

COSMIC CHENREZIG

artist: Karma Phuntsok

size: 48x66 inches

medium: acrylics on linen

date: 2014

Cosmic Chenrezig is a stunning painting demonstrating Karma's great skill as a painter with delicate brocade patterns, carefully shaded flowers and garments, and a beautiful gold halo. Chenrezig is the embodiment of the compassion of all the Buddhas. As a Bodhisattva, Chenrezig has made the commitment to remain in samsara until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment.

Karma's Chenrezig embodies the quiet feeling of compassion with his beautiful and delicate face and hands, his gentle demeanor, and his peaceful presence. Once again, Karma has created wheels and circles of dots emanating out from the central figure. With each dot he says the mantra "Om Mani Padme Hung." A deep feeling of meditative peace and tranquility shines onto the viewer. Chenrezig is separated from his lotus seat by a double dorje or vajra. Dorje is the thunderbolt which strikes through ignorance. Below his lotus are offerings: the dharma wheel, the conch shell and flowers for this genteel Bodhisattva.

With its size and thousands of dots, this was a very difficult painting, taking countless hours and strenuous physical effort.

I saw this painting in Miami, when we first went to meet Karma. I was enchanted by its beauty and serenity. We were able to bring Chenrezig home to live in the temple at Shoshoni Yoga Retreat and thereby share him with meditators from all over the world.



NATURAL BUDDHA WITH WILDLIFE

artist: Karma Phuntsok

size: 48x66 inches

medium: acrylics on linen

date: 2018

Natural Buddha with Wildlife is a sumptuous painting of Shakyamuni Buddha, who taught the middle path between indulgence and austerity. He is in an exquisite natural setting. This large painting includes an assortment of wildlife, including a wild turkey, a big-eyed nocturnal marsupial, a koala bear, butterflies, a cockatoo and other beautiful tropical birds. They reside in a fern forest deep in the jungle. Shakyamuni holds the begging bowl filled with nectar and has his right hand reaching down in the “calling the earth to witness” mudra, which seems especially appropriate as everything about this painting has to do with Nature and Mother Earth. Karma often alternates between precise technical painting and a more impressionistic style. In this piece, the entire painting is gorgeously rendered in a realistic fashion.

Two years ago, Karma told me that he would no longer create such large paintings because they are so physically demanding. However, in preparation for this show, he chose to revisit some large-scale paintings.



Detail of
Natural Buddha with Wildlife



INVOCATION OF BUDDHA

artist: Karma Phuntsok

size: 48x66 inches

medium: acrylics on canvas

date: 1999

Invocation of Buddha is a large painting which fuses contemporary painting methods, including the use of acrylics and canvas, with traditional Tibetan thangka painting. The central figure is Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha, with his two attendants. The background is painted with impressionistic and abstract use of colors, especially deep blues and greens, giving a feeling of universal space. Below the Buddha is a gorgeous dragon with pearls of wisdom floating in the sky around him. Mythically, dragons guard the pearl of wisdom. The Dragon is holding an offering bowl with a vase, and a minuscule Buddha. To the Buddha's right is an intricately detailed mandala of the four continents and Mount Meru, and to the left is an assemblage of the eight precious symbols, including a dharma wheel, two fish, an endless knot, and conch shell. A Tibetan umbrella provides shelter from above, while celestial beings and wisdom goddesses pay homage to the Buddha. The small flowers and mountains floating in the sky are references to Karma's current home in Australia. Dorjes, or vajras, which are a tribute to Tibetan Buddhism, sparkle like stars in the night sky.

This is one of the most beautiful paintings that I have ever seen. When I first saw it at the University of Colorado in 2006, I froze in my tracks. There was such a feeling of old and new coming together. Karma maintains the traditional thigse, or graph proportions of the Buddha conveying a sense of reverence. He fuses traditional Tibetan painting techniques with the contemporary art techniques of paint pens and the use of acrylics on canvas. The feeling of spaciousness, and the beauty and delicacy of the painting, drew me into a deep contemplative state. *Invocation of Buddha* not only inspired me artistically, but also gave me an experience of an astral meditative state.

This is the painting that changed my life. I had been practicing traditional Tibetan thangka painting since 1987. However, I found that working, being a mother of a small child, and the busyness of day-to-day life no longer afforded me the countless hours of dot shading that it takes to paint in the traditional manner. This painting inspired me to work in more contemporary ways. Seeing Tibetan painters, and in particular Karma, utilizing modern painting techniques, gave me the permission to follow their lead. I broke away from the restrictions of traditional Tibetan methodology. Very soon after visiting this painting, I began to work with Western painting techniques and ideas.



ALOHA MEDICINE BUDDHA

artist: Faith Stone

size: 30x48 inches

medium: acrylics on Hawaiian fabric mounted on canvas

date: 2015

I love the cheerful brightness and the feeling of aloha in this painting on yellow Hawaiian fabric with white plumeria flowers. I have two dragons soaring in the sky attending the Buddha, and, in the foreground on the right, is a portrait of my husband, Babaji, the left is a self-portrait with our dog, Pranam. I placed a snow lion in front of Medicine Buddha to symbolize his lion throne.

I have probably painted, carved and drawn Medicine Buddha more than any other Buddha. I have seen so many people benefit from the practice of the healing Buddha. Medicine Buddha is for healing physical, mental, and emotional illness. My mom would call me when a friend or relative was sick and say, "Faith, I'll pray the rosary and you do the Medicine Buddha practice." If nothing else, we were surrounding our loved ones with positive energy and love.

