

ART IN LIBRARIES EXHIBITION

Curator's Statement **TRAVIS FREEMAN**

Imagination, psyche, theologism, spirituality, and otherworldly are words that suggest possible domains of Paradise and Purgatory: tangible or intangible places that are deeply personal and joined with one's beliefs, hopes, fears, and dreams.

Paradise—a realm unencumbered by the messiness and chaos of everyday existence—symbolic of an alluring place of seemingly unattainable bliss. Its desirable destination is revealed in dreamscapes and allegorical perfections throughout history. Conjured visions of paradise dutifully obscure the injustices and confusions of reality with imagery of clarity and beauty, happiness and peace.

Purgatory—a realm troubled with suffering and reckoning—symbolic of affliction. Images past and present portray purgatory as an antagonizing destination of atonement and desperation. Depictions, typically, tend to be unpalatable and otherwise curiously foreboding.

The unyielding tension in John Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, is duality. Each story in the 10-book poem in some way wrestles with reconciliation or redemption. The myriad of visuals in the books and the artworks on exhibit at the University of Minnesota Libraries, like Milton's poem, articulate the perpetual drama of salvation and damnation associated with paradise and purgatory. "At once delight and horror upon us seise..." (John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1667)

Travis Freeman, student curator
Deborah K. Ultan Boudewyns, exhibit coordinator, art history & performing arts librarian, Wilson Library

GORMAN RARE ART BOOK EXHIBITION

Curator's Essay **MICHAEL WONG**

The exhibition *Paradise and Purgatory* presents a panoramic glimpse into the spiritual realms that have evolved through Christian and Buddhist iconography from the 4th century through the 17th century CE. The allegorical representations serve as a moral compass and illuminate how a worshipper might navigate the possibility of the afterlife.

As curator of this exhibit it has been enlightening to gather cross-cultural imagery of faith and devotion in rare art resources. The sources for these images are drawn from the University of Minnesota's Gorman Rare Art Book Collection and the University Libraries' special collections. I would like to express gratitude for the expertise and assistance of the staff of the James Ford Bell Library and the invaluable guidance of Deborah Ultan Boudewyns, creative advisor for this exhibition.

PARADISE AND PURGATORY

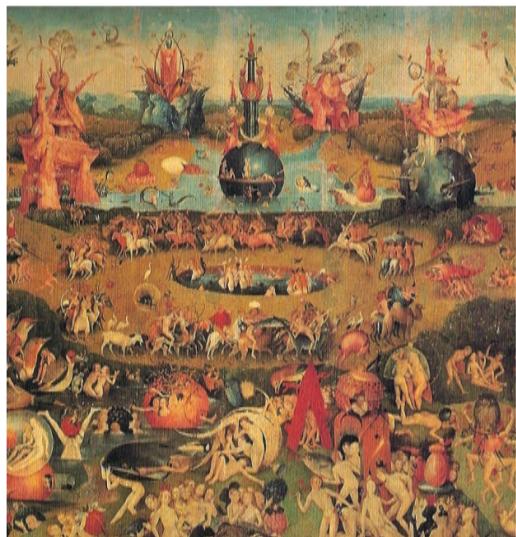
When viewing images of the afterlife drawn from centuries past, we are inevitably confronted by the persuasive power of faith in representations of divine vistas of paradise and the sulfuric infernos of purgatory. The images are the legacies of long vanished visionaries, and provide entry points of comprehension into their contemporary times and belief systems.

The exhibition *Paradise & Purgatory*, hosted in the T.R. Anderson Gallery in the University of Minnesota's Wilson Library, is on display from February 14 to April 4, 2008 and presents a selection of allegorical images ranging from the sublime to the profane. The images in this exhibition span a range of religious iconography, predominantly cited from the Buddhist and Christian faiths.

The three selections that form the foundation for this exhibition include "The Garden Of Earthly Delights," from the 14th century–15th century CE Flemish painter Hieronymus Bosch; the "Hell Scroll" from the Nara Collection, a 12th c Japanese masterwork attributed to the Kozan-ji monks; and the "Chakrasamvara Mandala," a Tibetan scroll painting dating from the 12th century CE.

Although these works reflect dramatically different cultural histories their purpose is similar: to depict the afterlife for the viewer, reinforcing religious doctrine within their respective societies. It is in this frame of reference that we turn our attentions to examining the history and content embedded in each work.

