

**Shadow and Void: Buddha<sup>10</sup>**  
**esea contemporary**  
**18 January – 20 April 2025**

*This exhibition at esea contemporary is co-organised with Fondazione Torino Musei and made possible thanks to major support from the Bagri Foundation, with additional support from Arts Council England and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.*



esea contemporary and MAO (Museum of Asian Art), Turin, are pleased to present 'Shadow and Void: Buddha<sup>10</sup>', a new exhibition showcasing historic Buddhist sculptures alongside contemporary artworks by Shigeru Ishihara, Lee Mingwei, LuYang, Sun Xun, Sinta Tantra, Wu Chi-Tsung, and Zheng Bo.

Opening in Manchester on 18 January 2025, the exhibition includes a selection of recently restored Buddhist sculptures, on loan from MAO, ranging from the seventh to the eighteenth centuries CE, as well as three new commissions created specifically for 'Buddha<sup>10</sup>'.

Curated by Xiaowen Zhu, Director of esea contemporary, and Davide Quadrio, Director of MAO, this innovative collaboration between the UK's only non-profit gallery dedicated to East and Southeast Asian contemporary art and one of Europe's foremost institutional collections of Asian art intertwines scientific studies, contemporary art, and spirituality.

By juxtaposing ancient artefacts with contemporary creations, 'Shadow and Void: Buddha<sup>10</sup>' delves into displacement, ritual, exotic consumption, and authenticity, inviting visitors to engage with Buddhist art as both sacred iconography and culturally significant artefact.

The exhibition is a multi-sensory experience, offering space for serene, historically anchored reflection enhanced by dynamic contemporary art forms.

Shigeru Ishihara's sound installation, 'Co-existence' (2023), transforms the gallery into an immersive acoustic landscape, converting traditional sound rituals into a meditative experience.

Lee Mingwei's video installation, 'Spirit House' (2023) centres on themes of gifting, generosity, silence, and offerings, echoing the Buddhist principle of compassion.

LuYang's vibrant video work 'Moving Gods' (2015), merges influences from manga, anime, neuroscience, biology, and theology.

Sun Xun's short animation 'Being is Negative (唯幻 / Illusione)' (2023), delves into the nature of reality and the fleeting constructs that shape human perception.

Sinta Tantra's site-specific installation 'Perfume' (2023) fills the space with the scent of burning incense, while a mural of two overlapping circles embodies cosmic unity and balance.

Wu Chi-Tsung's video 'Drawing Study – MAO Bodhisattva Guanyin, Ming-Qing Dynasty' (2022), features the Bodhisattva Guanyin sculpture from MAO's collection illuminated by the artist's torch, evoking a sense of *yūgen* (幽玄) – a profound grace that resonates through the centuries-old statue.

Zheng Bo's 'Drawing Life (Lesser Heat)' (2021), is a series of fifteen *plein air* pencil drawings, capturing Hong Kong's dense plant habitats as part of a meditative practice.

Having begun as an initiative by MAO to study, analyse, and critically reinterpret Buddhist artefacts from its collection, 'Buddha<sup>10r</sup>' was first realised as an exhibition in Turin in 2023, exploring and re-evaluating the significance of these pieces through a contemporary lens, highlighting their layered histories and cultural transformations.

Through collaborations with experts and contemporary artists, 'Buddha<sup>10r</sup>' has evolved and expanded – a second phase of the exhibition in MAO included new contemporary works, digital content, and live performances, enriching the dialogue between historical and modern interpretations of Buddhism and immersing audiences in themes such as origins, restoration, and cultural legacy.

'Shadow and Void: Buddha<sup>10r</sup>' marks the project's first international iteration, journeying from Turin – Italy's historic industrial centre and automotive hub – to Manchester, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

Xiaowen Zhu, the Director of esea contemporary, said, "With 'Shadow and Void: Buddha<sup>10r</sup>', we seek to transcend traditional dichotomies between sacred artefacts and contemporary art, exploring how these diverse expressions of cultural legacy can coexist and mutually enrich each other. By juxtaposing ancient objects with modern works, we open up a space for deeper contemplation on how the resonance of historical narratives continues to shape, challenge, and expand our understanding of spirituality and identity—an inquiry that feels increasingly urgent in today's complex and ever-evolving multicultural landscape."

Davide Quadrio, Director of the MAO said: "Moving an exhibition is not about moving objects, but sharing and adapting ideas. It is about the evolution of projects. Buddha<sup>10</sup> at esea contemporary will be exactly this: tracing a project in MAO, touring and evolving it into another context. This is an ecological way of thinking about cultural exchanges, as well as thinking of a generous way of developing concepts in an ever-changing display."

Building on 'Buddha<sup>10r</sup>'s initial foundation, the exhibition in Manchester invites visitors to experience a dialogue that bridges traditional reverence with the immediacy of contemporary art, celebrating both preservation and reinvention through interdisciplinary engagement.

Ends.

## Notes to editors:

Image credit: Courtesy of MAO Museo d'Arte Orientale, 'Buddha<sup>10</sup>' – X-Ray 'La Venaria Reale' Conservation and Restoration Centre.

Press assets available to [download here](#).

**For more information, images, or interview requests please contact: [press@eseacontemporary.org](mailto:press@eseacontemporary.org) / 07885467181**

Shadow and Void: Buddha<sup>10</sup>

18 January–20 April 2025

Preview: Friday, 17 January, 2025, 6-8pm

esea contemporary, 13 Thomas Street, Manchester, M4 1EU, United Kingdom

Free Admission

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm | Sunday, 12 – 5pm | Closed Mondays and Bank Holidays

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**Daive Quadrio** (b. 1970) is the Director of the MAO Museum of Asian Art in Turin. He has worked in China in the arts and culture for over two decades, curating, producing and supporting the development of Contemporary Art in China.

