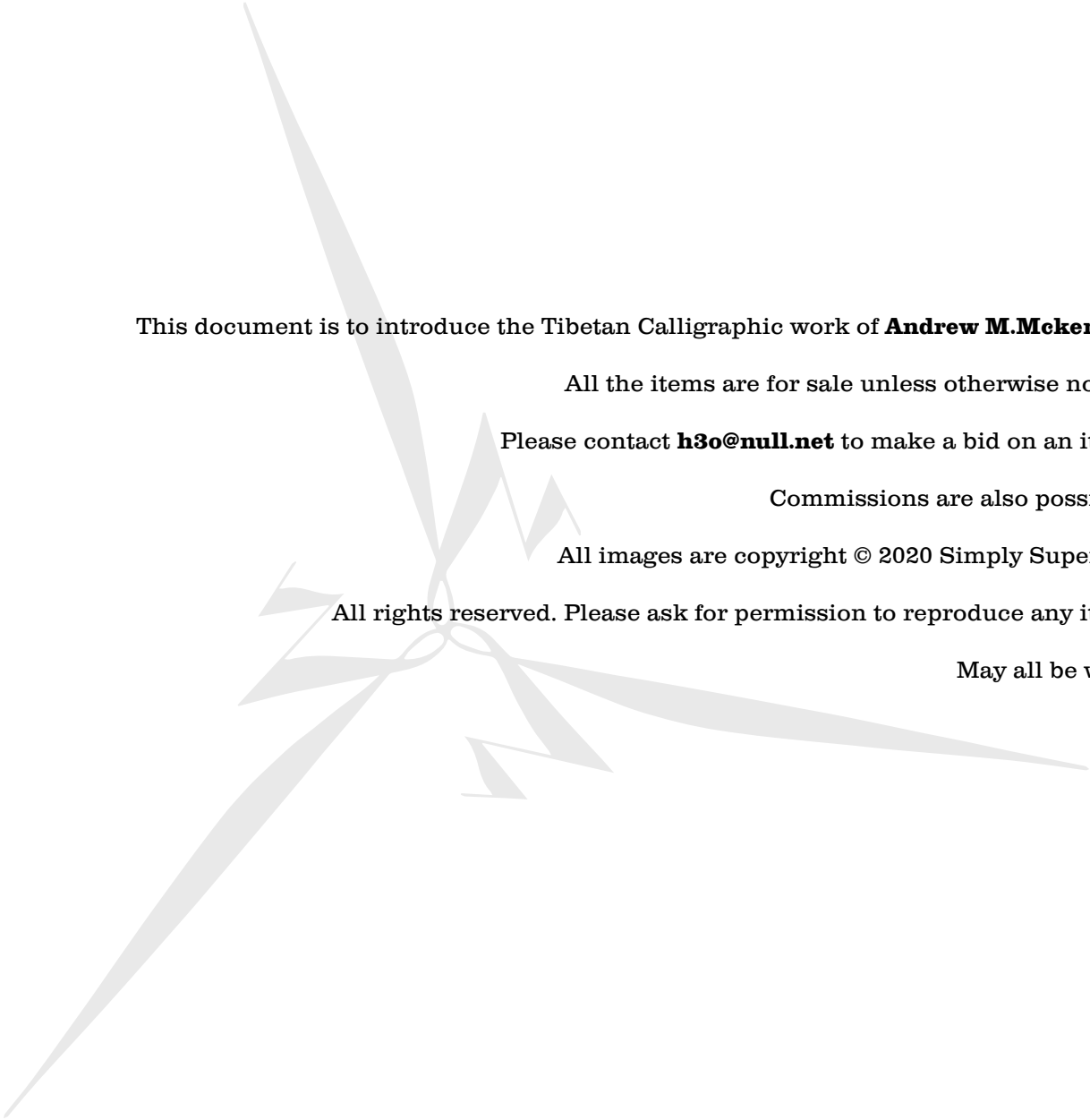




བོད་ཡིག་གི་འབྲི་ཚུགས་ལག་ཟུལ།  
**tibetan calligraphy**

ཡུལ་ལུ་ཡུལ་ལུ་



This document is to introduce the Tibetan Calligraphic work of **Andrew M. McKenzie**.

All the items are for sale unless otherwise noted.

Please contact **h3o@null.net** to make a bid on an item.

Commissions are also possible.

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May all be well.



I first started touching the world of writing in a deeper manner than just words on paper when I was in my very early teens; a friend of mine's father was an Artist. Growing up in the late '60s and early '70's in the North-East of the UK that was, for me (as my Father would have put it), as rare as rocking-horse shit. That the world could be seen in so many different and startling ways was a door opening up to what still seems like an infinity of further doors. By whatever means it was, I came across "the esoteric" by avoiding school, and reading from one end to the other of a shelf of books labelled "miscellaneous" in the library where I would be almost every day when I was supposed to be learning how to lie, steal and bully elsewhere.

My first foray into foreign languages was a tiny touch of Sanskrit through a book on the philosophy of yoga, and the next from trying to decipher Japanese calligraphy, to which I was immediately drawn, along with most other Japanese matters of "style" - something I would find out later to have been somewhat co-opted by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in his own synthesis of art forms. For "fun" I started to teach myself Sanskrit, and rapidly learned that its allure was so strong, that I decided to leave it alone for fear that it would swallow every waking moment of my existence - days could literally be spent on one word.

Many years later, increasingly frustrated with the computer's inherent distance from the matters being worked with (while working ridiculously and health-destroyingly with them), gradually paper and ink (and pencil, and paint, and many other things) re-entered my framed and blinkered view, and the resultant expansion has led here.

Having lived in a few different countries and learned a few languages, I had been very conscious of the fact that what most people consider to be "translation" is simply a two-column list which gives the illusion that there can be a direct correspondence from one side to the other. Anyone who has ventured into these absurdly deep waters knows that some things are simply not capable of translation; and seemingly suddenly (but it was of course gradually), the idea that the many books I had read of "other" philosophies contained technical terms which they did not translate made sense. My Mother tongue is English, and this is truly both a blessing and a curse: what it makes surface communication appear easy it also, with equal or even surpassing strength, makes grasping slippery concepts impossible. The Aristotelian logic which is embedded in the English language makes many judgments, decisions and choices for those whose only language is English, and if a hammer is the only tool you have, all your problems rapidly become nails.

My interest in the Tibetan Buddhist practice of Chöd ignited a desire to read the texts of the liturgies in the original, and as I started to enter this stream, I was eventually deeply shocked to find that what appeared to be reasonable renderings of the Tibetan were in fact, often, complete distortions. Further, it seemed obvious that due to the fact that many of the terms used were of Indic (and therefore Sanskrit) origin, and the revelation that the main Tibetan script itself (as well as much grammar and other matters) were taken from Sanskrit, Devanagari, Gupta and Brahmin, that it was time to go back to Sanskrit to support translation as well as understanding. Added to this, when the great bulk of translation work from Indian Buddhist texts to Tibetan was done in the 11th Century, whole worlds of thought were imported into the Tibetan language and culture; and with the subsequent cessation of Buddhism in India and its flourishing in China and Tibet, the result is that today, many thousands of Sanskrit texts only exist in translation into Tibetan.