Hieronymus Bosch's masterpiece "The Garden of Earthly Delights" from 1514 to 1516 represents the Flemish artist at the conclusion of his prolific career in the city of S'Herthogenbosch.



As an artist, Bosch (c. 1455–1516) eventually devoted to creating allegorical themes such as the Last Judgment and The Adoration of the Magi, imbuing these themes with elusive mysticism executed with technical virtuosity.

Bosch's treatment of the allegorical landscape, populated by bizarre hybridizations of human and beast, grotesque monsters, and ghouls and phantoms, is a reflection of the tumultuous and often cataclysmic events of the late 14th to early 15th century CE in European society. During Bosch's time, the Bubonic Plague, known as the Black Death, had claimed the lives of 25 million individuals, one third of Europe's total population. The ensuing social and economical devastation shook the foundation of established religious thought and philosophy, resulting in new forms of religious mysticism that fundamentally questioned the role of faith in the Catholic Church (Larsen, 8). In addition to the reformulation of religious doctrine, morality and philosophy throughout Europe, the persecution of witchcraft, sorcery and black magic became an ingrained social practice of the day, manifesting itself most notably in the execution of the visionary Joan of Arc in 1431.

These sweeping societal changes are crystallized in Bosch's interpretation of paradise and purgatory in his work, the "Garden of Earthly Delights." In Bosch's depiction of paradise, he creates a veritable garden of love, filled with nude men and women, peacefully frolicking and enjoying the presence of birds, plants, and companions of the other sex (Larsen, 132). This idyllic scene visually celebrates physical desire and carnal pleasure

by the sensuous rendering of implied coital relations between men and women, but allegorically imparts a warning against the perils of physical desire and sexual debauchery.

The theme of sexual extravagance and moral turpitude is further exemplified in the companion section to this work, "the Hell panel." Bosch adopts the theme of purgatory and creates an image of rarely equaled horror, crowding the composition with figures in scenes of agonizing torture inflicted by monstrous creatures set against a backdrop of a smoldering buildings. Sexual abandon still plays a central role in this panel, with references to sodomy, as well as male and female genitalia seen throughout the composition. We also see the artist's insertion of the effects of the Black Death as a theme in this work, illustrated specifically by the hordes of people falling victim to death in the background of this image. After careful scrutiny of this painting, we come to the conclusion that Bosch's interpretation of both paradise and purgatory constitutes a moralizing sermon, depicting mankind as lost in sin.

The Buddhist masterpiece the "Hell Scroll" from the 12th c. during the late Heian Dynasty, reflects the introduction of Buddhism throughout the Japanese empire in the 6th century CE. The Heian period (794–1185 CE) is known as the last chapter in Japan's Classical era during which an unprecedented peace and security flourished. Two Buddhist esoteric sects emerged as the dominant faiths in Japan during this period: the Tendai, stemming from Chinese Buddhism, and the Shingon, more closely aligned with Tibetan and Indian Buddhism.

The Hell Scroll consists of a series of images depicting each of the lesser hells drawn from the Shingon Buddhist sect of the period, and are attributed to the painter-monks of the Kozan-ji temple in Kyoto Japan (www.onmarkproductions.com/html/oni-demons.shtml). The hierarchical structure of the Buddhist afterlife is governed by the reincarnation cycle known as the Wheel of Life. This wheel encompasses all levels

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Michael Wong grew up in Honolulu, Hawaii. He has lived in the Twin Cities since 2000 and is pursuing an MFA in sculpture and drawing at the University of Minnesota.

Araan Schmidt, born in Iowa City, Iowa, received a Bachelors of Fine Arts in 2004 from Kansas City Art Institute, and is currently a second year MFA student at the University of Minnesota.

Lindsay Montgomery began studying ceramics and glass at the Sheridan College School of Crafts and Design in Toronto Ontario, received an interdisciplinary fine arts degree at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax Nova Scotia, and is now in her first year at the University of Minnesota.

TJ Barnes was born in Posey County, Indiana, in 1974, received a BFA from the Herron School of Art, and is in his second year at the University of Minnesota.

Cheryl Wilgren Clyne, born in Duluth, Minnesota, completes her MFA this spring, after receiving a BS degree in Architecture and Film from the University of Minnesota

Katinka Galanos is an MFA student at the University of Minnesota.

Steven Rooney first studied at the Delaware College of Art and Design followed by a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and is in his first year in the MFA program at the University of Minnesota.