In 1998, he founded the BizArt Art Center, Shanghai's first not-for-profit art lab, which he directed for more than a decade. In 2007, Quadrio established Arthub, a production and curatorial proxy active in Asia and worldwide. Since October 2020, he has been a visiting professor at Luav University. Over the past twenty years, Quadrio has produced and organised hundreds of exhibitions, educational activities, concerts, film screenings, biennials, editorial projects, workshops, and exchanges both in Asia and internationally, fostering connections with local and global institutions.

**Xiaowen Zhu** is an author, lecturer, and Director of esea contemporary, the UK's only non-profit art centre dedicated to showcasing artists and art practices informed by East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) cultural backgrounds. Since joining in 2022, she has revitalised the organisation's mission and artistic vision, transforming it into a dynamic hub for cross-cultural dialogue. She also serves on the British Council's Arts and Creative Economy Advisory Group.

Zhu's international career spans Shanghai, New York, Los Angeles, London, and Berlin, where she has curated numerous contemporary art exhibitions and collaborated with both established and emerging artists. A published author, her works include *Oriental Silk* (2020) and *Encounters* (2022). She has delivered lectures and talks at prestigious institutions such as LSE, Goldsmiths, Heidelberg University, and Rhode Island School of Design. Recognised by *Apollo* magazine as one of the *40 Under 40* in the Asia Pacific, Zhu is a thought leader in contemporary art.

**esea contemporary** is the UK's only non-profit art centre specialising in presenting and platforming artists and art practices that identify with and are informed by East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) cultural backgrounds.

esea contemporary is situated in an award-winning building in the heart of Manchester, home to one of the largest East Asian populations in the UK. Since its inauguration as a community-oriented visual arts festival in 1986, esea contemporary – previously named Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA) – has continuously evolved to establish itself as a dynamic and engaging space for cross-cultural exchanges in the British art scene, as well as in a global context.

esea contemporary aims to increase the visibility of contemporary art practices from the East and Southeast Asian communities and their diasporas. It is a site for forward-thinking art programmes that beyond exhibitions also include commissions, research, residencies, publishing, and a wide range of vibrant public events. esea contemporary values creativity, compassion, interconnectedness, and collectivity in implementing its mission.

esea contemporary is funded by Arts Council England and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

**The Museo d'Arte Orientale (MAO)** in Turin, which opened its doors in December 2008, stands as a beacon of significance within Italy and ranks among the largest institutions in Europe dedicated to the study and appreciation of Asian art. It resides within the storied walls of Palazzo Mazzonis, a grand architectural masterpiece dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. An exquisite restoration effort has breathed new life into this historic edifice, meticulously preserving its ancient structures and embellishments, thus providing the perfect backdrop to showcase the museum's esteemed collection.

The MAO serves as an expansive window into the rich tapestry of ancient Asian cultures. Its galleries, thoughtfully arranged across four floors, offer an extensive array of artworks and artifacts hailing from South and Southeast Asia, including the Indian subcontinent and the Indochinese peninsula. Notably, it boasts Italy's most comprehensive collection of Chinese funerary art, spanning from the Neolithic era to the Tang dynasty (7th-10th centuries AD). Moreover, the museum houses displays of both religious and secular Japanese art, as well as artistic treasures from the Himalayan Region, encompassing Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. A significant collection of Islamic art further enriches its offerings. On the ground floor, amidst the Japanese gardens, a dedicated space hosts temporary exhibitions that continually enhance the visitor experience.

The MAO's collection embodies profound meanings and wields tremendous potential. It uniquely positions itself in Italy as an institution that shares the narrative of a dynamically expanding continent. Through its collection and cultural programming, the MAO strives to serve as a platform that fosters international dialogue with the Asian world while concurrently acting as a bridge and filter connecting it to the Western world.

**Fondazione Torino Musei** conserves and manages the historical and artistic heritage of the City of Torino. The museums part of the Foundation are GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, MAO – Museo d'Arte Orientale and Palazzo Madama – Museo Civico d'Arte Antica. Fondazione Torino Musei is the sole partner of Artissima s.r.l.

The mission of the Foundation is to preserve this heritage, shape research, exhibit and communicate these art collections and historical monuments, making them open and accessible to the public, thereby serving the community.

The Foundation pays close attention to accessibility and education, for children and young people of all ages and their families; it provides support for the development of artistic and curatorial projects on a regional level; it interacts with businesses to foster collaboration between cultural and entrepreneurial players; it defines its cultural contents in relation to a perspective on the world that permits valorisation of its own heritage, programming and exporting its exhibitions.

**The Bagri Foundation**, established in 1990, is a family foundation driven by curiosity. Its vision to cultivate a meaningful space for Asian culture to thrive, shift perspectives and deepen connections. Through grants and strategic partnerships, the Foundation champions unique ideas that weave traditional and contemporary of Asia. Recent and upcoming projects include *Artes Mundi*, the UK's largest art award; *Asian Bronze: 4000 Years of Beauty* at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, an exhibition exploring bronze craftsmanship through the centuries; and *Citra Sasmita: Into Eternal Land*, a sensorial exhibition showcasing Indonesian Kamasan paintings and Balinese mythology.