

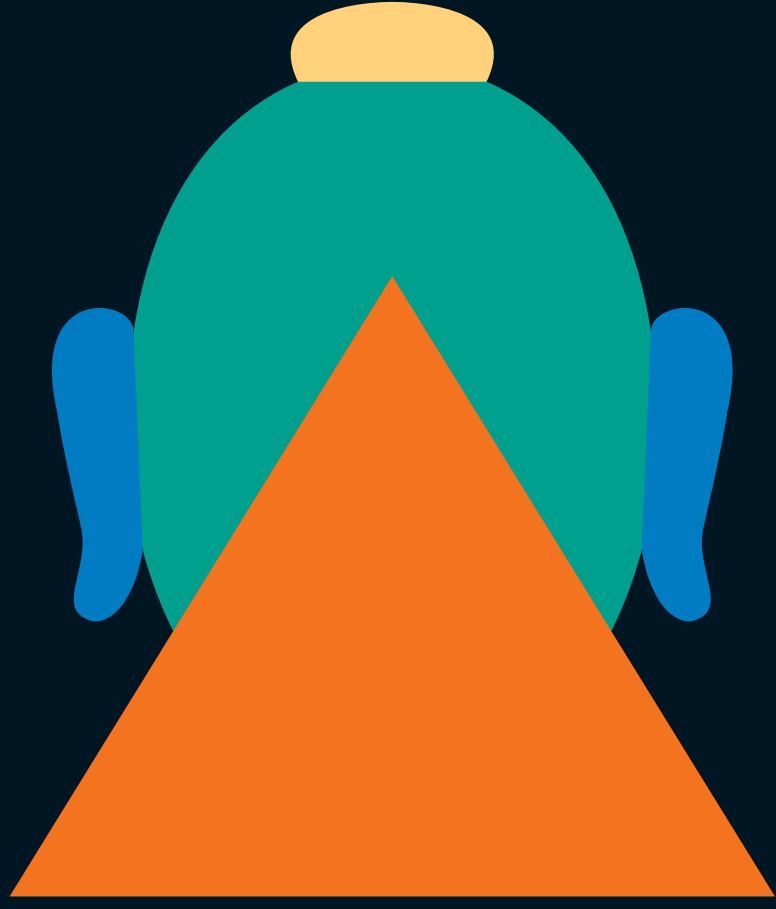
IBFF NO 1

NOVEMBER 20-23, 2003

LOS ANGELES

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INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST FILM FESTIVAL





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NOVEMBER 14–23

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International Buddhist Film Festival

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Throughout the Exhibition

Curated by Linda Connor

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**INTERNATIONAL
BUDDHIST
FILM FESTIVAL**

NOV 20–23 at LACMA www.ibff.org

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Welcome to the first International Buddhist Film Festival.

The Buddhist understanding that what we experience is projection, is cinema in the most profound sense.

In the sixth century BC, Prince Siddhartha, the future Buddha, was challenged by personal and political upheaval, and he heroically strove to find a meaningful way of living. Waking up and paying attention, he discovered a path of spiritual transformation. The seeds of this breakthrough have continued to flower through 2,500 years.

A new wave of contemporary cinema is emerging to embrace all the strands of Buddhism—directly, obliquely, reverently, critically, and comedically too. The diversity of the many buddhisms of our times is expressed in the work offered here.

So we invite you to explore our selection of films from ten countries—eight of these are premieres. Engage. Enjoy. Reflect. Tell us what you think.

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Executive Director

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IBFF AT LACMA, NOVEMBER 20–23, 2003