The lack of clear information regarding Tibetan calligraphy in the English language was a considerable obstacle, but I stumbled on, approximating what I could find, copying, trying out various methods (and getting it all wrong). Looking closely at the few computer typefaces of Tibetan script, it became obvious that the difficulties of rendering the script, with its stacking of characters and other non-Western attributes, on computers made it foolish to copy what was there. And then, a breakthrough; while in London for completely unrelated reasons, I saw a small notice at a Buddhist centre I was lodging at informing me that a course in Tibetan calligraphy was to take place exactly when I actually had free time. This was led by the incomparable Tashi Mannonx, who by intelligence, wisdom and great example, has kindled in the hearts of many a yearning to carry out the practice (for indeed, this is what it truly is) of Tibetan calligraphy. From that moment onwards, the illumination he provided was the fuel for what was to result in the eternal wrestling with form and substance created out of the void that is 'creation' when we speak of calligraphy, and in particular, Tibetan calligraphy. To be with this work, it takes all that you have. One must be present as if hanging by the fingernails on the edge of a cliff, or wanting air as if drowning. This practice gives no quarter, and allows of no sleepwalking. Although many might not see the mistakes, flaws, attempts to fool the viewer, the self-flattery and deceit of the habituated lazy mind present in all people but especially with those who have something to do with 'art,' the person that undertakes this (very naked) wrestling match between motivation, spirit, paper and ink knows what they have done. It gives the perfect opportunity, if one has the courage to take it, to deal with the self not as we would like it to be, or have fashioned a persona for, but as it is - and as the saying goes, one must know that one is in prison before the desire to escape might arise.

All the work presented here is from various stages of development, and cannot be other than that; perhaps in five years' time I will have destroyed all of this work. Perhaps, too, I might have a benevolent streak towards myself and forgive these trespasses. These works are created from as deep a place as I can access in my present state, seeking to do the very best I can with the phrase or concept, the form of the script and its proportions and underlying geometry, and the effect that all these things might have. I have the arrogance to hope that these pieces might work for others as support for their practice, as the opportunity to focus on a concept or idea which might in some small way enrich their lives, or, the ultimate folly, assist them in "waking up" for perhaps a moment. If any beauty might come into being or be reflected as a result of these efforts, then this is an additional happy circumstance.

Thanks are offered of immeasurable quantity and quality to:  
Tashi Mannonx, Geshe Dakpa Gyaltsen, Sönam, and most indubitably, Douglas Wolf.

**Andrew M. McKenzie**  
Pärnu, Estonia, 2020



### **CAVEAT & ASPIRATION**

All work here is based on a mixture (or synthesis) of considered reflection on the subjects of the calligraphy. All of them, I think, can be considered applicable outside the realms of Buddhism as well as within it, and no prerequisites would need to be in place before being able to appreciate and work with these pieces. There are few answers here: as someone wiser than myself once said, the questions are far more important than the answers, and my devout hope is that some of these questions will lead to a liberation of the need for answers.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

All prints are printed on Labora's "Korrex Nürnberg", a proofing press manufactured in 1972 which came from Germany to Estonia in 2015. Korrex presses were made circa 1918-77 in Pforzheim, (West) Germany by Max Simmel Maschinenfabrik. They have fixed beds and rolling carriages, which carry the hand-fed paper across the printing plate. Labora are at <https://labora.ee/> and in Tallinn, Estonia. In addition, all paper for these prints is hand-made by them. Further information at: <http://www.labora.ee>.

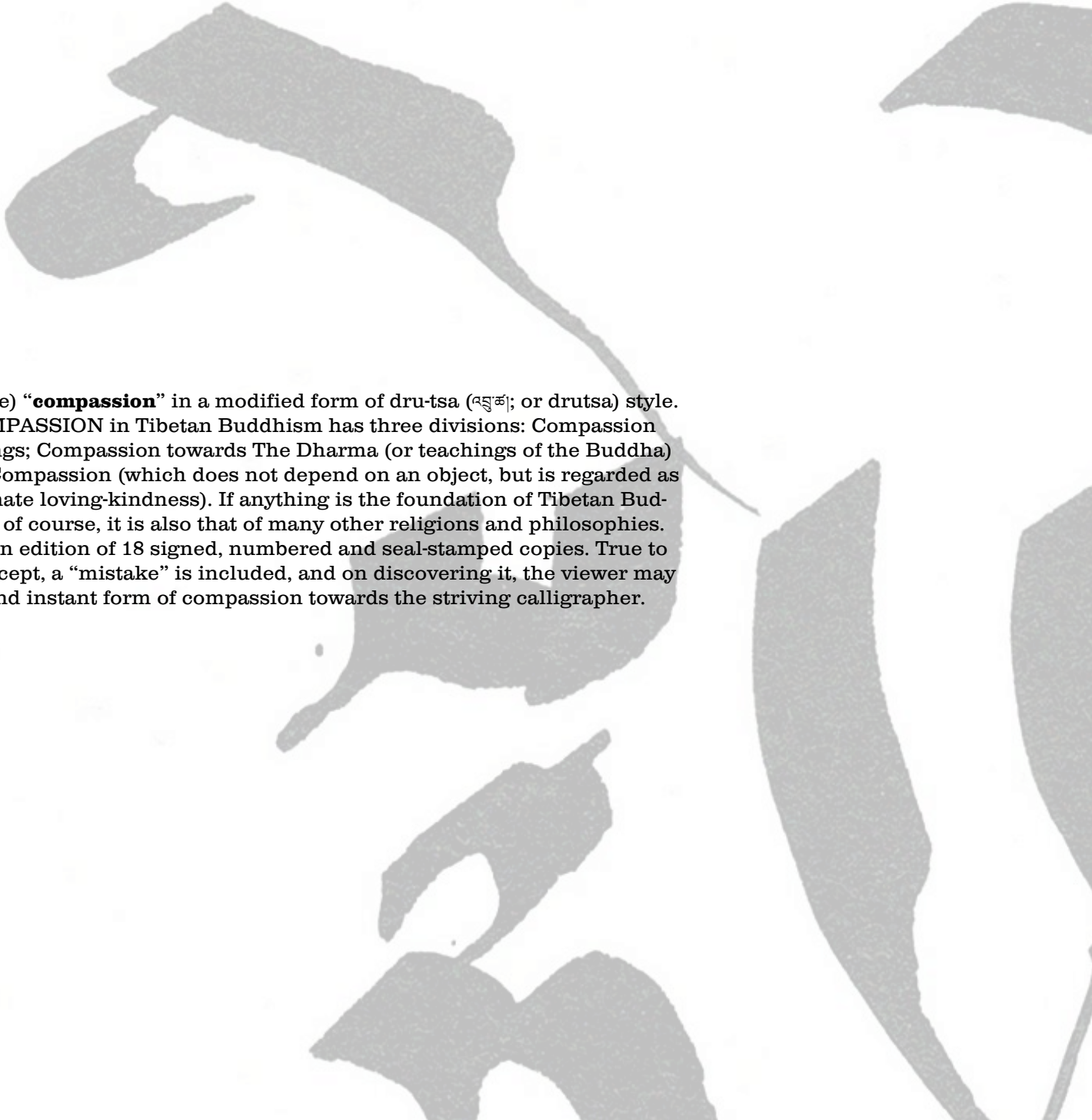
All materials used in the production of other works are, as far as possible, from sustainable / renewable sources, while at the same time giving the maximum life-span to the work. Any enquiries will be answered.

