

BUDDHIST PAINTINGS OF SRI LANKA

by Albert Dharmasiri, Sri Lanka

58. Art in Sri Lanka is closely connected with Buddhism. For more than two thousand years, Buddhist artists had tried to make the teachings of Buddhism intelligible to ordinary people: — the practice of virtue, concentration and wisdom, the way of inner peace and thus to peace in the world and to a just world order. Mr Dharmasiri showed his audience slides of frescoes from different periods, from the 5th to the 13th Centuries, called the **Classical Style Period**. Among the best-known paintings of this style are the **Tivanka Image House frescoes** of the 12th Century. His next slides showed paintings of the 18th and 19th Centuries, works of two different schools from different parts of the country: the **Central Highlands** and neighbouring plains and the **South-western maritime zone**. In the former, the **Kandyan School** paintings are more abstract, the colours predominantly red and yellow. In the latter, the **Southern School's** works come closer to realism. Both schools, however, are closely related to each other in style, composition and motif and in their emphasis on outline. In the modern period, two contemporary painters, **Solius Mendis** and **George Keyi**, have made a significant contribution to the tradition of Buddhist paintings in Sri Lanka.

CHILE : ARTISTS IN THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

59. **The National Committee of Chile**, unable to send a delegation to the Congress, submitted a written contribution, summarized as follows:

In the distressing conditions through which they have lived now for some years, Chilean artists have come to realize that a society based on reckless mercantilism ends up by losing sight of the essential values of education and culture. It gives rise to a class of consumer citizen and profiteer solely concerned with the acquisition of material goods to the detriment of their spiritual counterpart. Music, literature and painting become so alien to him that, in his eyes, works of art have ceased to exist.

In this situation, the artist ends by being isolated; he drifts out into the margins of society and may even lose his identity as a creator. Meanwhile, the ordinary citizen becomes daily more ambitious and aggressive, — the very antithesis of the citizen who would have resulted from a harmonious and balanced society, where the preservation and blossoming of cultural values would have remained paramount.

60. Fully conscious of the risks they run, Chilean artists hereby declare once again their faith in:

1. the work of art with its power to open up new horizons for those who regard it, no less than the power to stimulate their doubts when faced with fallacious assertions;
2. (their faith in) the Associations of artists — and especially in the International Association of Art, which spares no effort to improve the situation of the artist and which, by its generous and fraternal attitude to the Chilean National Committee, has made its artistic isolation less cruel.

The message concluded with the heartfelt thanks of the Chilean National Committee to the Secretary General, to the whole of the Executive Committee and to all its artist colleagues.

ARTISTS' CONTRIBUTION TO A MORE JUST WORLD ORDER

by Henry Nkole Tayali, Zambia.

61. In his address, Mr Tayali put special emphasis on the significance of art in African life, art in its broadest sense including music, drama, dance, oral literature, painting and sculpture. This is particularly relevant in rural Africa where men's very existence is based on the philosophy and principles of the creative art forms. It is how the history, traditions and customs of a whole continent have been preserved. Mr Tayali accused Western observers of giving a completely wrong picture of African art. After studying African life and customs in some remote village for a month or two, they go home and write books on African art; they pass themselves off as experts and authorities.

62. The National Committee of IAA in Zambia is a very new organization. Its work is limited because of low funds. Its members work, however, with the University of Zambia. Mr Tayali found this kind of co-operation between national institutions rewarding. Collaboration with international institutions was important, too. As a good example, he quoted the **International Arts Workshop** held

in Lusaka in September, 1982. It was attended by artists from different parts of the world. The theme of the workshop « **The Universality of a Practising Artist and Craftsman** » signified once again the vigour of the universal bond, art.

ARTISTS' CONTRIBUTION TO A MORE JUST WORLD ORDER

by Solomon Irein Wangboje, Nigeria

63. Professor Wangboje started by drawing the attention of his audience to the desperate need to create a new social order and spoke of the role of art in this change. He readily approved of the significance of international gatherings that discuss various current problems. In his opinion, the Xth Congress of IAA had a direct focus: the **production crisis** which characterizes the world socio-economic order. To discuss the solution of this manifold problem, in the aesthetic perspective, is not easy.

64. Art, although as old as world history, lacks theoretical formulation and bears the stigma of « non-production » in many parts of the world. The situation is by no means facilitated by the many current tendencies to increase alienation, caused by exploitation in modes of production. What then can an artist do, apart from appealing to the international conscience, especially to that of the « super powers »?

65. Concentrating firstly on the overall situation, Professor Wangboje said that he knew his audience held many varying, individual, even contradictory views and notions about art and its place in the scheme of things. There was an extreme divergence of opinion about the most advantageous line of action: some believed in the power of art, some demanded autonomy for the arts and advocated a philosophy of non-partisanship. To some extent, artists themselves were to blame, partly at least, if they were regarded as irrelevant in the general production effort, and if their works are dismissed as mere signs of alienation. Now, in many parts of Africa, and also in some Third World countries elsewhere, art is still part of the structure of beliefs interwoven with material existence. Art incorporates properties necessary for the ideological function; thus the charge of irrelevance hardly applies to art.

« **The point I am trying to make** », he said, « **is that production relations which subsist in a society are bound to produce, in the final analysis, art forms which reflect those relations.** »

66. Secondly, he went on, the strength of art and its vital, social role must be understood and increased. It must rise from its position of a weak pariah in a peripheral situation, from its role as a marginal link between the world of production and that of thought and mental activity.

67. The role which art must play in a new world order is to be much more extensive: its relationship with society as a whole must be fully engaged. In short, the artists' active participation in the struggle for a just and humane world order will make the world recognize and appreciate the vital role of art.

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68. To bring this second session to a close the Secretary General read the following message for **World Communications Year** from the Director-General of Unesco, **Mr Amadou Mahtar M'Bow**. And in deference to the international character of his audience, he read it in ten languages selected from among those of the delegations at the Congress:

« *In an organization whose objectives relate to such matters as education, science, and culture we must avoid systematic confrontations... What we need most is a constant willingness to engage in dialogue.* »