

Fleming Museum: Anonymous: Contemporary Tibetan Art
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Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile greets the visitor entering this special exhibition, yet the image is dated 2012, not ca. 1503 and her face is partially hidden under a white transparent respiratory facemask, while symbolic clouds of smog encircle the figure, pointedly referencing an environmental theme. Dedron, the artist, of this *Mona Lisa*, was born in Lhasa in 1976 and is one of the few women on the contemporary Tibetan art scene. This work, like several others in this outstanding exhibition, uses a traditional Tibetan medium (jewel-like colors of stone ground mineral pigments) while its driving content is very much 21st century.

The Fleming Museum presents a rare opportunity to view contemporary Tibetan art of stunning originality while gaining insight into a culture of great historical significance before it disappears. There are 20 artists represented in the show, all of them named except for the collection of six videos that were attributed to "anonymous" makers. The anonymous moniker nods not only to the title of the exhibition but to traditional Tibetan culture which places little emphasis on individuality or self-expression. The question of identity and its loss becomes a major thematic thread running through this exhibition, as are many courageous political, social and cultural metaphors suggested by the works. .

Sherab Gyatsa born in Shigatse in 1958, is the oldest in this curated grouping and Palden Weinreb, born in New York in 1982, is the youngest, suggesting the range and overall youthful exuberance and ingenuity presented. A majority of the artists were born in Tibet; Dharamsala, Kathmandu and Lhasa. Other artists are expatriates, based as far away as Zurich and the Australian Outback. They are now outsiders looking in, tracing their roots. Some, like Karma Phuntsok trained as a traditional thangka painter. In his work titled *Marpa* the artist fused 11th century imagery with the Australian Aboriginal dot painting technique of his adopted homeland.

The exhibition was curated by Rachel Perera Weingast, supported by the Shelley and Donald Rubin collection and originated at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at the State University of New York, New Paltz. Thanks to the leadership of Fleming Director Janie Cohen and her staff, the exhibition made it's way to Vermont. In fall, 2014, it moves on to the Queens Museum in New York.

—Cynthia L. Close