

MEDITATING THE LINE

LUISE KLOOS
JOSIP ZANKI

ASTRID KURY
INTRODUCTION



JOSIP ZANKI

A STORY ABOUT LINE: BEGINNING,
PRINCIPLE OR ENDLESS SEQUENCE



LIST OF WORKS



WORKS



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



IMPRESSUM

ASTRID KURY

INTRODUCTION

“Every phenomenon can be experienced in two ways” Wassily Kandinsky wrote in the introduction to his book of spiritually expressive force “Point and Line to Plane” (Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche: ein Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente*, Munich, 2nd edition 1928, page 11 – English edition Dover History of Art series).

This study marks an important step towards the autonomy of artistic means, which leads lines and colours beyond the function of the representational depiction. Kandinsky differentiates between a focus on the “outside” and the “inside” in the perspective of the viewer. The outside has an effect like a reflection on a window pane, the inside is like a door opened to a “play of horizontal, vertical lines and lines that tilt in different directions as a result of the accumulating and scattering patches of colour that sometimes sound high, sometimes deep.” Kandinsky tried to find visual equivalents through the exact analysis of the effects of colour and shape, which were more than a mere reflection “on the surface of consciousness”. This artistic rendition in art of the experience of a soul was the force that drove his work, inspired by Far Eastern philosophy and contemporary theosophy.

Artistic activity also becomes a meditative practice through this approach: an exercise in freedom from attribution, but also a lifelong attempt to approximate the autonomous momentum of the creative, often framed strictly by routines of perfecting the traditional through constant repetition. I would like to place the work of Luise Kloos in this art historical tradition. She has immersed herself in Buddhist painting techniques with incredible passion and concentration, appropriating this meticulous and precisely regulated drawing with the finest strokes of the brush and choice pigments. From this she has then developed approaches for internalizing the work by creating dense fabrics of line and colour, through which she creates seemingly timeless, floating sound images. She has taken her own path here, one thoroughly inspired by contemporary music and the dynamics of sound. The pattern of her work is similar in some ways to that in the ringing of bells, where at the moment of dense pealing of each bell together, a superimposition of the individual sound element is

barely identifiable, but instead a fine interwoven synthesis and interweaving arises from all the parts together, becoming an original something of its own and more than merely the sum of its parts – and then at this point if we think back to Kandinsky, the viewer may be able to “open a door” as in his work.

I see her experimental line and colour studies both as spiritual practice and as an attempt at the moment of change to keep on researching, to stay constantly on track until the turning point of the work is reached. In a thick overlay of colour layers and linear rhythms and with the participation of chance, her works move along the line of search to reach the momentum of more. One can certainly try to read these pictures backwards, in an attempt to piece together the process by which they were made. Yet they no longer divulge this secret, they have been transformed into non-specific colour-line-sound spaces that are particularly inviting for process of absorbing them deeper and more closely.

Josip Zanki, the congenial partner of Luise Kloos in numerous joint and Europe-wide art projects for decades, has also approached this meditative practice in his own very specific way. In his case too, this is supported by a longstanding study and enthusiasm for Tibetan painting. In his artistic oeuvre he developed a distinctive and clearly recognizable style – one could almost say his handwriting: the lines of the objects run tightly in monochrome gray through the pictorial space, the contours have their own notation and through this describe a symbolic view of the world, impressions condensed into inner images, these are fed by love for the landscapes of childhood and here especially for the trees and the forest. It is not without good reason that the Japanese have their tradition of forest bathing: The biophile person recovers in the orderly pattern that forms an intact forest, here everything points to everything else in a dense communicational fabric comprised of all residents in this community. And in a way, both artistic approaches are reminiscent of a forest experience, as though wandering through the hidden order of the thicket with one's eyes wide open.

JOSIP ZANKI

A STORY ABOUT LINE: BEGINNING, PRINCIPLE OR ENDLESS SEQUENCE

For many years, or better to say, since our first real-life encounter at Graz train station in the fall of 2004, I was able to “follow” the drawing skills of Luise Kloos. Although we have collaborated on interdisciplinary art projects for years; in which the focus was on artistic interventions as reactions to problematical, social or cultural issues, public space, or scientific research; we have never had the opportunity to exhibit together (independently) and show the results in the medium in which we both operate, which is drawing. From 2011 to 2015, we also studied traditional Buddhist thangka painting together under the mentorship of Master Locho at the Thangde Gatsal School, in the village of Kandi in India.

