



EFFORT

LIVELIHOOD

MINDFULNESS

CONCENTRATION

ACTION

WISDOM

SPEECH

THOUGHT

# The Invisible Thread

BUDDHIST SPIRIT IN CONTEMPORARY ART



## Jimmy Ong

Born in Singapore, 1964.

Reading the work of Thich Nhat Hanh helps articulate and resolve my own conflict of growing up in a Confucious/Taoist/Buddhist household. Thich Nhat Hanh also points out the relevance of the hungry ghosts as a Buddhist *dharma* (teaching) known as Ullambana.

*Study for Hungry Ghosts (Hulu Shrines)* is a sketch of the *Portable Prayer*, an installation that parodies the private confessional in a public setting. Will sending a prayer through the personal computer redeem one's prayer like a printed receipt? Nevertheless, the artist hopes the process will prompt the viewer to recognize the hungry ghosts in us.

A description of the *Portable Prayer* installation:

The viewer is invited to enter a tent-like collapsible shrine in the shape of a *hulu*, or bottle gourd. The *Hulu Shrine*, intended for outdoor installation, is a makeshift temple wired to facilitate the private act of "connectivity" with a greater consciousness - the Internet. Once inside the shrine and seated before a computer terminal, the viewer inputs a prayer, which in turn is "encrypted" in a language of the viewer's choice. The encrypted prayer is posted in real time onto the website [www.portableprayer.org](http://www.portableprayer.org), and woven together with other prayers onto a quilt-like webpage. After a period of 49 days, the prayer is "emancipated" by a software program that has been blessed in real time by a Buddhist monk.

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2002 *Trees in a Garden*, Lunuganga Bentota, Sri Lanka.
- 2002 *Portable Prayer*, Plum Blossoms Gallery, New York.
- 2001 *Lovers Rocks*, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 1999 *Alter Altar*, Gallery 456, New York.
- 1999 *The Other Woman*, Dagmar Gallery, Santa Monica, California.

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2000 *12 ASEAN Artist*, National Art Gallery, Malaysia.
- 2000 *ArtSingapore*, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore.
- 1996 *Interaction*, Cicada Gallery, Singapore.
- 1995 *Figurative Works*, Mulligan Shanoski Gallery, San Francisco, California.
- 1994 *Windows on Singapore Art*, various venues, China.

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dinwidde, Donail. "Bodhisattva Pudica: The Nudes of Jimmy Ong," *Asian Art Newspaper*, January 2000.
- Findlay, Ian. "An Intimate World," *Asian Art News*, September 1997.
- Lee, Peter. *Talking Charcoal*, 10 ASEAN Artists, National Gallery Malaysia, August 2000.
- Lenzi, Lola. "Alter Altar: Jimmy Ong," *Art Asia Pacific*, October 2000.
- Ollman, Leah. "Jimmy Ong at Dagmar," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1999.

Jimmy Ong Study for Hungry Ghosts (Hulu Shrines), 2002. Charcoal on paper; 56" x 42". Courtesy of Plum Blossoms Gallery, New York.