PROGRAM 1	Thursday November 20, 7:30 pm <i>Travellers & Magicians</i> – U.S. Premiere \$20
PROGRAM 2	Friday November 21, 1:00 pm <i>The Anniversary</i> , with <i>Chasing Buddha</i> \$8
PROGRAM 3	Friday November 21, 3:00 pm <i>Tassajara</i> , with <i>Peace Is Every Step</i> — <i>Meditation in Action</i> – L.A. Premieres \$8
PROGRAM 4	Friday November 21, 5:30 pm <i>Hi! Dharma</i> – L.A. Premiere \$8
PROGRAM 5	Friday November 21, 7:30 pm <i>Words of My Perfect Teacher</i> – U.S. Premiere \$8
PROGRAM 6	Friday November 21, 9:45 pm <i>Ghost Dog</i> \$8
PROGRAM 7	Saturday November 22, 1:00 pm <i>King of the Hill: Won't You Pimai Neighbor</i> with <i>Special Works TBA</i> \$8
PROGRAM 8	Saturday November 22, 6:00 pm <i>Jacob's Ladder</i> \$8
PROGRAM 9	Saturday November 22, 8:00 pm <i>Home Street Home</i> – U.S. Premiere \$8
PROGRAM 10	Sunday November 23, 6:00 pm <i>Shower</i> \$8
PROGRAM 11	Sunday November 23, 8:00 pm <i>Wheel of Time</i> – L.A. Premiere \$8

TICKETS

Opening Night Special Event (Program 1 screening only) \$20/(\$18 LACMA members)

All other screenings \$8/(\$6 LACMA members)

Discount Packages

Festival Pass: (all screenings) \$80

Friday Pass: (all screenings on Friday, November 21) \$30

Saturday Pass: (all screenings on Saturday, November 22) \$18

Tickets to the IBFF include admission to the Museum's exhibitions during regular Museum hours on the day of the screening for which tickets are purchased.

Tickets are available at the LACMA box office during regular Museum hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday – Noon to 8:00 pm; Friday – Noon to 9:00 pm; Saturday and Sunday – 11:00 to 8:00 pm; closed Wednesday

Or call Ticketmaster: 877.522.6225 (there is a service fee for these purchases)

LACMA

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

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LACMA is located in the Miracle Mile area between Fairfax Avenue and La Brea Avenue, on Wilshire Boulevard, just east of Ogden Drive.

Pay parking is available in the lots at Wilshire Boulevard and Spaulding Avenue, and at Wilshire and Ogden Drive. Parking in these lots is free every day after 7:00 pm.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

We are delighted to have the Loews Beverly Hills Hotel as the official IBFF host hotel.

Perfectly located only minutes away from LACMA, with a shuttle service during the IBFF, the Loews Beverly Hills is offering special rates for IBFF attendees.

Call 310.277.2800 and be sure to say you're attending the festival.

Guests who register for three nights or more will receive a free Festival Pass good for all screenings.



The International Buddhist Film Festival is produced by Buddhist Film Society, Inc., an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

BUDDHIST FILM SOCIETY, INC. INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST FILM FESTIVAL

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SPONSORED BY **TIBETAN ARTS****U.S. PREMIERE****TRAVELLERS & MAGICIANS**

Director: Khyentse Norbu
 BHUTAN, 2003, 35 MM, 108 MINUTES

Khyentse Norbu in person

Few have heard of Bhutan and even fewer have passed its remote Himalayan borders. This pristine Buddhist kingdom has quietly avoided the strife of its northern neighbor Tibet and only recently opened its doors to the West. In the absence of television and western influences, a sophisticated yet vulnerable culture has matured. One of Bhutan's most revered Buddhist teachers, Khyentse Norbu (Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche), joins us in L.A. to present his second film, the country's first full-length feature in Dzongkha, the official language.

Part road movie, part Bhutanese fable, *Travellers & Magicians* is really two stories—one earthly and one magical, played out against the backdrop of the Himalayas. Tshewang Dendup is Dondup, a civil servant posted in a small village who dreams of greener pastures. A series of events leaves him stranded on Bhutan's only highway with a mismatched group of fellow travelers. The mischievous monk in their midst (played by Bhutanese scholar Sonam Kinga) entertains them with a mysterious fireside tale. In this dark parallel story, Deki Yangzom is a lonely housewife whose secluded existence is turned inside out by Tashi, a mysterious stranger played by Lhakpa Dorji. The stories weave together down their respective paths lined with seduction, deception and dreams.

Carefully chosen locations rarely seen by outsiders are shared on screen in the context of these characters' lives. Each turn in the road illuminates Bhutan's natural beauty. Both her people and landscapes are cause for wonder.