The school’s methodology was based on copying the Buddha and bodhisattva figures in a drawing technique using sacred measures and a painting technique based on dry shading – an endless series of thin, thicker, and water-thinned lines to maintain color freshness and create a harmonious relationship of light and darkness on the surface of a painting. It was in these processes that we both came closer to what we have in common in our work, which is meditation on a line, meditation of a line, and meditation after working on a line. This meditation includes not only the time of hand movement and gestures but also the time of physical absence from the drawing when we are left with only a state of true emptiness. Drawing sketches and endlessly drawing lines in the dry shading technique is part of creating a sacred space in which the deity or all-pervading energy lha is embodied and that is why it is necessary to control tools (hands), artistry (mind), and dedication (emotions). The

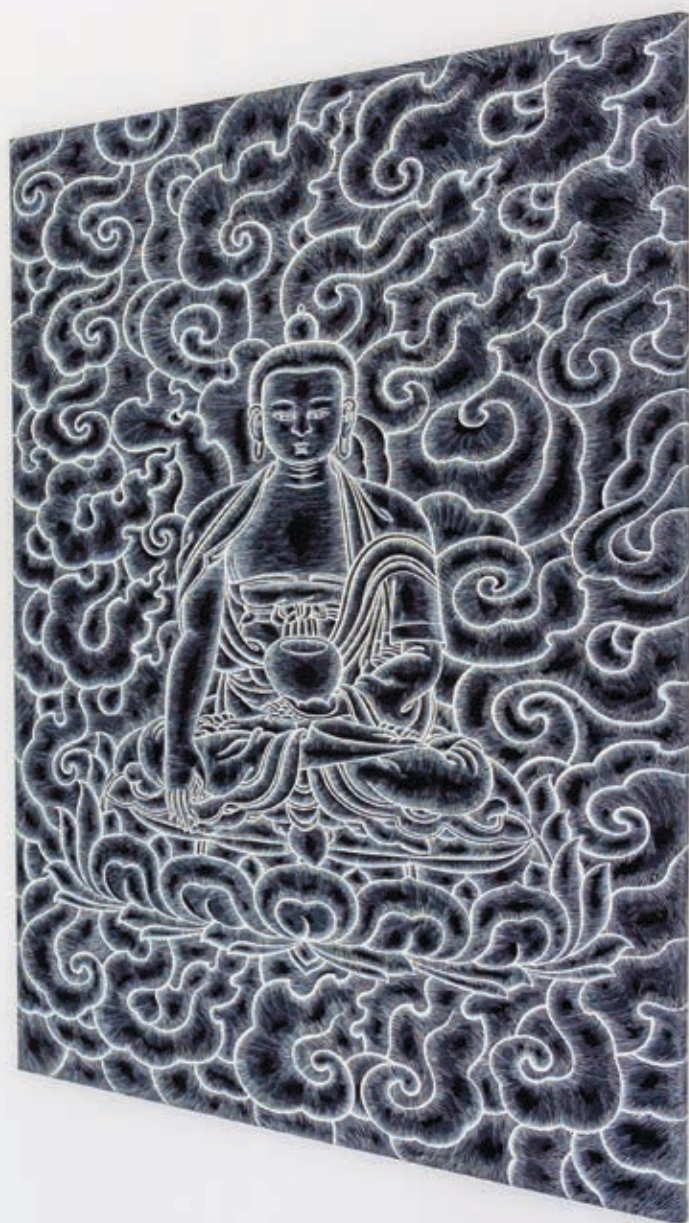
personalized and embodied experiences gained at the Thangde Gatsal School both Luise Kloos and I personally incorporated into our daily artwork.

From today's position, and I say this after 10 years of researching thangka painting, it is impossible to separate our work on a thangka painting from our work within contemporary artistic practices. The experience of meditation changes our view of the very act of creation, of the position of the author, and all those who observe the artwork. When he manifestly established that "every man is an artist", referring to the concept of social art and human creativity in general, Joseph Beuys hinted at the future course of artistic practice. And that is the path from the concept of an artwork as a representation of a character, a scene, or an idea; a model of beauty without any additional meaning, sense, or content; all the way to the identity of everyday life, expressed in the range from ready-made, appropriation, to ethnographic turn in art.