### **DO NOT READ THIS SECTION**

Due to the nature of the materials and the inevitable effects of photography, many aspects of these works cannot be adequately represented in such a form, and this portfolio is merely to give a basic idea of the quality and range of the present work on offer. Without doubt or exaggeration, all of these are much more alive and communicate far more directly "in real life." You are unreservedly encouraged and invited to experience this for yourself.

### **PLEASE READ THIS SECTION**

All comments here reveal my own lack of experience and knowledge, and much of it is not only wrong, but very wrong. However, these comments reflect, necessarily, my own level of understanding and ability to discern, and as such are inescapably bound up with subjectivity. For this, I truly and sincerely apologise, but I have the arrogance to hope that in some way these pretentious musings might inspire or even point to something fruitful in and for the reader. Your forgiveness is not expected, but if given, deeply appreciated.



སྙིང་རྗེ། - (wylie: snying rje) “**compassion**” in a modified form of dru-tsa (འབྲུ་ཙ་; or drutsa) style.

The concept of COMPASSION in Tibetan Buddhism has three divisions: Compassion towards sentient beings; Compassion towards The Dharma (or teachings of the Buddha) and Non-Referential Compassion (which does not depend on an object, but is regarded as the basis of the ultimate loving-kindness). If anything is the foundation of Tibetan Buddhism, it is this; and of course, it is also that of many other religions and philosophies. This rendition is in an edition of 18 signed, numbered and seal-stamped copies. True to the nature of this concept, a “mistake” is included, and on discovering it, the viewer may exercise a direct and instant form of compassion towards the striving calligrapher.



Edition of 18 numbered copies printed on hand-made cotton 300g2 paper, which also has added flax fibre. 210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches), signed and stamped by the maker. The original is also for sale, carried out with sumi ink on cold-pressed 300g2 paper.

ཐོང་པ་ཉིད།



འཇུག་པ་ལྟེན་པ་

ཐོང་པ་ཉིད། - (wylie: stong-pa nyid, Sanskrit “Śhūnyatā” शून्यता) “**emptiness**” in both drutsa and paytsik styles, showing how different they can be. Emptiness is a crucial facet of Buddhist practice. As the Buddha himself said, in one of his very first conversations after his enlightenment, and before he started formally teaching, the one thing that sets his teaching off from all other spiritual teachings (he was talking to a Brahmin) is that his teaching always begins with emptiness.



空山鸟语



We may work with Emptiness within this notion, and all around it; this is not something that can be grasped at and understood, but rather the very opposite of that which can be held in such a way. Such things are naturally difficult to talk about, but by taking these forms of a word which points, the experience may eventually realised. Both on 280gsm cold-pressed paper, mixture of sumi inks, Parallel pen, stamped and signed.

འགྱུར་མེད་ཤེས་རབ། - (wylie: 'gyur med shes rab) “**unchanging wisdom**” in tsugring (ཚུག་རིང་།; sometimes known as druchen) script. Commissioned piece from a set of pieces in various scripts of a Dharma Name. In Sanskrit, this would be 'aksara prajna' which the Tibetan translation seeks to emulate; but this goes much deeper than simple translation. The “changing” part refers to “that which can be transformed” and the “-med” of the Tibetan is the negation of this; whereas the Sanskrit 'a-' prefix negates in somewhat the same way as in English “a-political,” so rather than affirming the existence of something by its negation, the non-existence of this possibility is indicated. “Wisdom” here is the normal translation of something rather more complex. “Prajñā” is really two words, meaning “prior-to-knowledge” - that experience before labelling, identifying and judging which normally occurs so fast that we do not notice anything which precedes it. Thus, the terms here refer to the basis, unrefined and unclassifiable source of all arising.



210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches) 300gsm paper, automatic pen, mixture of 2 sumi inks, stamped, signed.



300gsm paper, automatic pen, mixture of 2 sumi inks, stamped, signed.  
210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches)

འོད་གསལ་གྱི་སེམས། - (wylie: od gsal gyi sems) “**luminous mind**” in tsugring (ཚུག་རིང་།; sometimes known as druchen) script. Another commissioned piece of a Dharma Name. As in many languages, the concept of “mind” is extraordinarily hard to reduce to one concept, and in this case encompasses and refers here to a vast body of thought regarding the whole notion. A translation of the Sanskrit “Citta,” which in the Indian and Tibetan traditions does not have a static sense, it has the sense of “minding.” The illumination referred to here is \*not\* ‘clear light’ as often used when translating this term; rather, it points to the fundamental capacity of mind to illuminate the objects of its knowledge and hence to know them - therefore, “that which produces illumination of something through its own luminosity / light.”



ॐ The main function of om̐ in Buddhist mantras seems to be to mark what follows as a mantra. om̐ presents Buddhahood in potential, and is contrasted with hūṃ which represents Buddhahood made manifest. Colour is white, associated with the crown chakra.

Pronounced /ō:/ (IPA)



हूँ hūṃ is a hermeneutical device which can unlock the true nature of reality. It is massively polyvalent, which is to say that it has almost infinite meaning because of the network of associations that it sits at the center of. Colour blue, associated with the heart chakra.

Pronounced /hū:/ (IPA)



ॐ The syllable AH is the essence of all phenomena, known as sunyata or emptiness, which is absolutely unfabricated. Colour is red, associated with the throat chakra.

Pronounced /a:h/ (IPA)



The syllables om āḥ hūṃ as a set are associated with body, speech and mind. In this presentation, the possibility of examining these three aspects is manifest, and at the same time the realisation that they are mutually interdependent and incomplete without each other is clearly stated.



