

The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama

BY ANNIE BUCKLEY

A small stone bench is inscribed with the message, "It Is In Your Self-Interest to Find a Way to Be Very Tender." The sculpture's ivory marble whispers profoundly, one of many voices in the traveling exhibition "The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama."

The exhibition opened on June 11th at its first venue, the U.C.L.A. Fowler Museum. The bench is the contribution of Jenny Holzer, one of eighty-eight contemporary artists from twenty-five countries who donated works to the exhibition. Those familiar with Holzer's work will recognize what the artist refers to as truisms but, like the rest of the works in this fantastic exhibition, familiarity with contemporary art is not a prerequisite for understanding. Rather, the experience is one of reflection on the ideals and concepts of Tibetan Buddhism, as seen through the eyes of artists. While art aficionados will appreciate curator Randy Rosenberg's excellent choices of both established and emerging artists, it is in the spirit of

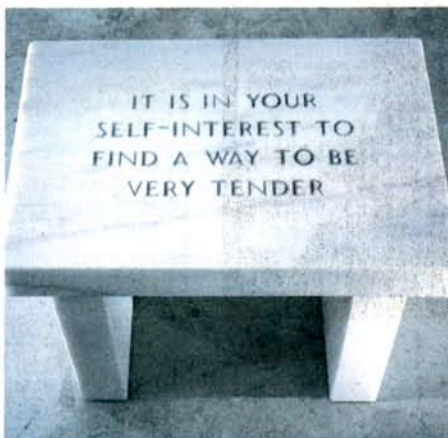
the show that all viewers, artists or yogis, children or businesspeople, will appreciate and experience equal parts contemplation and art appreciation.

The intention of the exhibition is, in the words of Rosenberg, "educational, inspirational, and transformative; its goal is both to

engage and heal." The exhibition does just that by bringing together works from around the globe to address issues of human rights, world peace, and compassion. Rosenberg organizes the work in themes that progress from the literal and representational to the abstract and universal. Each focuses on issues related to the Dalai Lama and his teachings and includes art in a variety of media from drawing and painting, to video, sculpture, collage and sound art.

The first room, "Interpreted Portraits," begins with a video by Bill Viola of the Dalai Lama giving a blessing. Small placards next to each piece offer insight into the work without overloading the visual experience with text. Holzer's piece is in the fourth grouping called "Empathy and Compassion," and the tenth and final theme is "Impermanence," a fitting finale concept.

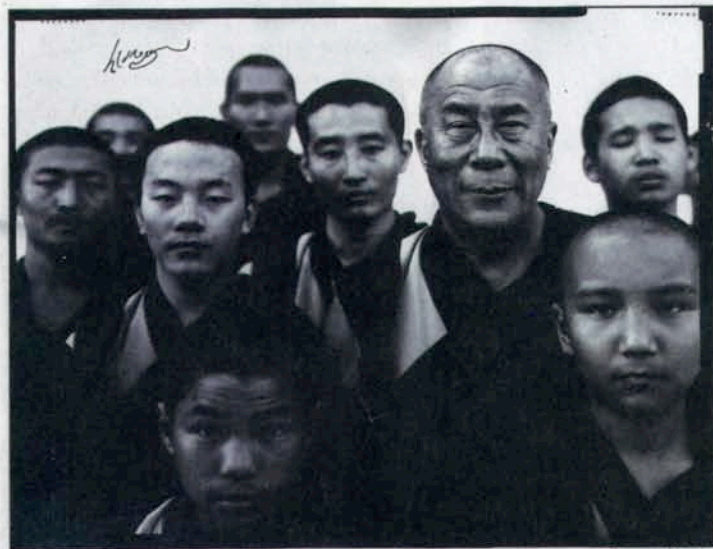
Unlike many large group exhibitions, the pieces form a dynamic whole, making it a challenge to pinpoint highlights, but there are a few standouts for practitioners of yoga or meditation. Marina Abramovic's "At the Waterfall" is a projected grid of video portraits of



Jenny Holzer; *Selection from Survival: IT IS IN YOUR SELF-INTEREST TO FIND A WAY TO BE VERY TENDER, 1983-85; White danby imperial marble footstool; 17 x 23 x 15.75 inches*



Lewis de Soto; *Paranirvana, 1999*
Mixed media with nylon, painted cloth; 25 x 7 x 6 feet



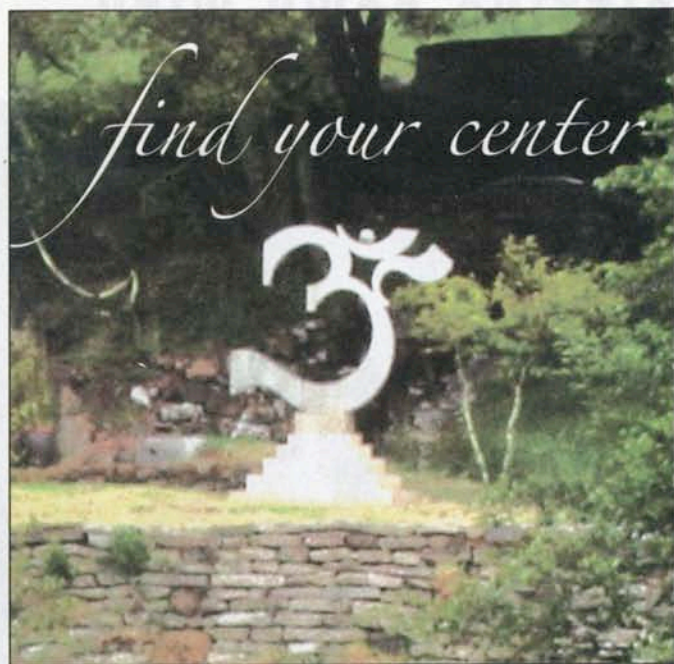
Richard Avedon; *His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Monks*, 1998 Silver gelatin print; 20 x 24 inches

monks and nuns from various Tibetan Buddhist traditions; their faces fill an immense wall with voices running together like water. Lewis deSoto includes a giant, inflatable Buddha made from nylon and painted cloth picturing the Buddha at the moment he faced his death. The work is striking in both stature and honesty - the artist superimposed his own face on the sculpture in response to the death of his father. Yoko Inoue's mixed media installation includes blue ceramic vessels cast from plastic bottles and topped with a version of the Buddha. Each is scored with a slit for coins, referencing the questionable practice of selling water and the artist's hope to return water to its spiritual origin

"The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama" is organized jointly by The Committee for 100 for Tibet and the Dalai Lama Foundation and will travel from Los Angeles to Chicago, New York and more venues to be announced. Each artist donated the work to benefit the project and the exhibition will culminate in an auction with proceeds supporting the organizers to continue to bring the teachings of the Dalai Lama to people worldwide. It is an elegant and reflective reminder of what we are capable of. It runs through September 10, at the U.C.L.A. Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

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