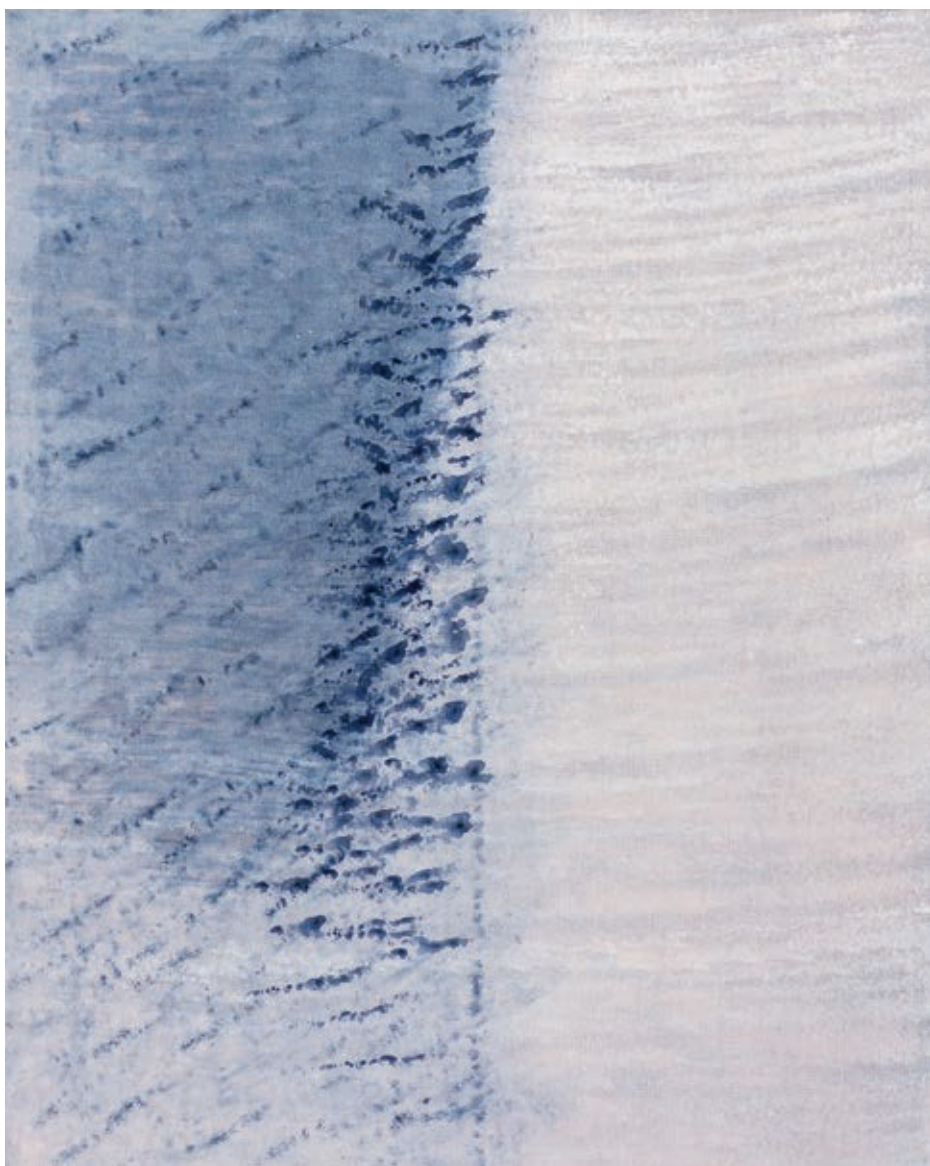
The experience of meditation opens a new reading of the artistic act by which the creator of sacred space and the formation of heavenly order on earth is the same – in Eliade's sense of those words. To establish order, the participation of all stakeholders of the real space is required, from the artist to the visitor of the exhibition space, that is, the one who looks at the artwork or meditates on the work. The knowledge acquired in the Buddhist school of painting further brought closer and, in a way, equated mine and the work of Luise Kloos. If for the period before that experience we can say that our common point was a vibrating fluid line drawing that formed uniform graphisms of different shapes and was based on exhausting rhythm of repetition and transformation; from the moment of accepting the line as a part of the meditation process, we both no longer start from such formative similarity in the treatment of the image surface (two-dimensional surface) but from the fact of awareness in the very process of creation. The sequence of lines that form the unity of geometric shapes or the body of a deity is no longer for us a means that leads to the final product or an image created by the dichotomy of creation – origin, but a part of the infinite process of shaping. Just as yoga exercises use breathing that changes our breathing habit into breath consciousness, we turn the very process of artistic creation into a process of inner transformation of a being.

In a series of lines, points, or surfaces, Luise Kloos and I participate in a sacred rite in which we are only a part of the guide, that is, the carrier of the all-pervading energy *lha*. It is a long and exhausting process in which neither the beginning, nor the end, nor any difference is seen. When the average Westerner is confronted with different thangka paintings, it seems to him that they are almost all identical in style, art, and quality, or presumed meaning for the history of Buddhist art. It is at this point that the illusion of the Western view is shattered because progress, individualism, or for example "mature style" is impossible to determine, simply because these analytical apparatuses for the Buddhist art are not valid. For years, Luise Kloos and I have been trying to disappear beyond the reach of analytical apparatus, to get lost in the multitude of fading lines where we testify that we ourselves are an image, just like an image-object, and also the one who looks at it. As in Truffaut's film *Fahrenheit 451*, where each of the rebels remembers a literary work, Luise and I have remembered the same line for 16 years and are ready to utter it at any moment. It never appears and never disappears; it is singular and multitude and is known only in meditation.