The Director

Khyentse Norbu was born in a remote area of eastern Bhutan to a family of poets and yogis in the year of the metal ox. Norbu is known by his friends and students as H.E. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, the reincarnation of a 19th-century religious reformer who played a pivotal role in the revitalization and preservation of Buddhism in Tibet. Raised in strict Buddhist monasteries and institutions in Bhutan and Sikkim, Norbu's first encounter with film was as a monk at the age of nineteen when he caught a glimpse of a Bollywood epic on television in an Indian railway station.

In 1999, his first full-length film, *Phörpa (The Cup)*, became an international success. "I think it's better to understand the power of this influence, than to be its victim," he said at the time. He learned much of his craft from mentor Bernardo Bertolucci while serving as a consultant during the making of *Little Buddha*.

Khyentse Norbu travels as a teacher and spiritual director to Buddhist centers and schools around the world. This role is illustrated in *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, a revealing documentary also premiering at the festival (see Program 5).

OPENING NIGHT GALA

Gala Reception at LACMA
 on the Plaza adjacent to Pentimento Restaurant
 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles

November 20, 2003
 6:00–7:30 pm

\$100 contribution to
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includes admission to the U.S. Premiere of
Travellers & Magicians
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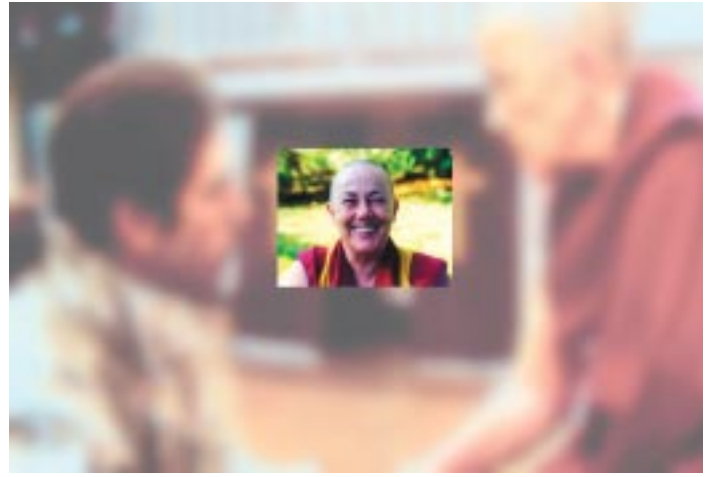


THE ANNIVERSARY

Director: Ham Tran
 USA, 2003, 35MM, 28 MINUTES

Ham Tran in person

A simple Buddhist rite of remembrance frames this short dramatic work from talented new Vietnamese-American filmmaker Ham Tran. Beautifully filmed by *Before Night Falls* cinematographer Guillermo Rosas, the film skillfully cuts between cruel child's play and the brutality of real warfare. The story offers a surprising view of human suffering even under war conditions, and Buddhism is presented not as an escape to Nirvana but as mindful reflection on this suffering. With a glimpse of the devastation in Vietnam and its aftermath, *The Anniversary* invites parallels between the violent situations there and the current state of global affairs.



with **CHASING BUDDHA**

Director: Amiel Courtin-Wilson
 AUSTRALIA, 2000, MINI DV AND SUPER 8 FILM, 52 MINUTES

Former Catholic, communist, and radical feminist, the Venerable Robina Courtin has been a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition for over twenty years. Her nephew, Amiel Courtin-Wilson, heard many wild tales about his aunt while growing up. He emerged as a talented filmmaker in his teens and was drawn to her as a subject "because of her sheer strength in dealing with a life that would have crippled most people."

Amiel and a skeleton crew chases Robina around two continents (America and Australia). Remaining as unobtrusive as possible, they capture profoundly intimate moments as Robina teaches death-row prisoners, gives advice and confers ritual empowerments.

What emerges is an inside portrait of a hard-edged woman boldly engaging in courageous compassionate activity while shattering every stereotype of a Buddhist nun. Taut and stylish editing and music sustain a heightened sense of vitality.