This painting of the healing Buddha, with the miniature portraits of Baba and I, makes me feel happy. It's cheerful and sunshiny and radiates healing energy and love.



DEVI, MEDITATION ON TARA

artist: Faith Stone

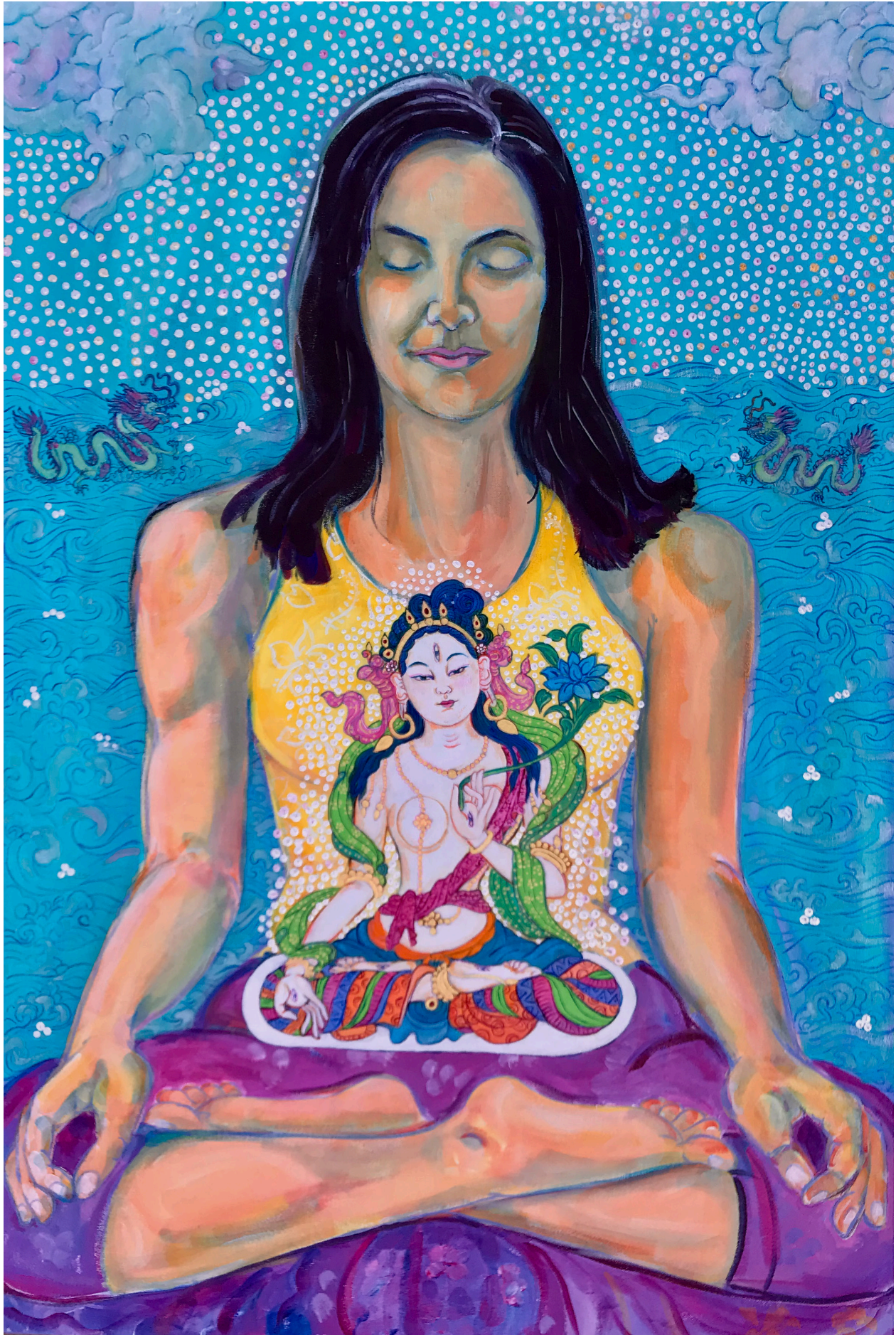
size: 20x30 inches

medium: acrylics on canvas

date: 2015

This is a portrait of my daughter, Devi, in meditation. She is meditating on White Tara, who embodies loving-kindness. In the yoga sutras, meditation is described as stilling the thought waves of the mind. With that idea, I made the background waves tossing and churning with two water dragons attending the goddess. Pearls floating in the ocean represent the pearl of wisdom, which the dragons guard. The sky is filled with shimmering dots, representing the stage of meditation where one radiates the Bodhisattva, or goddess, out in all directions for the benefit of all sentient beings. Puffy rainbow clouds drift lazily by, much like the meditator allowing thoughts to simply pass through without attachment.

This is part of a series that combines portraits with meditation ideals. I love to draw, paint and carve portraits. I also love to depict Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In this series I am able to fuse these two loves.





TWO TARAS WITH BREACHING WHALE

artist: Faith Stone

size: 24x34 inches

medium: mokuhanga woodblock

hand-rubbed onto mulberry paper

using watercolor inks

date: 2016

My background is traditional Tibetan thangka painting. I like to have a historical reference for projects and found a rare thangka in the Metropolitan Museum of Art showing both Green and White Tara. That was the affirmation I needed to create this artwork. The setting is the Big Island of Hawaii with Hualalai Mountain in the background. Winter is calving season for the humpback whales and it is not uncommon to see the whales breaching and playing. There's a feeling of such joy as these enormous creatures propel themselves skyward and crash back down with a huge splash. Spectators are filled with awe by their size, power and beauty.