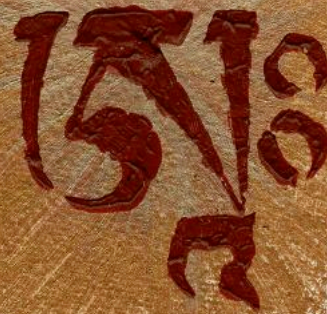
300gsm paper, watercolour, acrylic, watercolour ink, 3 types of gold gilding fluid, stamped and signed.



"Reverse" versions of the previous items: 300gsm paper, watercolour, acrylic, watercolour ink, 3 types of gold gilding fluid, stamped and signed.



Om



Om

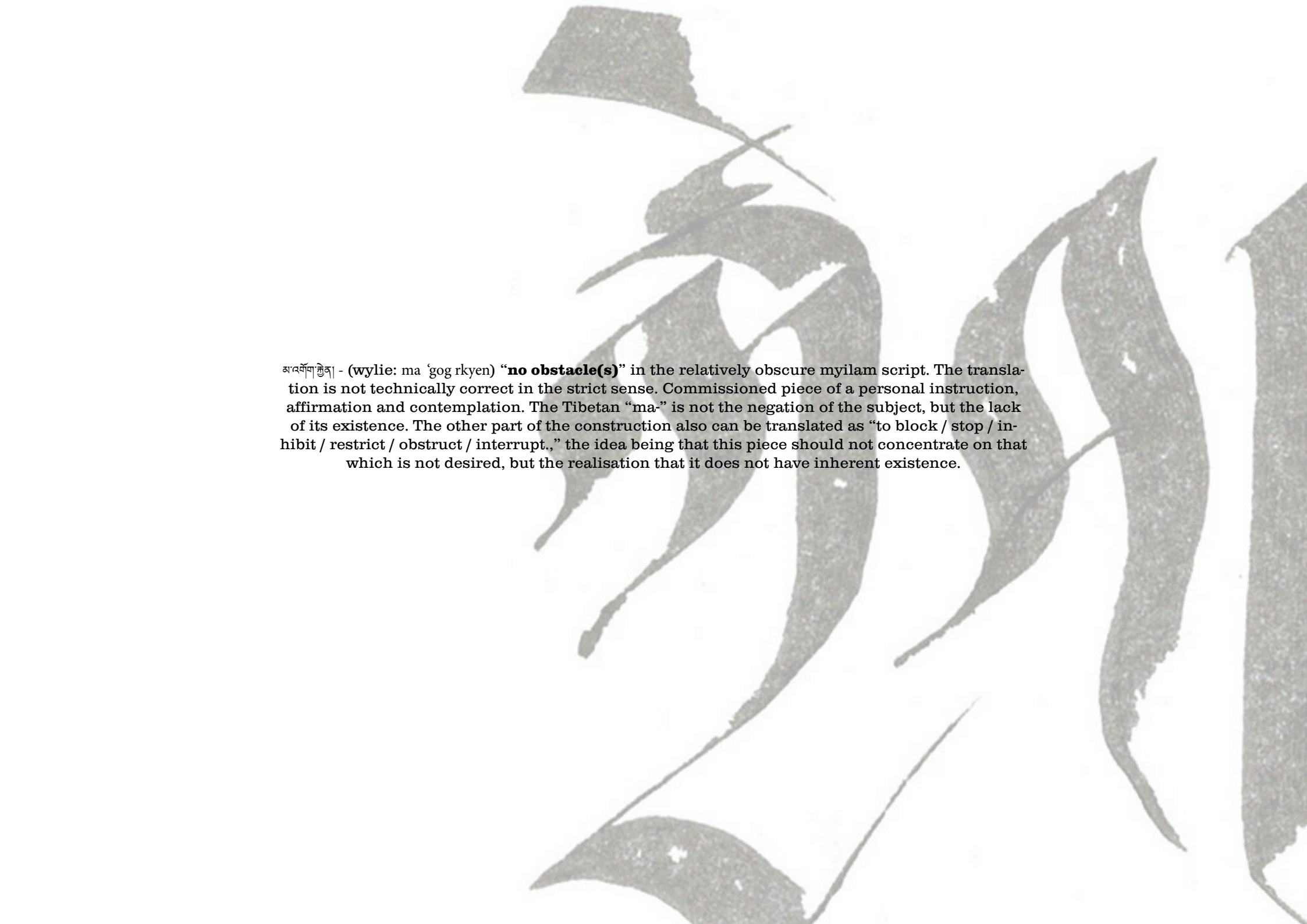


Om



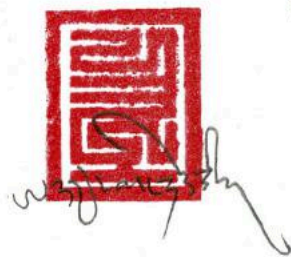






མ་འགོག་རྒྱུན། - (wylie: ma 'gog rkyen) **“no obstacle(s)”** in the relatively obscure myilam script. The translation is not technically correct in the strict sense. Commissioned piece of a personal instruction, affirmation and contemplation. The Tibetan “ma-” is not the negation of the subject, but the lack of its existence. The other part of the construction also can be translated as “to block / stop / inhibit / restrict / obstruct / interrupt.,” the idea being that this piece should not concentrate on that which is not desired, but the realisation that it does not have inherent existence.

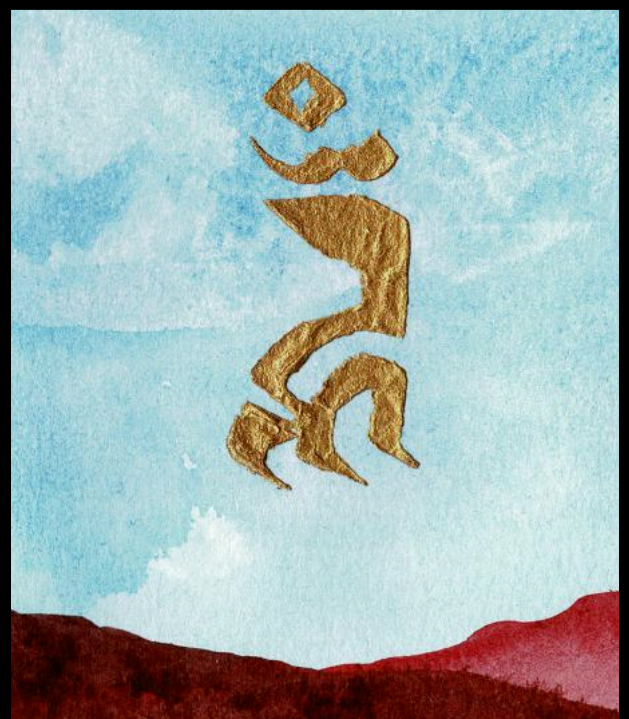
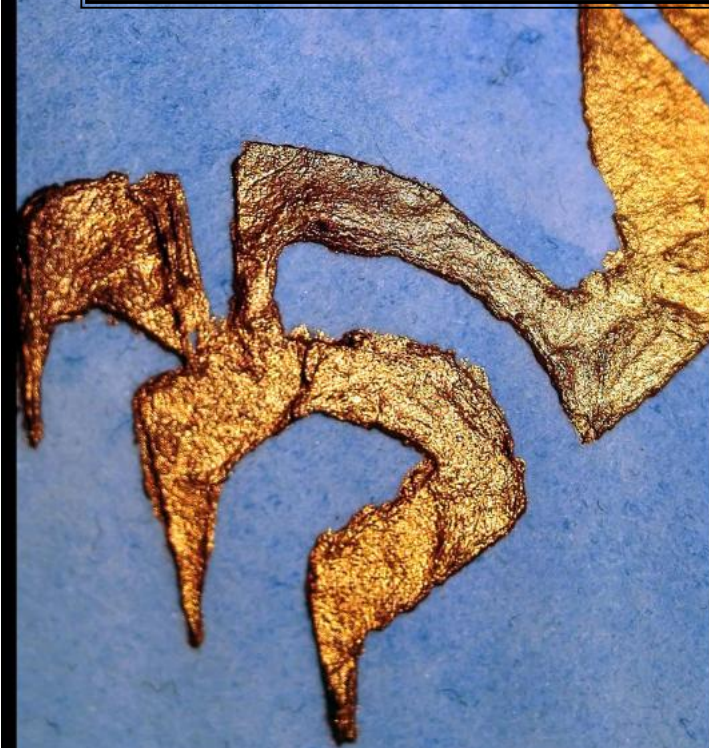
ਸਮਾਜਿਕ



