

## The Six Senses of Buddhism: docent training information

Possible tour themes:

- Buddhism
- Sensory experience
- Museum studies
- Transnational movement

Six sense bases, which are pairs of sense organs and sense objects:

- eye and visible object
- ear and sound
- nose and scent
- tongue and taste
- body and touch
- mind and mental objects (thoughts, feelings, perceptions, sense impressions)

The goal of Buddhists is generally the release from *samsara* (cycle of birth, existence, death, and then repeated), which can only occur when one attains enlightenment or awakening (a deep or true understanding of reality and existence). Historical Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, c. 5th century BCE) attained enlightenment and, in subsequent sermons, explained the Four Noble Truths.

Four Noble Truths:

- life is suffering
- desire or craving is the root of that suffering
- the elimination of that desire is the path to eliminating suffering
- the eightfold path is the way to that elimination

Twelve causes of remaining in *samsara* (Dependant Origination)

- Ignorance
- Formation
- Consciousness
- Name and Form
- Six Sense Bases
- Contact
- Feeling
- Craving
- Clinging
- Existence/being

- Birth
- Aging and Death

Contact between the sense organs and the sense objects result in desire/craving, one of the causes for remaining in *samsara*. Therefore, restraint of or a deeper insight into the senses is essential for realizing the Four Noble Truths and gaining enlightenment. However, sensory experience is necessary in propagating the spread of Buddhism and cultivating understanding of the teachings.

*Upaya* (skillful/expedient means): adapting one's message to fit the abilities of the audience; utilizes sensory experience

Multiple schools of Buddhism are represented in the exhibition, especially Zen and Pure Land Buddhism.

- Zen Buddhism characterized by an emphasis on meditation and finding insight in daily life; for Zen Buddhists, there is the possibility of sudden enlightenment in this life
- Pure Land Buddhism characterized by the strong belief in and veneration of the Buddha Amida (Amitābha), the Buddha of the Western Pure Land/Paradise; the general goal for Pure Land Buddhists is rebirth in the Pure Land during their next existence for a more pleasant life and to get a step closer to reaching enlightenment