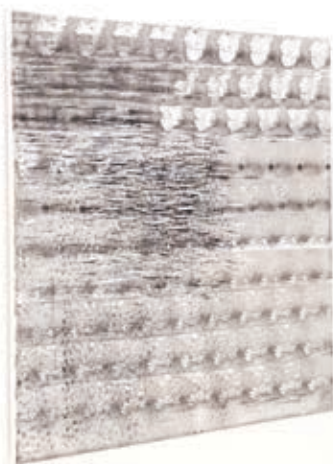




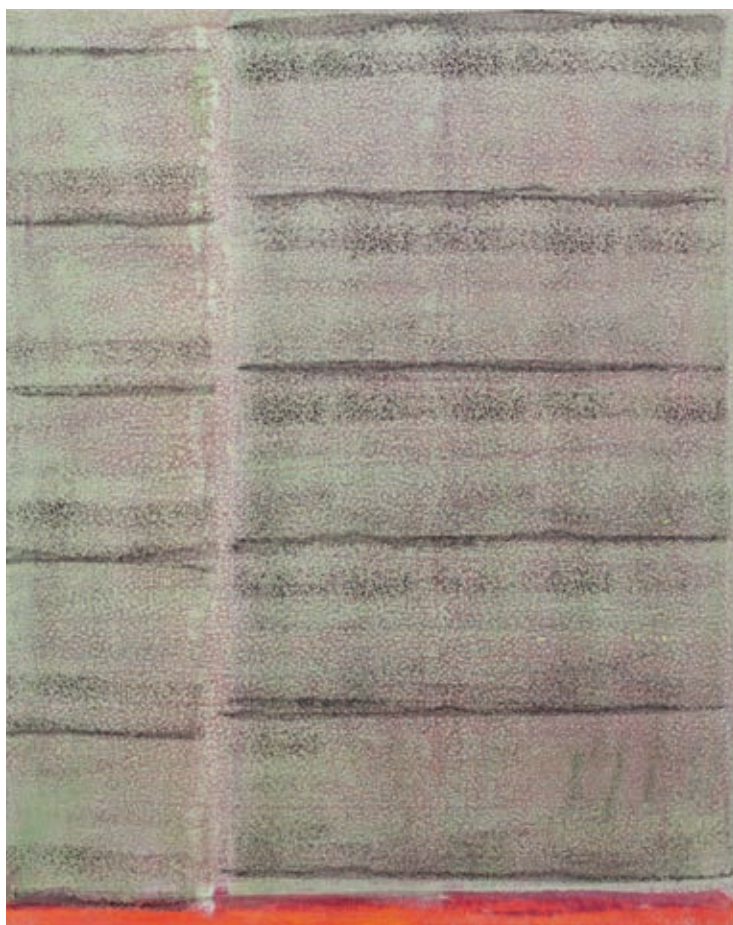


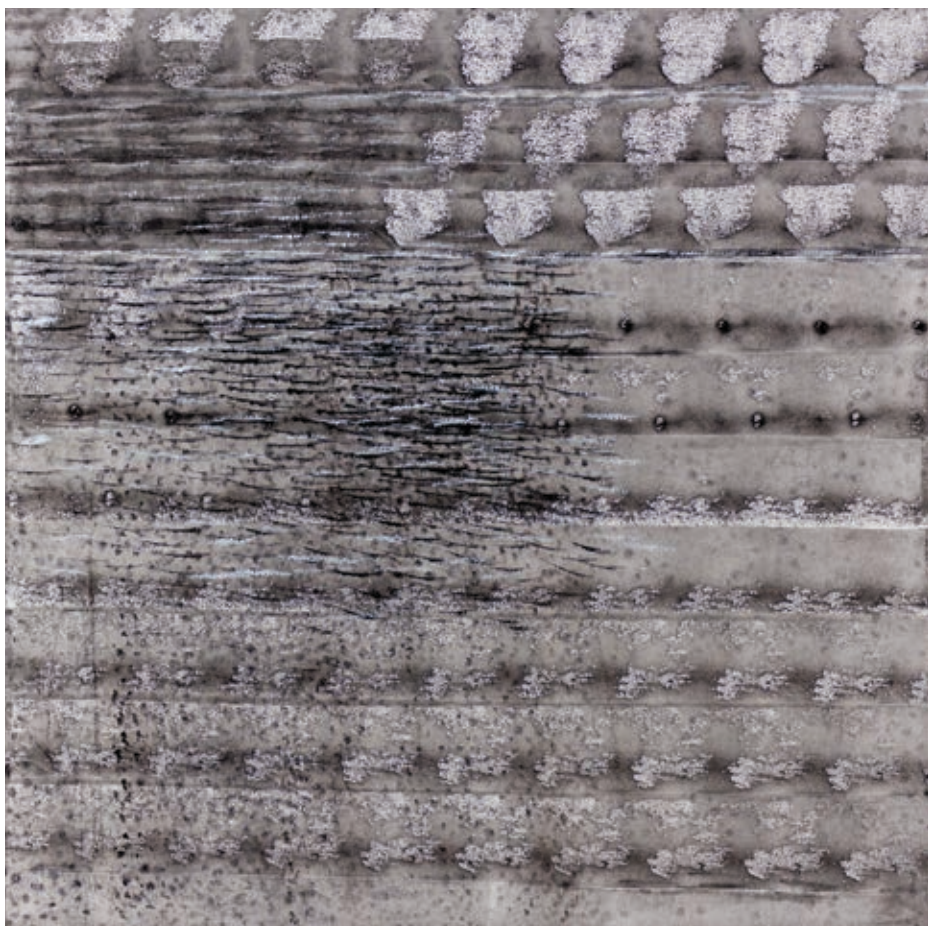




