Stacey Holloway graduated with a BFA from the Herron School of Art and Design at Indiana University with a major in sculpture and a minor in art history, and is now a second year MFA student at the University of Minnesota.

Josie Lewis, born in northern Minnesota, in 1976, is a second year MFA student at the University of Minnesota.

Travis Freeman studied at the Burren College of Art in Ireland in 1998, received his BFA from the University of Iowa in Drawing and in Art Education in 1999, and is now in his second year of the MFA program at the University of Minnesota.

Jason Gaspar is currently an MFA student at the University of Minnesota.

of earthly and spiritual existence and can either bring the individual closer to Nirvana, or conversely condemn the individual to a sentence in purgatory before rebirth into the next physical existence.

According to Buddhist doctrine, there are eight principal hells corresponding to the original eight hell scrolls; attached to each of these are 16 subsidiary hells. The Nara Hell Scrolls present seven out of the eight principal hell scenes entitled the Hell of Excrement, the Hell of Measures, the Hell of the Iron Mortar, the Hell of the Flaming Cock, the Hell of the Black Sand Cloud, the Hell of Pus and Blood, and the Hell of Foxes and Wolves (www.onmarkproductions.com/html/oni-demons.shtml). Each of these depictions represent the many phases of the Buddhist concept of purgatory, where the damned are subjected to various ordeals commensurate with the misdemeanors they were guilty of in their earthly life.

The Hell of the Iron Mortar is one of the eight principle hells where those guilty of wickedness and theft are pounded and crushed in a huge mortar. Against a gray background symbolizing the eternal gloom of the underworld, four hideous demons are depicted grinding the souls of damned. The one on the right, emptying out the victims' bones, looks like a spiteful old hag, its gaping mouth and leering eyes foreboding nothing but evil.

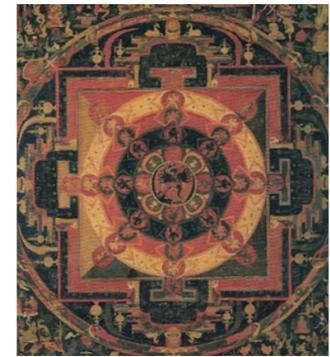
The horrific images of purgatory found throughout the Nara Hell Scrolls exemplify 12th century Japanese esoteric iconographic style, using gruesome imagery to inspire the pursuit of salvation within the reincarnation cycle.

The Tibetan scroll painting "Chakrasamvara Mandala," from the 11th century CE, belongs to the Esoteric Buddhist conception of paradise and purgatory. The origins of the Tibetan Mandala format can be traced to the 11th century CE when Buddhists began to create representations of their deities and surrounding landscapes as devices to guide the viewer's meditation in either public or private forums of religious devotion.

The Buddhist faith was first introduced in Tibet through philosophical and religious interaction with India beginning in the late 8th century CE. This cultural exchange focused on the development of Esoteric Buddhism, a form of traditional Buddhist doctrine that offered a radically different method in the pursuit of enlightenment.

The traditional Indian or Mahayana Buddhist model espoused a many-tiered route to spiritual illumination for the devotee, achieved over many lifetimes in the reincarnation cycle. Esoteric, or Vajrayana Buddhism, differed from the Mahayanist tradition in two main divergences; the first stated that humanity inherently was enlightened, but that the sensory and physical world betrayed this purer spiritual clarity; and the second indicated that enlightenment could be attained by intense meditation over a few lifetimes, if not within one lifetime (Singer, 7). The Vajrayana philosophy questioned at heart the illusory qualities of the physical world by challenging socially defined norms of good and evil practices, endorsing sexual activity and the forbidden consumption of alcohol and meat. Esoteric Buddhism believed that by indulging in the taboo, individuals were able to break free of their "own conventional notions of spirituality...[to achieve a] profound knowledge of themselves" (Singer, 8).

Esoteric Buddhism offered the worshipper an alternative way to navigate the route to enlightenment and employed strikingly new iconographic forms and roles for its imagery. This iconography often renders deities in sexual embrace "meant to convey the ecstatic nature of enlightenment, and alludes to the integrative process that lies at the heart of Esoteric practice: male and female are symbols of the countless pairs



of opposites (love and hate, good and evil) that are experienced in mundane existence" (Singer, 9).

