

## Fall Ango 2018 Art Practice

Note: Tathagata is a common epithet for the Buddha. It translates as “one who has come thus” and “one who has gone thus.”

*Huineng asked Nanyue, “What is it that has come like this?”*

*Nanyue said, “To say it’s like something misses it.”*

*The Sixth Ancestor said, “Does it depend upon practice and enlightenment?”*

*Nanyue said, “It’s not that there is no practice and enlightenment. It’s just that we should not be defiled by them.”*

*The Sixth Ancestor said, “Just this non-defilement is what buddhas have maintained and transmitted. You are like this. I am like this. All the Ancestors in India were like this.”*

This Ango we are studying Buddha Ancestors. To study Buddhas of the past as practitioners in the present is to be a living link in the wisdom tradition of buddhadharma. It is to know and appreciate those who came before and how their teachings, lives, wisdom and compassion live within us in our own practice today.

Master Dogen taught: *Actualizing buddha ancestors means to bring them forth and look at them in veneration. It is not limited to buddhas of the past, present and future, but it is going beyond buddhas who are going beyond themselves. It is taking up those who have maintained the face and eye of buddha ancestors, formally bowing and meeting them. They have manifested the virtue of the buddha ancestors, dwelt in it, and actualized it in the body.*

In your sessions for this Ango’s art practice, and drawing upon the readings of Buddha Ancestors (Jataka Tales, Therigatha excerpts, and excerpts on some of the Buddha’s disciples), reflect on those who have come before you – their humanity, their struggles, their dedication and teachings – and how their delusion is your delusion, their liberation is your liberation, their Buddha nature is your Buddha nature.

*You are like this. I am like this. All the Ancestors in India were like this.*

In your creative work, *bow and meet them*, as you express your own experience – felt sense – of their living realities within yourself as a student of the Way. This might take the form of expressions of gratitude, the commonality of delusions and insights; that is, I am like this, you too are like this. All the ancestors were like this.

Use the medium of your choice, and if you can, plan on offering a few of your pieces at the ZMM or ZCNYC art practice presentations in November.