L.A. PREMIERE

**TASSAJARA**

Director: Frazer Bradshaw
USA, 1997, 16MM, 28 MINUTES

Frazer Bradshaw in person

Tassajara, the oldest continuously operated Zen monastery in America, sits in a narrow valley east of Big Sur, California. A rough unpaved road from the nearest highway is only one of the barriers to casual visits. Fires in this dry country are common and can be deadly (the monastery lost several buildings in a fire two decades ago), but the historic hot springs here, once used by the indigenous Esselen tribe and enjoyed by generations of Californians since, have attracted people from afar for years.

Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi, the late Japanese leader of the San Francisco Zen Center and author of the groundbreaking bestseller *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, founded Tassajara as a retreat center, a place for traditional monastic Zen Buddhist training in 1966. It is open to the public during the summer, and belongs to the monks and the wildlife the rest of the year.

This beautifully photographed work is free of narrative, and that's perfect. For the relatively few who have made the journey, this is a gentle and respectful reminder of the meditation practice environment there; for others, it offers a compelling, knowing visit to a very special place that exists outside the realm of time.

L.A. PREMIERE

*with* **PEACE IS EVERY STEP—MEDITATION IN ACTION**

Director: Gaetano Kazuo Maida
USA, 1997, BETASP, 52 MINUTES

Gaetano Kazuo Maida in person

The opening sequence of this remarkable documentary shows Vietnamese Zen teacher and activist Thich Nhat Hahn visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with a large group of his students and pleading with the U.S. government not to go to war in the Persian Gulf... in 1991.

For his efforts to try and end the Vietnam War, Nhat Hanh was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1967. He has been an exile since coming to America during that war and travels extensively from his Plum Village community in France to teach around the world. His committed, compassionate "engaged Buddhism" has been highly influential for a generation of practitioners. This profile tells his story and shows the effects his work has had. It is narrated by Ben Kingsley and includes rare footage from Vietnam produced by Nhat Hanh's own School of Social Service in the '60s.

IBFF executive director Gaetano Maida's prescient film has never been screened in L.A. The programming committee chose to include it in this the first IBFF because of the importance of Nhat Hanh's work in the U.S.; at the time this film was being made, he was virtually unknown here and the film crew had access no longer possible.

L.A. PREMIERE



HI! DHARMA

Director: Kwan Park
KOREA, 2001, 35MM, 95 MINUTES

This seemingly typical Korean *Jopok* (gangster) genre film offers more than escapist action comedy. In the middle of a turf war, five big city gang brothers seek refuge in a rural Buddhist monastery and the contrasts loom large. First-time director Kwan Park skillfully plays with these conventions while avoiding the predictable.

The head monk (veteran Korean actor Kim In-moon) bears himself with dignity and reserve as the younger monks display an assortment of reactions to the intrusion and provocations from the outside world. But the gangsters are on unfamiliar ground too, and subtle transformations begin to unfold all around—not always as expected.

Many will be surprised to see how beautiful the Korean countryside is (and how similar perhaps to the Catskills or the Sierra), and most will be intrigued by the simplicity and solidity of the monastery environment. This is no recent movement—these are the deep roots of Korean culture, and the collision with contemporary urban elements is very much a part of the modern dilemma there (and elsewhere . . .). With Jung Jin-young, Lee Won-jong, Lee Moon-shik, and Ryu Seung-soo as the monks, and Park Shin-yang, Park Sang-myun, Kang Sung-jin, Kim Soo-ro, and Hong Kyung-il as the visitors.

U.S. PREMIERE



WORDS OF MY PERFECT TEACHER

Director: Lesley Ann Patten
CANADA, 2003, 35MM, 101 MINUTES

Lesley Ann Patten and Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu (subject), in person

Award-winning Canadian filmmaker Lesley Ann Patten has created a hard-fought and revealing feature-length documentary about Bhutanese lama-cum-auteur Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche (director of *Travellers & Magicians*) from the perspective of three students, including herself.

Patten is afforded unprecedented access to the inscrutable lama but not without a dose of his rascally trickery. He repeatedly eludes her lens as she trots the globe following him from the streets of London to the World Cup finals to the Kingdom of Bhutan. He changes hats as often as his mood—sometimes joker, sometimes teacher, sometimes mischievous, always kind. When he finally does choose to reveal himself, it proves worth the wait.