The scroll painting "Chakrasamvara Mandala," often described as the "Wheel of Great Bliss" (Kossak, Singer, 52), is an archetypal example of Esoteric iconography, mapping the route from the

hellish world of the dead to the rapture of enlightenment for the worshipper. The mandala depicts Samvara, a fierce protective deity and his consort Vajravahini locked in a passionate embrace in the center. Vajrayana Buddhism considers Samvara to be an emanation of Aksobhva, one of the five Buddhas of wisdom (Bèguin, 84). The first ring of lotus petals contains the goddesses of the four cardinal directions, "Dakini (east), Lama (north), Khandaroha (west), and Rupini (south) interspersed with depictions of skull caps for the four intermediate points which are said to "contain the thought of enlightenment (Kossak, Singer, 52). The mandala's remaining four concentric rings refer to the levels of meditation, representing the "circles of thought, speech, body and intuition" (Kossak, Singer, 52), guiding a viewer's moments of spiritual reflection to a goal of ecstatic awareness, or enlightenment."

Outside of the mandala are representations of the eight cremation grounds, each associated with the eight cardinal and intermediary points of the compass. These cremation grounds are the equivalent of purgatory and are accompanied by wrathful deities from the land of the dead (Kossak, Singer, 52). Beyond the contained meditative space of the mandala are graphic illustrations of agonizing torture: beasts feasting on the bodies of the dead and cavorting skeletons, forming a terrifying vision of purgatory. The upper register of this Thangka shows various deities in an array of poses and the bottom register displays a group of devotees, including Shakyamuni, the physical manifestation of the Buddha before enlightenment (Kossak, Singer, 53). The "Chakrasamvara Mandala"'s depiction of the Buddhist path to enlightenment is an evocative and powerful representation of the afterlife, enticing its viewers into an accelerated quest for spiritual enlightenment.

The three iconographic pieces of paradise and purgatory highlighted in this exhibit—the Flemish painting "Garden Of Earthly Delights," the Japanese "Hell Scroll," and the Tibetan "Chakrasamvara Mandala,"—reflect periods of momentous social change within their respective societies. Although these images are drawn from dramatically different cultures, they function in the same manner to capture attention with dynamic graphic imagery of the afterlife reinforcing a spiritual righteousness. The selected works are historical documents that represent the contributions visual language can have on culture and spirituality in ways that are mysterious, terrifying, and awe-inspiring.

Michael Wong, student curator

WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Bèguin, Gilles. *Tresors de Mongolie: The Eminent Mongolian Sculptor-G. Zanabazar*. Ulaanbaatar: State Publishing House, 1982. [¶](#) Kossak, Steven M., and Jane Casey Singer. *Sacred Visions: Early Paintings From Central Tibet*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998. [¶](#) Komatsu, Shigemi. Gaki Zōshi, Yamai Zōshi. Kusōshi Emaki. Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, Showa 62, 1987. [¶](#) Larsen, Erik. *Bosch: The Complete Paintings by the Visionary Master*. New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1998. [¶](#) Thangka, (2008, January 6). In Wikipedia, The free encyclopedia. Retrieved January 13, 2008, from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thangka [¶](#) Hell Scrolls: Japanese Buddhist Statuary: Gods, Goddesses, Shinto Kami, Creatures and Demons. Retrieved January 13, 2008 from www.onmarkproductions.com/html/oni-demons.shtml

Paradise and Purgatory is a joint exhibition of books from the University of Minnesota's Gorman Rare Art Book Collection and Special Collections, and eight graduate student artists from the University of Minnesota's Department of Art.

The theme Paradise & Purgatory for the joint exhibition was conceived by this year's book curator, Michael Wong. The universally considered topic by artists, spiritualists, and literati, offered the perfect opportunity to join in collaboration for the first time the Art in the Libraries Exhibition program with the Annual Gorman Rare Art Book Exhibition.

On exhibit from February 14 to April 4, 2008, the artwork in Wilson Library and the Music Library presents personal visions of paradise and purgatory that

seek resonance with the images by visionaries depicted in the rare books ranging from the 4th century through the 17th century on display in the T.R. Anderson Gallery, Wilson Library.