210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches)  
300gsm paper, automatic pen, mixture of 3 sumi inks, stamped, signed.



ཨུཾ  
“**HUNG/HUM**” in ancient Lantsa script. The Rañjanā script Lantsa is a writing system which developed in the 11th century and until the mid-20th century was used in an area from Nepal to Tibet by the Newar people, the historic inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, to write Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Newari. When Rañjanā was introduced to Tibet, it was referred to as Lanydza (Tibetan: ལའོ་ཇཱ་). This script varies slightly from the standard Rañjanā. In Tibet, the Lanydza variant is used to write original texts of Sanskrit. Currently in the beginning of a revival amongst the Newari people, the extensive use of this script to acknowledge the roots of many Sanskrit inheritances, especially mantras, makes it extremely valuable to be worked with and investigated.





ཨུཙུཎ

**“HUNG/HUM”**  
in ancient Lantsa  
script. Tibetans  
pronounce the  
Sanskrit syllable  
HUM as HUNG.

HUNG is the syl-  
lable of the heart es-  
sence, and is more  
profound than any-  
thing I could write  
about it here.

Watercolour and  
acrylic on 280 &  
300gsm watercol-  
our paper, approx  
100 x 50mm.

Many examples  
completed in a  
series of miniatures  
to be used as medi-  
tational aids.



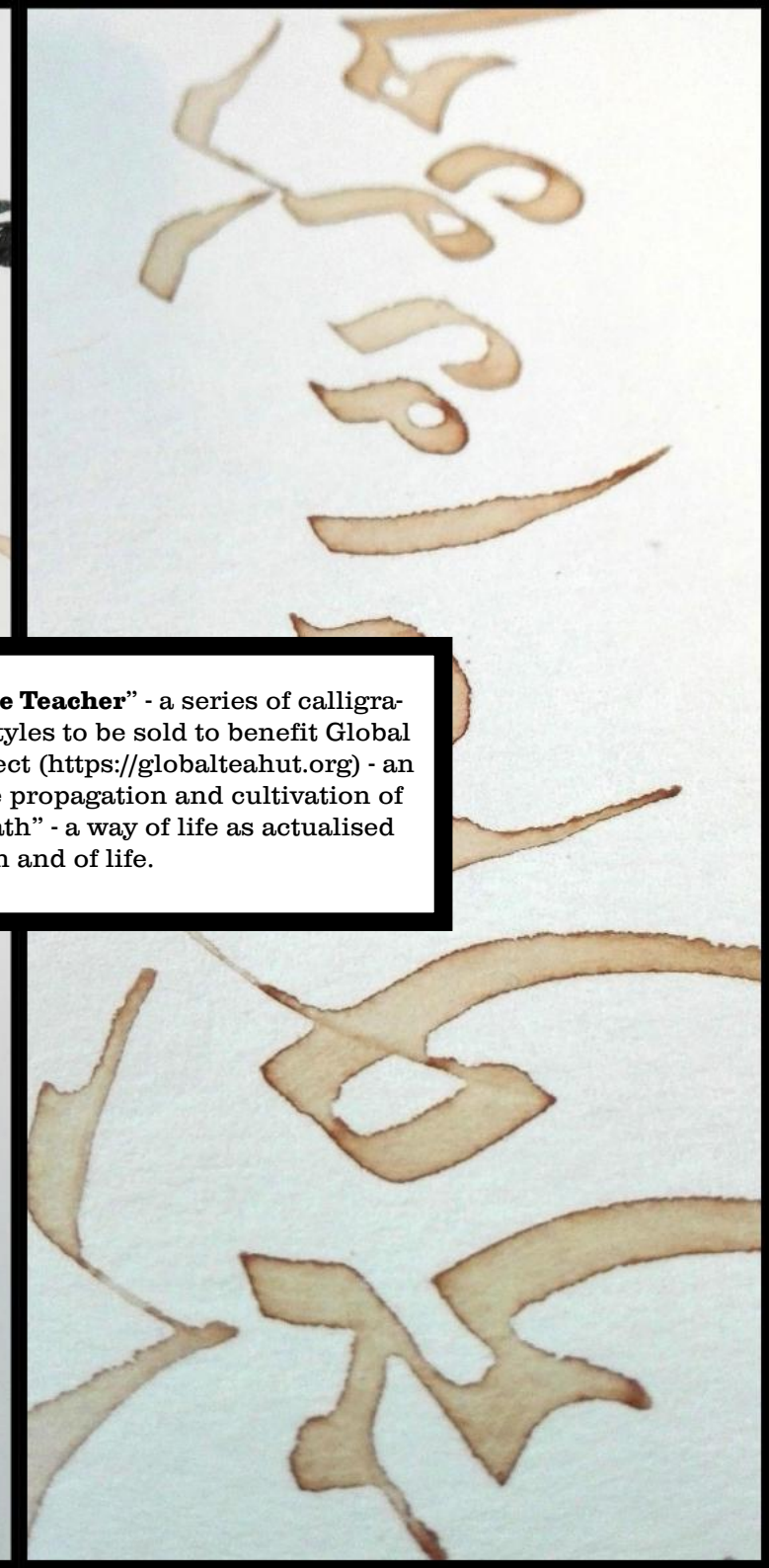


15 copies black, 3 copies gold and black, printed on hand-made cotton 300g2 paper, which also has added flax fibre. 297 x 420mm (11.7 x 16.5 inches) numbered, signed and stamped with the maker's seal. The original is also for sale, carried out with sumi and gold-flake ink on cold-pressed 300g2 paper.