This personal documentary sheds an often comedic light on the student/guru relationship. The guru in this case has a tendency to offer teasings rather than teachings, defies prediction and shatters the image of the serene sage. Patten, a long time student of Buddhism, was instrumental in creating a meditation program for women at the Halifax Correctional facility. Featuring appearances by Bernardo Bertolucci and Steven Seagal. A co-production with the National Film Board of Canada.



GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI

Director: Jim Jarmusch
USA, 1999, 35MM, 116 MINUTES

“Meditation on inevitable death should be performed daily. And every day, without fail, one should consider himself as dead.”

Jim Jarmusch (*Dead Man, Down by Law, Stranger Than Paradise*) gives us a mesmerizing tale of the underworld, bringing together the Mafia, an obsessive pop culture psyche, and an ancient warrior code as expressed in the 18th century *Hagakure—The Book of the Samurai*, compiled by a Japanese samurai-turned-Zen monk.

Forest Whitaker is hit man Ghost Dog—subtle, elegant and precise in applying the discipline of this code to his own conduct. Electronic eavesdropping devices and silenced automatic pistols replace the weapons of legend but the code remains. Ghost Dog slips smoothly, unseen in the night, executing his job with one-pointed focus. The tables turn when a contract goes awry and his mobster boss, to whom he has loyally given respect and service for ten years, is forced to seek retribution.

The haunting, hypnotic hip-hop score by RZA draws us into the dark realm of this modern warrior where every action has consequences.



KING OF THE HILL: WON'T YOU PIMAI NEIGHBOR

Creator: Mike Judge
Producer/writer: John Altschuler
USA, 2000, BETASP, 20 MINUTES

John Altschuler and Mike Judge in person

“Yeah, yeah, Buddhist, whatever... monks.”

American network television is often spoken of as a wasteland, a vehicle for consumerism and mindless entertainment. Well, apparently no one told the folks at *King of the Hill*, a long running animation success on FOX.

Bobby is the son of Hank and Peggy Hill, just-folks Americans (often self referenced as “rednecks”) living in the suburbs as the world changes rapidly around them. Immigration and contemporary culture challenge them and their friends at every turn. The show thrives on sharp satire and no subject is sacred or spared.

The nickname for this episode is “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Buddha,” and we learn more about Buddhism in its twenty minute running time (a network “half-hour”) than we do in many a full length feature work. A skillful send-up of the *Kundun* story of the identification of the young Dalai Lama, this surprising episode in particular demonstrates the power of good writing. It’s all about love.

with

SPECIAL WORKS TO BE ANNOUNCED



JACOB'S LADDER

Director: Adrian Lyne
 USA, 1990, 35MM, 115 MINUTES

Screenwriter Bruce Joel Rubin in person

A deceptive and compelling work from Adrian Lyne (*Fatal Attraction, Lolita, Flashdance*) *Jacob's Ladder* has become a cult classic. Drawing on the imagery and references of the Vietnam War era with its drugs and political/military conspiracy environment, the film follows Jacob Singer (a young Tim Robbins) from the war zone to a battlefield in his mind. We meet his demons and lovers and taste his despair, but *Jacob's Ladder* is no ordinary genre film.

Screenwriter and meditation teacher Bruce Joel Rubin (*Ghost, Deep Impact, Stuart Little 2*) wrote the script based on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. He spent over ten years looking for the right director to take on the challenge. In Lyne he found a fearless artist who boldly explores the darkness of an unsettled mind at the edge of reality. With strong performances by Robbins, Danny Aiello, Matt Craven and Elizabeth Pena.

U.S. PREMIERE



HOME STREET HOME

Director: George Schouten
 THE NETHERLANDS, 2003, BETASP, 80 MINUTES

George Schouten and Bernie Glassman (subject) in person

Brooklyn native, L.A.-trained Zen teacher Bernie Glassman is an aeronautical engineer, political activist, baker, and trained clown who provokes some and helps many through his organized and inspired compassion in action.

