do, we must take infinite space and time as the object. Only by establishing such a vision can our minds and actions correspond to those of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The mind is as vast as the void, but because of self-attachment and the limitations of our cognition, our view of the world has become so narrow that we only care about one person, one family, one enterprise, or one region. At most, we care about our nation, our country, and the world. However, even the world that we hold in our minds is insignificant in the universe.

How should we get to know and understand infinity?



Buddha Dharma provides us with two types of spiritual practice. The first is to take the infinite space and time as well as all sentient beings as perceptual objects. Such practice of contemplation helps us not only remove the inner narrow presumptions but also return the mind to its original state. The second is to examine the mind with the power of careful observation and contemplation, to go beyond the finite, and to know infinity directly. So, the concept of infinity in Buddhism is not an armchair theory, but something that can be achieved through meditative concentration.

In the practice of Chan design, infinity inspires us in two ways.

**1. By understanding infinity, we can open up our minds and recognize the beauty of emptiness.**

The mind and external conditions actually affect each other, and especially, for ordinary beings, it is easy for our minds to change with the circumstances. When

we only see what is in front of us, our minds would have plenty of things to express. Such expression shown in the design often appears exaggerated, complicated, and blindly overloaded with many irrelevant fancy elements. In such an environment, our minds would be uptight, crowded, and narrow. Practice of Chan design mostly uses subtraction, using simple and clean space to help us appreciate the connotation of emptiness, and then guides us from the emptiness of external circumstances to that of the mind.

## **2. We should unify the finite and the infinite.**

Although the work itself is finite, if our minds are only limited to this, then our work will become an isolated existence. Only by eliminating the preexisting settings and boundaries within us can our minds and works extend outwards. In terms of architecture, the ancients in China were adept at incorporating the surrounding landscape, treating buildings as part of the overall environment. This approach allows one to experience an infinite world

within a limited space, while also reflecting the ingenuity of creation within the boundless view. The fusion of the finite and the infinite enables seeing the grand from the minute, merging the interior with the exterior, offering significant inspiration for innovative design thinking.

# IV

## TRANSCENDENCE

Speaking of Buddhism, transcendental practice and worldly living are two unavoidable topics. Chinese Confucianism is traditionally quite worldly. Though certainly it also contains some transcendental contents, as represented by hermit culture. However, this is the kind of renunciation that comes from a lack of better options. As the saying goes, “In a righteous nation, one should serve; in a corrupt nation, one should retreat.” People choose to settle for less because their ambitions are unfulfilled. However, the path of transcendence and liberation in Buddhism is not only a conscious choice after a thorough understanding of the truth about life, but also an active

renunciation of the joys of samsara. We are engaged in worldly living out of compassion not only because we are unwilling to relinquish all sentient beings, but also because we have committed ourselves to liberating all living beings from the abyss of suffering. In practice, we must deal with worldly affairs with a transcendental mind. It is an elevation of transcendence, not a deviation. As a result, the spiritual temperament of transcendental practice and that of worldly living are destined to be totally different.

Confucian concerns are mainly confined to the current society, while Buddhist spiritual practice is based on the ten directions and three periods of time. Through hearing, contemplation, and practice, it guides people to establish the right view, examine the world closely with the wisdom of emptiness, realize the impermanence and illusion of the Five Aggregates, the body and the mind, to recognize the false nature of fame, gain and loss, glory, splendor, and wealth, and to comprehend the truth that “all conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, dew, and lightning.” With such

understanding, on the one hand, we can actively engage in worldly living with bodhicitta, transforming the world and enlightening ordinary beings; on the other hand, we can realize that everything we do is nothing but the moon in the water or an illusory flower, and thereby we would no longer fall into attachments to “I” and to worldly affairs. In this way, no matter how much we do, we would neither calculate “how much we have done,” nor feel “how great I am,” or be burdened by these thoughts. By combining transcendence and renunciation, we maintain a detached mind of transcendence while being actively engaged in worldly living.

In the practice of Chan design, transcendence provides us with two inspirations.

**1. Worldly design is akin to addition; blindly chasing external forms will lead to inevitable deviation.**

For instance, many designers take kitsch as down-to-earth, take weirdness as creativity, and take luxury as elegance,

magnificence, and top class. These designs not only fail to provide people with the enjoyment of beauty but also mislead the public aesthetic preferences. Transcendental design is much like doing subtraction. Under the premise of satisfying all necessary functions, this kind of design work is presented in a concise, simple, and low-key style, not only making us feel content with fewer desires but also urging us to focus on the inside instead of chasing the outside. In the present noisy, impetuous, and materialistic society, we especially need this breath of fresh air.