EXHIBIT PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

DEBORAH K. ULTAN BOUDEWYNS

GORMAN RARE ART BOOK EXHIBIT

MICHAEL FONG *Student Curator*
WAYNE POTRATZ *Faculty Advisor*

ART IN THE LIBRARIES EXHIBIT

TRAVIS FREEMAN *Student Curator*
CLARENCE MORGAN *Faculty Advisor*

DISPLAYS & IDENTITY

DARREN TERPSTRA

PARADISE & PURGATORY

exhibit guide



art in the libraries exhibition ON DISPLAY / SELECTED WORK

I. Katinka Galanos

Pocket Landscape No. 3
Inkjet Print
2008

Pocket Landscape No. 4
Inkjet Print
2008

An Endless Fragment
HD Video
51 Second Loop
2007

II. Stacey M. Holloway

Why Does the Cooped Chicken Dance?: Music Box
Cast Bronze, Wood, Motors and Mixed Media
2007

III. Michael Wong

Janus
Graphite, Chalk and Ink on Paper
2005

IV. Jason Gaspar

Untitled
Mixed Media
2007

V. Josie Lewis

Revelation 13:5 And there was given unto the accuser a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and a great power was given unto him.
Cut Paper
2008

Ezekiel 1:5 And as I looked, behold, four heavenly creatures, and they had a wheel within a wheel, and their rims were full of eyes round about.
Cut Paper
2008

VI. Steven Rooney

Copy of "The Birth of Christ" by El Greco
Oil on Canvas
2007

Series of Portraits on the Light Rail (1-4)
Ink Wash
2007

VII. Travis Freeman

You Are Finite and You Contain Infinity
Mixed Media
2007

VIII. T.J. Barnes

If I Show You My Hands Will You Believe Me?
Oil on Ply Wood
2008

First Failed Attempt at Capturing Space: From the Series I Mapped the Universe and Put Myself in the Center
Mixed Media
2008

IX. Aaron Schmidt

M.A.D. (Mutually Assured Destruction)
Stainless Steel
2007

X. Cheryl Wilgren Clyne

Out There Darkness
Mixed Media
2007

It Began Here
Mixed Media
2007

When the Cloud Left the Sky
Mixed Media
2007

What You Need
Mixed Media
2007

Influences
Mixed Media
2007

Alone I Can Not Be
Mixed Media
2007

Cap of Lead In the Sky
Mixed Media
2007

Dream Innocent Many
Mixed Media
2007

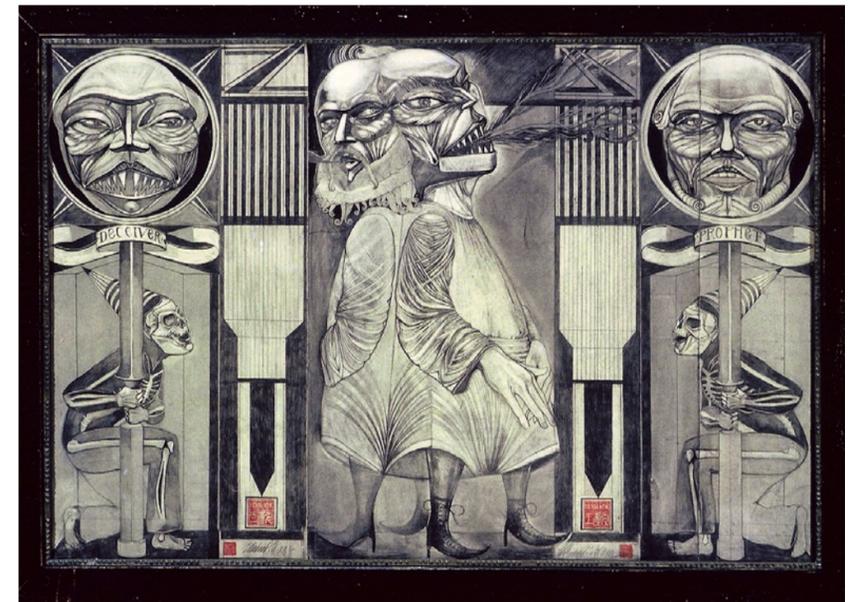
Three That Were You
Mixed Media
2007

XI. Lindsay Montgomery

Lucy's Secret
Pressed Molded Earthenware
2007

The Best Way to Stuff a Squirrel
Pressed Molded Earthenware
2007

In the Company of Wolves
Pressed Molded Earthenware
2008



Made possible by the Ronald and Eva Kinney Family Foundation, the Friends of the University of Minnesota Libraries, and the Department of Art.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer. ©2008 by the Regents of the University of Minnesota.