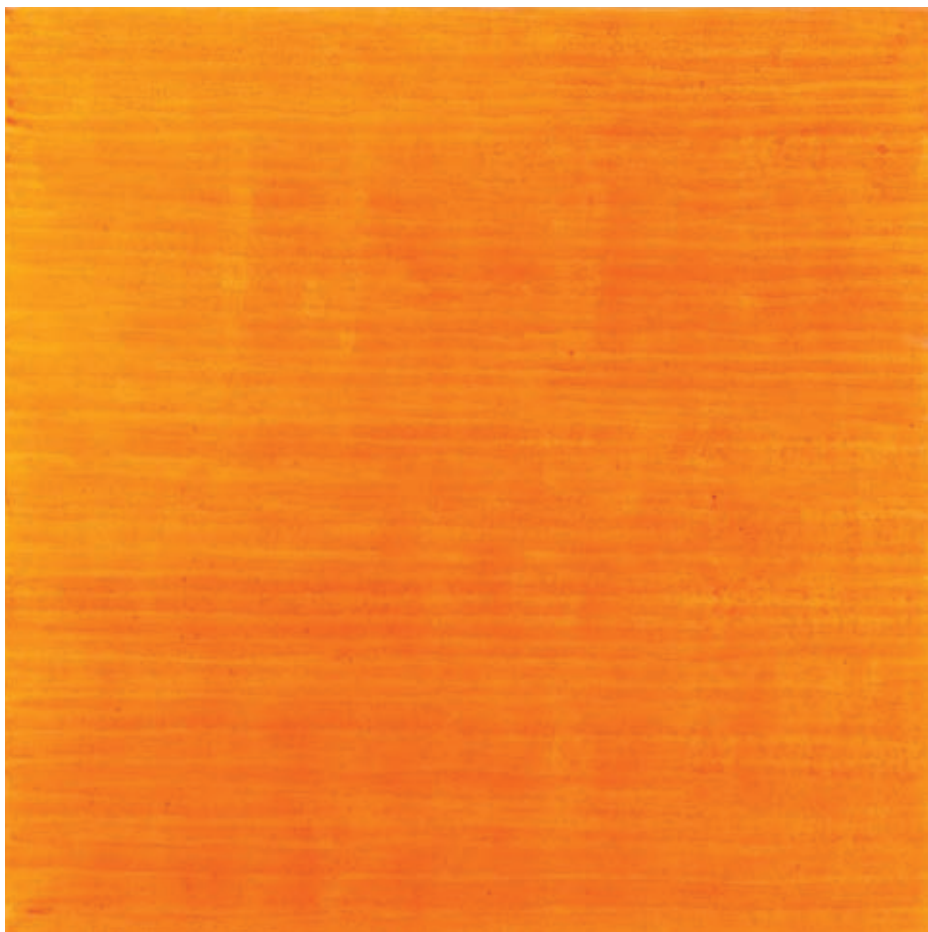


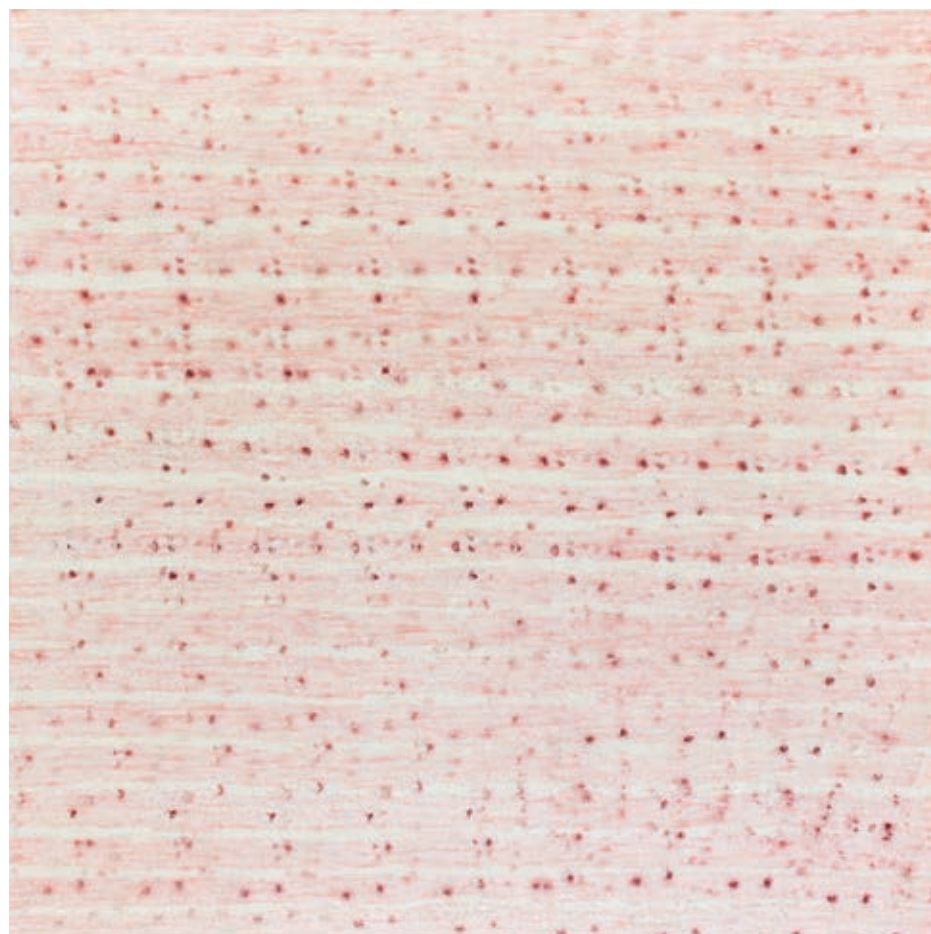


