**2. Worldly design is to meet self-needs; it will foster desires and worldly attachment.**

Modern society is constantly agitating our desires. Fulfilling them brings satisfaction but is also exhausting. Therefore, more and more people gradually relinquish their material pleasures, begin to pursue the kind of life that reverts to original simplicity, pursue the quality and meaning of life, and pursue a life flavored with Chan, so that the mind that has always been galloping outwards

can get some rest. As designers, only by focusing on the inner nature of life can we create works that settle people's bodies and minds. Such design works neither cater to the public's taste nor follow conventions but possess the power to transcend and purify the mundane world so as to meet our higher level of spiritual needs.



# V

## TRANQUILITY

Tranquility represents the spiritual attainment and inner peace conveyed by one's work. Most people's understandings of tranquility tend to be external. People think tranquility refers to a quiet environment without noise. However, tranquility in Buddhism mainly refers to inner peace. In Buddhism, the word often associated with tranquility is nirvana, and nirvana itself is perfect tranquility.

What is nirvana? Nirvana refers to the cessation of inner restlessness. Our minds are full of various kinds of delusions, emotions, and afflictions, arising here and falling

there like roaring waves. Especially living in the internet age, we are constantly bombarded with and controlled by overwhelming information. Even when we want to sleep, we still habitually play with our phones. Even when we yearn for a moment of peace, we cannot help but indulge in delusive thoughts. Once we lose the ability to rest, our bodies and minds will lose the opportunity to recharge. Therefore, not only is our fatigue hard to dissolve, our restlessness is also hard to ease.

How can we calm the mind? The Buddhist practice of precepts, meditative concentration, and wisdom is a set of well-organized and effective methods that have been proven countless times over two thousand years. By observing the precepts and not committing unwholesome karma, we can lead a simple and healthy life, and avoid the interference of bad external circumstances. Through cultivating the power of meditative concentration and dwelling the mind in one place, not only our minds would tend to settle but also our afflictions would have no opportunity to arise. By observing and examining our mind and body

as well as the external world, eventually, we would open the door to wisdom and realize and attain the true reality. When our delusive thoughts subside, we would experience the inner tranquility and joy of life.

In the practice of Chan design, tranquility inspires us in two ways.

**1. We have to take a close look at what our work conveys.**

When people admire the calligraphy works of Master Hongyi and other eminent monks, they can sense the power of tranquility; conversely, when people look at some contemporary works, they might feel agitated. In fact, in Chinese calligraphy and painting circles, whether a work contains “internal heat” has long been regarded as one of the important criteria to evaluate the quality of a work. The so-called “internal heat” actually refers to restlessness, a kind of externalization of the designers’ state of mind. The thoughts that designers use in the process

of creation would all be expressed through the works.

All works of art have a lot to do with the mental states of the designers themselves. In a sense, a work is actually another kind of existence of its creator, a projection of the creator's spiritual temperament. As the saying goes, "One's calligraphy reflects one's personality." From the perspective of quantum mechanics, all phenomena do not exist objectively. The world we see is determined by our own karmic systems and cognitive patterns. What we perceive and see contains both the energy of the world and our cognitive patterns. So, when observing the world, we are not just observers; we are also participants. An observer even plays such a role, not to mention a creator. Artists are supposed to create spiritual nourishment for the public, but if we create with an impetuous and utilitarian mind, our works will certainly convey a feeling of impatience and eagerness for instant success. If we do that, then our behaviors would be no different than producing junk food. This is something that we particularly need to reflect on.

**2. To convey the power of tranquility through Chan design, we must first cultivate a Chan mind that understands no-self, formlessness, and infinity.**

We frequently talk about empowerment. In a sense, not only do the Three Jewels possess empowerment, but the works of art can also convey empowerment, which is a kind of spiritual power that induces resonance in us. Do we bring positive or negative empowerment to the public? Does our work bring tranquility or agitation to the public? To a large extent, these depend on the creators. Only by improving our self-cultivation can we provide a healthy artistic product to society.

# VI

## DETACHMENT

Being detached from all worldly affairs and watching the clouds rising at ease is what many people yearn for, but it is not something we can do just by thinking about it. Without letting go of our inner attachments, afflictions, and pressures, it would be beyond our power to achieve detachment. But, how can we attain a detached mind? Western society emphasizes the liberation of one's personality, mainly to remove the shackles of institutions, beliefs, and traditions. Liberation in Buddhism allows us to remove the shackles formed by false perceptions and attachments and thereby eradicate our inner confusion and afflictions. Otherwise, even if we have all kinds of external freedom,

we would still be like silkworms trapping ourselves in cocoons. Therefore, detachment must be premised on wisdom. Only when we see the truth about the world can we let go of all our attachments, neither taking pleasure in material goods nor expressing pity for ourselves, and truly attain the ease of watching the rising clouds.