ཐུང་འདས་པ། / འཁོར་བ། - (wylie: myang 'das / 'khor-ba) “**nirvana / samsara**” in khyug-yi (འཕྱུག་མིས།) script. In the original Sanskrit nirvāṇa (निर्वाण) this term literally meant to be “snuffed out,” but came eventually to mean in Tibetan “to have gone beyond” or “transcended,” whilst saṃsāra (संसार) has the basic meaning of “to go around” and therefore leads to the idea of “cyclic existence.” Here, the words are conjoined at the ends of both of the terms by the “shad” marks (not actually a part of the pronounced ‘words’), showing that both are inextricably linked, in the same way that one cannot ever have a one-sided coin. The script is that which is normally used (or variants of it) to write more everyday things, given that the more commonly seen Tibetan scripts are slow to write; this pointing to the fact that the idea of these two concepts, or “worlds” are not in any way extraordinary, and are the very basis of ordinary “reality” itself. The shortened form combining both terms in Tibetan འཁོར་འདས་པ། (wylie: 'khor 'das) is written in tsugring script above the maker’s seal. Lastly, the terms are both “the wrong way up” or perhaps, neither is incorrect.



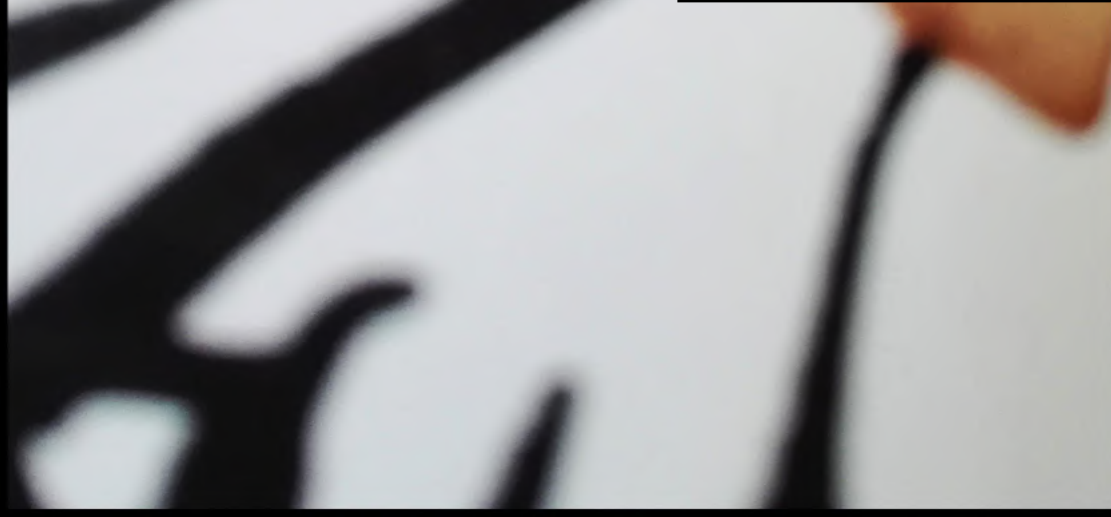
ཇ་ནི་སྒྲོན་པ་མཆོག **“Tea is the Supreme Teacher”** - a series of calligraphies in various scripts and styles to be sold to benefit Global Tea Hut’s Life Meets Life project (<https://globalteahut.org>) - an organisation dedicated to the propagation and cultivation of Tea as a “do” - a “way” or “path” - a way of life as actualised practice in and of life.





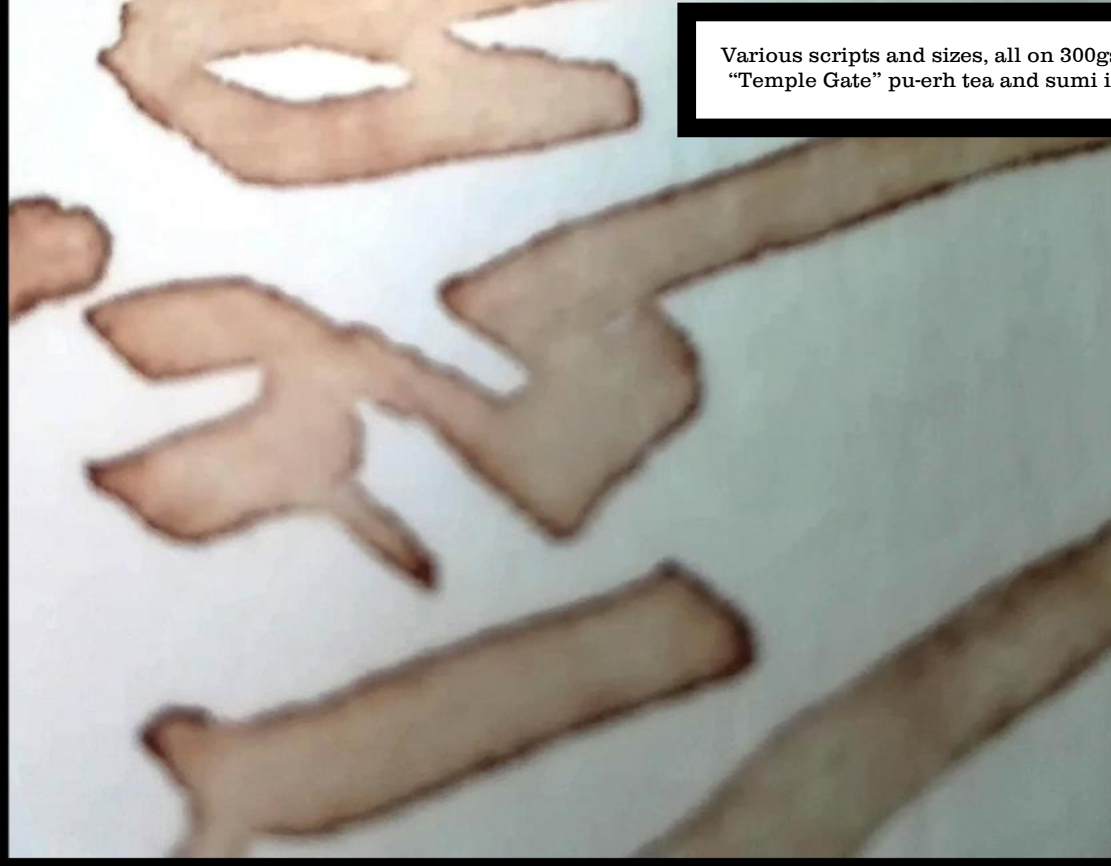


ཇ་ནི་སྟོན་པ་མཆོག





Various scripts and sizes, all on 300gsm cold-pressed watercolour, written in "Temple Gate" pu-erh tea and sumi ink, automatic pens, stamped & signed.