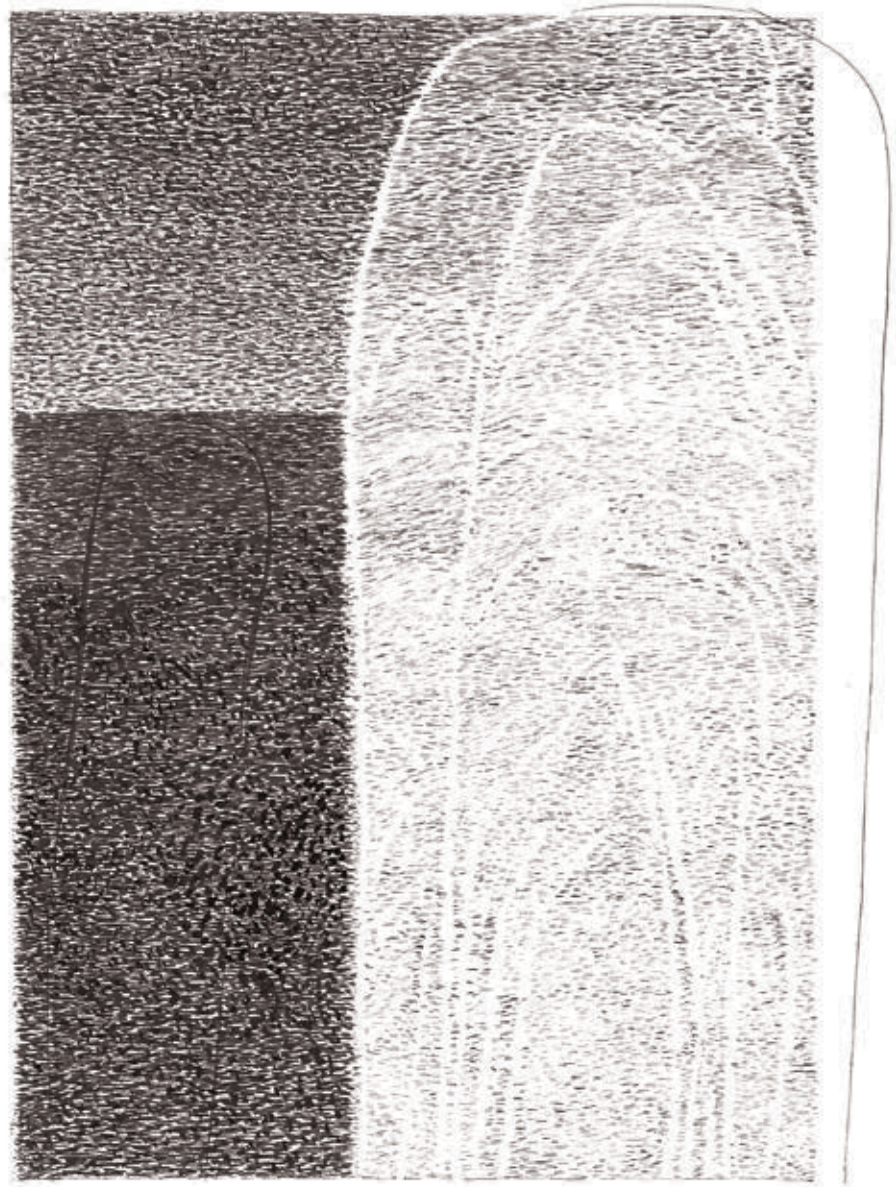


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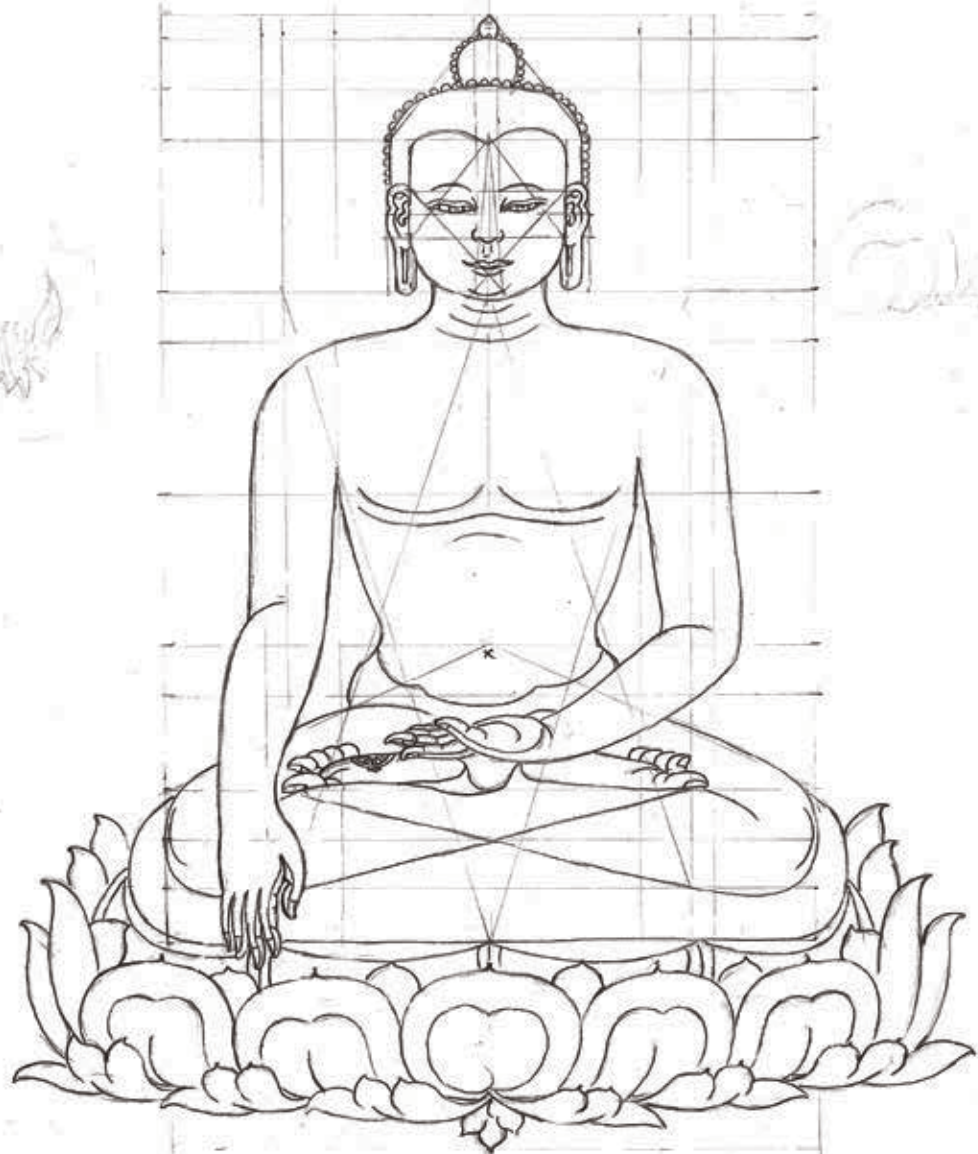