In another respect, many designers and artists may hit a bottleneck in the stage of creation. Those who have achieved certain accomplishments will be anxious when facing these obstacles which are difficult to overcome. The more anxious they get, the harder it is to break through the bottleneck. Nonetheless, the question is how can we make a breakthrough? Besides improving our skills, we also need to attain a detached mentality. The so-called detachment, for one thing, is to abandon the stereotypes, emancipate the mind, and “go into battle without any burdens,” and for another, is to get out of our comfort zone and explore more possibilities. More importantly, we should not be bound by fame and wealth. If all we care about is fame and gain, then our behaviors no longer

correspond to art. However, these are the interpretations of detachment in the conventional sense. The ultimate detachment is to exceed the cycles of rebirths and transcend samsara.

In the practice of Chan design, detachment not only reveals the temperament of a work but also reflects the spiritual attainment of a designer. Detachment has two inspirations for us.

**1. Do not design for self-promotion; otherwise detachment becomes unattainable.**

If designers and artists value themselves too much, then they only want to show off and highlight their uniqueness. Such behavior is itself an expression of craving, hatred, and ignorance, inevitably leading to considerable distress. In fact, this is the sore point for many artists. The veneer of art can sometimes provide a guise of concealment and apparent justification for such craving, hatred, and ignorance. Nonetheless, no matter what form the



three poisons take, their essence is still affliction, and they are the sources of our suffering.

**2. In design, do not pander to public taste or conform to convention; otherwise detachment becomes unattainable.**

Undoubtedly, it is not that we only entertain ourselves without considering the needs of the public, but retain our detachment in this worldly living so that we can create works in a natural and unrestrained way – neither increasing nor decreasing and leaning neither to the left nor the right. Whether it's design or artistic creation, both are meant to serve all sentient beings. However, such creation must come from life and rise above life, following the conventions of the mundane world yet transcending them. Only by doing so can we be neither disturbed nor distracted by craving, hatred, and ignorance and create truly nourishing spiritual wealth for society.

Above is my interpretation of “No-self, Formlessness,

Infinity, Transcendence, Tranquility, and Detachment.” This six-word maxim is not only a guide for the practice of Chan design but also an even higher realm of life. As the saying goes, “Efforts are made beyond the painting.” What are these efforts? They usually refer to a comprehensive cultural accomplishment, but from my perspective, these efforts should include both the designer’s and artist’s reflections on the meaning of life and perceptions of the truth about the world. Without these two, the so-called cultural attainments are superficial, only staying at the level of knowledge and techniques.

When we resolve to attain awakening and are willing to practice the six-word maxim in the design process, such artistic creation will not be limited to “art” or “technique,” but it will become a vessel to convey the Way. Therefore, Chan design should not only involve thinking from professional and stylistic perspectives to inspire creativity, but it is even more crucial to learn Buddhist wisdom to attain a higher realm of life.

Creating excellent work of life and becoming the  
best version of ourselves is what really counts.

## 国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

国际静心协会（简称 MPI）是 2021 年成立于瑞士苏黎世的非盈利组织，旨在向全球传播佛法智慧和禅意生活。

静心学堂为“国际静心协会”旗下的核心公益品牌，致力于传承生命觉醒教育，为现代人提供安顿身心、安身立命之道。我们推广的静心学堂课程体系，为汉传佛教济群长老以四十年修学所证，对当代佛教教育作出的探索，包括禅意生活、智慧人生和觉醒之道。同时，我们将在世界各地营造具有禅意的空间、彼此增上的氛围，为大众修学保驾护航。

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Mindful Peace International (MPI), established in 2021 in Zurich, Switzerland, is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading Buddhist wisdom and promoting a Chan-inspired life globally.

The Mindful Peace Academy serves as the core public welfare brand under Mindful Peace International. We are dedicated to passing on education about life awakening and offering modern individuals ways towards physical and mental well-being, thereby helping them ground themselves and discover their life's mission. The curriculum we promote at the Mindful Peace Academy has been authenticated through forty years of study and practice by Master Jiqun, an eminent elder of Han Buddhism. It represents an exploration of contemporary Buddhist education, encompassing teachings on the Chan-inspired Life, the Wisdom for Living, and the Path to Awakening. Moreover, we are committed to creating Chan-inspired spaces and fostering mutually enriching environments worldwide to safeguard the public's learning journey.

The *Mindful Peace Academy Collection* showcases a selection of courses on the Chan-inspired Life and the Wisdom for Living. We sincerely hope that through these courses, more individuals will engage with life awakening education and share in the blessings that Eastern wisdom brings to humanity.

本书由善信

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