Version hanging in perhaps the  
greatest tea shop in the world,  
Chado, Tallinn, Estonia.





210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches) 300gsm paper, automatic pen, sumi ink, stamped, signed.




ལྷན་ནེ་དང་གཡོ་འགྲུལ། - (wylie: lhan ne dang g.yo 'gul) “**stillness and motion**” in tikrang script. This is a commission intended to give the possibility of deeper consideration of these two qualities. The ‘stillness’ here is the *\*experience\** of stillness as opposed to the conceptual, and the ‘motion’ part is more complex, pointing to ‘fluctuation’ as in, being disturbed from equilibrium, without necessarily being a pejorative term in Tibetan, as well as ‘animated’ and as much to do with mental as physical in its meaning.



ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍ଭଗବତ୍



300gsm paper, automatic pen, sumi ink, stamped, signed.



མ་འདི་གོ་ཐུབ་ཀྱིན་མི་འདུག - (wylie: sgra 'di go thub kyin mi 'dug) “**this sound is inaudible**” in petsu script. One of a series dealing with various aspects of the original Vedantic approach to ‘sound.’ Whereas western thought tends to regard vibration to be the cause of sound, Vedantic thought (and eventually, Tibetan Buddhist thought, too) posits a primordial sound which in turn creates everything. This implies that \*everything\* follows from that original impulse, and is that which makes it up, somewhat in accordance these days with the aforementioned western scientific thought. Just as in music, resonant frequencies affect other frequencies, and by strengthening, resonating, amplifying, supressing or damping these, an uncountable number of effects and results occur.

With apologies to René Magritte.

དུས་ཀྱི་མིང་རྟགས།



དུས་ཀྱི་མིང་རྟགས། - (wylie: dus kyi ming rtags) “**time(s) signature**” in uchen (དབུ་ཅན་, wylie: dbu-can [“with a head”]) script. Commission, but also part of the “sound” series, and also part of the ongoing exploration of nuances and wonders related to the umbrella term we have of “translation” and the sideways path to enlightenment that can come by means of playing with this. Tibetan music is not notated or structured in the same way as Western music, and so the requested term “time signature” does not have an exact correspondence, nor does it have the same potential double meaning. In English, a time signature is placed at the beginning of a piece of music to indicate the ‘measure,’ 4 units (x) per bar, and so on. The notion of “time” in Tibetan is much less straightforward (!) than in English. Here, I have translated “time” as “present time” and “signature” as “seal” (the historical reasons for this are too long to go into here, but the multiple meanings in English are also applicable).

210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches) 300gsm cold-pressed paper. Automatic pen and mixture of 3 kinds of sumi ink, stamped and signed.



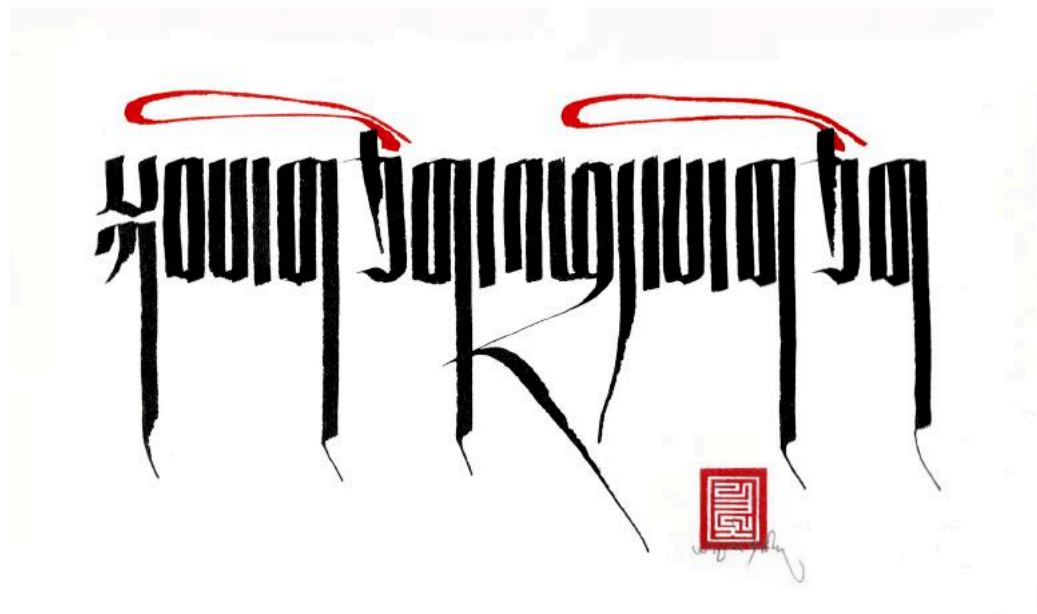
𑖦𑖯𑖫𑖜



Handwritten signature in black ink below the red seal.

𑖦𑖯 - (wylie: sgra) “**sound**” in myilam script. Translation of the Sanskrit “śhābdaḥ.” There is a whole terminology and understanding of meaningful sounds (“science of sounds”) that forms the basis for the Sanskrit and Tibetan languages, and is used in various descriptions of the process of conscious knowing; “ear-consciousness” in particular. Such a huge subject can only be touched upon lightly, and is the subject of ongoing practice and investigation by this writer.

210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches) Automatic pen and sumi ink, stamped and signed.



Edition of 18 copies printed on hand-made cotton 300g2 paper, which also has added flax fibre. 297 x 420mm (11.7 x 16.5 inches) numbered, signed and stamped with the maker's seal. The original is not for sale, and was carried out with sumi and watercolour ink with an automatic pen on cold-pressed 300g2 paper.



སའ་སྐུ་གཅིག་འཕགས་པ་གཅིག་ - (wylie: sabs gcig 'phad pa gcig) “**one time, one meeting**” in tikrang script. the phrase is an original translation into Tibetan of the phrase Ichi-go ichi-e (Japanese: 一期一会) attributed to the 16th Century Japanese Tea Master Sen no Rikyū that describes a cultural concept of treasuring the unrepeatable nature of a moment. If life can be approached with this attitude even slightly, the realisation can be blinding, opening up an attitude of boundless appreciation and ultimately, to real compassion. One of a series of tea-related phrases which seem, to me, to extend far beyond any separated practice to any aspect of life at all, to be realised as pre-existing whenever we choose to allow them to be noticed.