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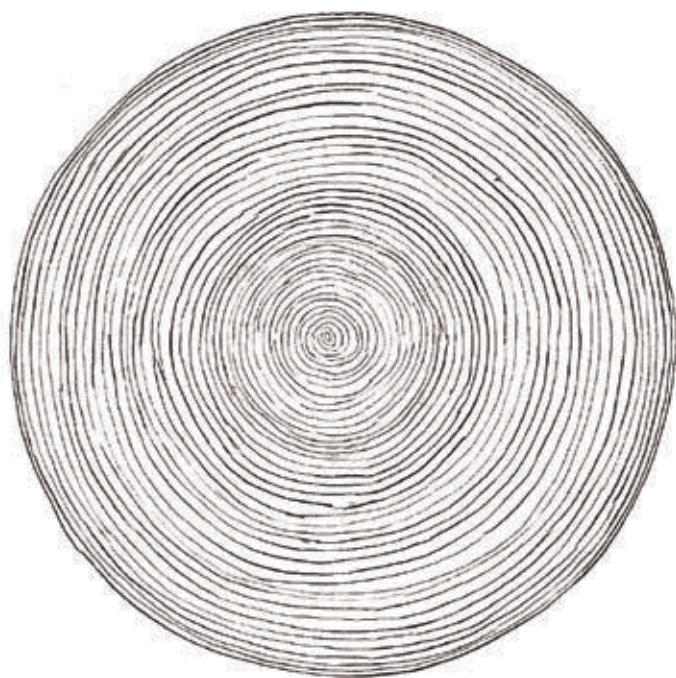