Glassman, founder of the Peacemaker Order, has led Zen practitioners on "retreat" among the homeless on the streets of New York, as pilgrims to Auschwitz and into the inner city. In Yonkers, New York, he started a community with a now successful bakery, a homeless shelter, jobs programs and a meditation hall. A student of Zen Center of Los Angeles founder Taizan Maezumi Roshi, Glassman has himself ordained many as Zen priests, including noted writer Peter Matthiessen.

This profile of him and his work was produced by Holland's remarkable state funded Buddhist television network, BOS.

L.A. PREMIERE**SHOWER**

Director: Zhang Yang
CHINA, 1999, 35MM, 95 MINUTES

Progressive filmmaker Zhang Yang, who honed his craft in the underground video circuit, gives us a story of past and future colliding in the heart of a man, his family and their community. Set in a neighborhood on the outskirts of modern Beijing, this is a tale of a prodigal son. Da Ming (Quanxin Pu), returns to the place of his youth and his father's old age—an antique bathhouse that draws the neighborhood men to bathe, gossip, pit cricket fights, quarrel and sing.

His simple younger brother, Er Ming, (Wu Jiang) tends to the bathhouse customers with loving care and joy in daily ritual. Water is the source of precious, healing qualities as Da Ming softens, and renews his connection to his family.

This is a deceptively simple film wearing the veneer of a family comedy but with genuine depth. It reveals a contemporary, transitional China, and a Vajrayana Buddhist spirit that survived the destructive forces of the Cultural Revolution. With remarkable actor Xu Zhu (*The King of Masks*) who creates an unforgettable father/elder with simplicity and subtlety.

**WHEEL OF TIME**

Director: Werner Herzog
GERMANY, 2002, 35 MM, 80 MINUTES

Werner Herzog in person

Master filmmaker Werner Herzog (*Enigma of Casper Hauser, Nosferatu, Fitzcarraldo*) devotes his eccentric passion and vast cinematic skill to a discovery of Tibetan Buddhism. With Germanic precision and an initiate's enthusiasm, Herzog seeks and finds the Dalai Lama at the special Kalachakra assembly in Bodhgaya, the place of Buddha's enlightenment, and chronicles a pilgrimage to sacred Mt. Kailash.

For Herzog, the world of Tibetan Vajrayana is newly discovered but deeply appreciated. He presents the Kalachakra, a ritual with half a million participants by focusing in on a few of the pilgrims and their unique stories. The monks making Tibetan noodle soup in huge pots and serving tea for thousands enjoy their tasks with playful humor. Herzog's images and resonant personal voiceover transport the viewer into the subtler mysteries of "the ecstasy of truth." His fascination with the devotion of these faithful is obvious as is his skill as a filmmaker. Even in the most extreme conditions he captures the beauty and exquisite artistry of one of Tibetan Buddhism's most significant rituals.

The first International Buddhist Film Festival is dedicated to the memory of Rick Fields (1942–1999), Ok-ko0 Grosjean (1940–2000), and Richard Kohn (1948–2000), who were there with us all the way...

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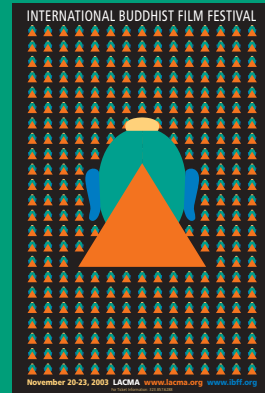
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Milton Glaser was pleased to design the poster supporting the Buddhist Film Festival. A selection of his other posters, many in museums and private collections around the world, are available at www.miltonglaser.com, in addition to prints, books, and other amusing ephemera.



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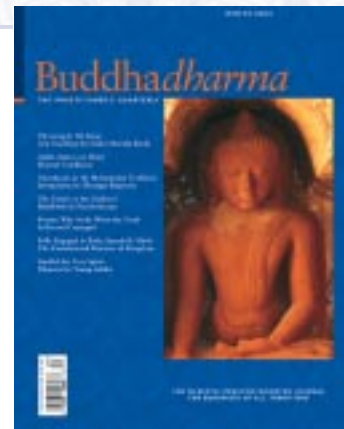


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