མོས་ཚུང་ང་རྒྱལ་ཆེ།  
མང་མོས་ང་རྒྱལ་ཚུང་།



མོས་ཚུང་ང་རྒྱལ་ཆེ། མང་མོས་ང་རྒྱལ་ཚུང་། - (wylie: thos chung nga rgyal che / mang thos nga rgyal chung) “**the more pride, the less comprehension; the more comprehension, the less pride**” tsugring script. A Tibetan folk saying which extends (as all the good ones do) out far beyond the limits of any culture or doctrine.

Facing page:


Left: an actual numbered and signed print, Edition of 18 numbered copies printed on hand-made cotton 300g2 paper, with added flax fibre. 297 x 420mm (11.7 x 16.5 inches), signed and stamped by the maker.

Right: The original calligraphy, 400gsm paper, automatic pen, sumi & watercolour ink. Also for sale.









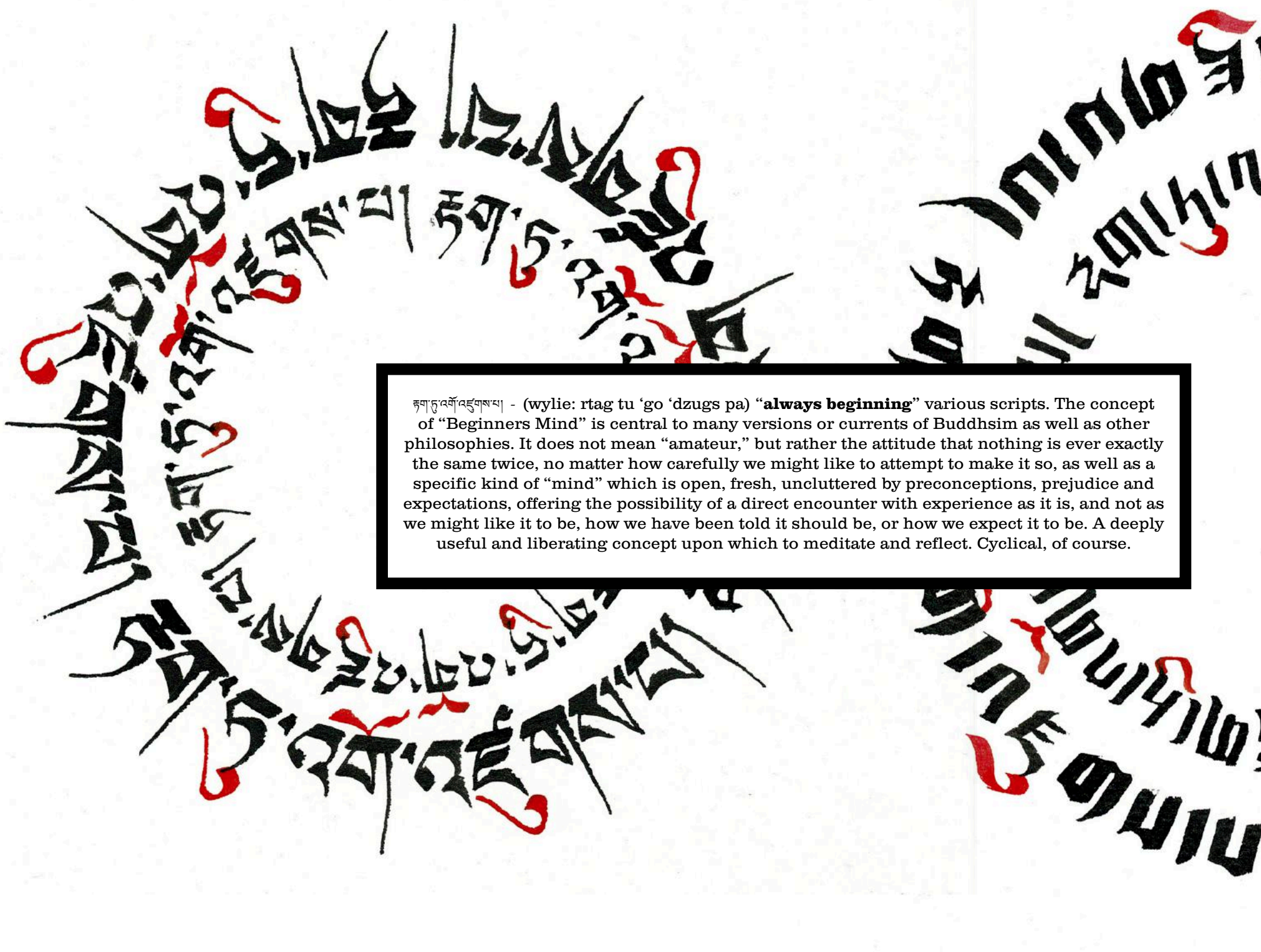
The sacred syllable “**A**” in uchen script. The esoteric meaning of ‘a’ is anutpāda or unarisen. This is a reminder that because all things arise in dependence on causes that nothing is permanent, and that nothing has any essential characteristic outside of those causes.

“I declare that A  
is the essence of all mantras,  
and from it arise mantras without number;  
and it produces in entirety the Awareness  
which stills all conceptual proliferations.”

(The Mahavairocana Abhisa bodhi Tantra  
translated by Stephen Hodge (XVIII.3, p.326-7))



Gilding fluid and acrylic on Stuart Semple's Black 3.0 which absorbs up to 99% of all visible light - 'A' arising from the void. 210 x 297mm (8.3 x 11.7 inches) 280gsm cold-pressed paper, signed and stamped by the maker.

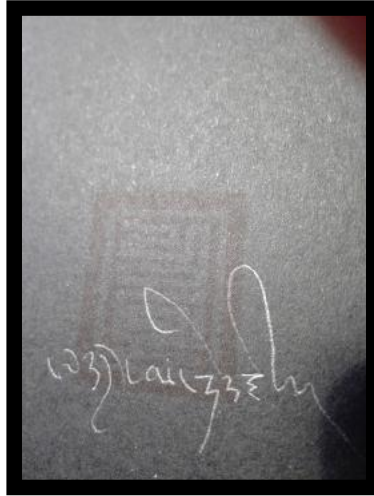


རྟག་ཏུ་འགོ་འདྲུགས་པ། - (wylie: rtag tu 'go 'dzugs pa) **"always beginning"** various scripts. The concept of "Beginners Mind" is central to many versions or currents of Buddhism as well as other philosophies. It does not mean "amateur," but rather the attitude that nothing is ever exactly the same twice, no matter how carefully we might like to attempt to make it so, as well as a specific kind of "mind" which is open, fresh, uncluttered by preconceptions, prejudice and expectations, offering the possibility of a direct encounter with experience as it is, and not as we might like it to be, how we have been told it should be, or how we expect it to be. A deeply useful and liberating concept upon which to meditate and reflect. Cyclical, of course.





Various sizes, carried out with sumi and watercolour ink with an automatic pen on cold-pressed 300g2 paper.  
Signed and stamped by the maker.



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