LIST OF WORKS

LUISE KLOOS JOSIP ZANKI

- 10/11** Exhibition view
- 12** Luise Kloos, O.T., 40 x 50 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 13** Luise Kloos, O.T., 40 x 50 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 14** Josip Zanki, Suvarna Matsya, 50 x 50 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 15** Josip Zanki, Buddha Shakyamuni, 150 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 16/17** Exhibition view
- 18** Luise Kloos, O.T., 40 x 50 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 19** Luise Kloos, O.T., 100 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 20/21** Josip Zanki, Vajrapani 1, 150 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2019
- 22/23** Josip Zanki, Vajrapani 2, 150 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2019
- 24/25** Josip Zanki, Vajrapani 3, 150 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2019
- 26/27** Exhibition view
- 28** Luise Kloos, O.T., 100 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 29** Luise Kloos, O.T., 100 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 30** Luise Kloos, O.T., 100 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 31** Luise Kloos, O.T., 100 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 32** Luise Kloos, O.T., 40 x 50 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 33** Luise Kloos, O.T., 40 x 50 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2020
- 34/35** Exhibition view
- 36/37** Josip Zanki, Tibetan Landscape, 100 x 150 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2016
- 38** Josip Zanki, Snowlion, 23,5 x 32,5 cm, pencil and ink on paper, 2018
- 39** Josip Zanki, Manjushri, 23,5 x 32,5 cm, pencil and ink on paper, 2018
- 40** Luise Kloos, O.T., 25,5 x 32,5 cm, ink on paper, 2020
- 41** Luise Kloos, O.T., 25,5 x 32,5 cm, ink on paper, 2020
- 42** Josip Zanki, Head of the Buddha, 23,5 x 32,5 cm, pencil and ink on paper, 2018
- 43** Josip Zanki, Body of the Buddha, 23,5 x 32,5 cm, pencil and ink on paper, 2018
- 44** Luise Kloos, O.T., 25,5 x 32,5 cm, ink on paper, 2020
- 45** Luise Kloos, O.T., 25,5 x 32,5 cm, ink on paper, 2020

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

LUISE KLOOS

Paintings, drawings, installations, performances, Graz
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IMPRESSUM

MEDITATING THE LINE

LUISE KLOOS

JOSIP ZANKI

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