

Celebrating the Flowering of Tsogyelgar, the Buddhist Community on West Liberty

“Incarnating The Beautiful, The Good, The True”

Just a few minutes west of town, on a now transformed farm property on West Liberty, the Buddhist community known as Tsogyelgar has been quietly flowering. Founded in 1990, by Stuart and Katie Kirkpatrick (known by their Buddhist names, Traktung Khepa and Tsochen Khandro), the community has become something to behold and treasure. Every Crazy Wisdom reader has reason to pay attention to what is unfolding at Tsogyelgar, and every Ann Arborite has reason to be proud of the sheer beauty and profound ambition and deep purpose manifesting itself there. It is not only a residential Buddhist community; it also includes achingly beautiful gardens, and magnificent Buddhist art work and shrines. (After the opening of the Tantric Mural last summer, *Current Magazine* described the work as “museum quality” and “Ann-Arbor’s best kept artistic secret”.)

Tsogyelgar, named for the great Tibetan female Buddha Yeshe Tsogyel, describes itself as a “gathering place for human enrichment and spiritual development.” “It is a living mandala” whose 25 acres include Crazy Cloud Hermitage, a residential Buddhist community, public peace gardens, shrines, a farming project working in conjunction with other charities to provide fresh produce and food security to local families in need, an innovative arts program, and a library of world literature on spiritual and human development. Collectively these endeavors are called “The Human Enrichment Project”.

On a typical Saturday, woodworkers, musicians, artists, gardeners, members of the Tsogyelgar community and friends gather to “bring joy and compassion into form,” inspired by Traktung Khepa’s words: “Compassion and creativity incarnate wisdom so that the beautiful, the good and the true become our center of gravity and the source of our actions.”

That vision is guiding Tsogyelgar. New works of art, charitable projects, and meditation gardens unfold and add to Ann Arbor’s cultural assets. Meanwhile, the community grows and matures, and its members deepen their own spiritual lives.

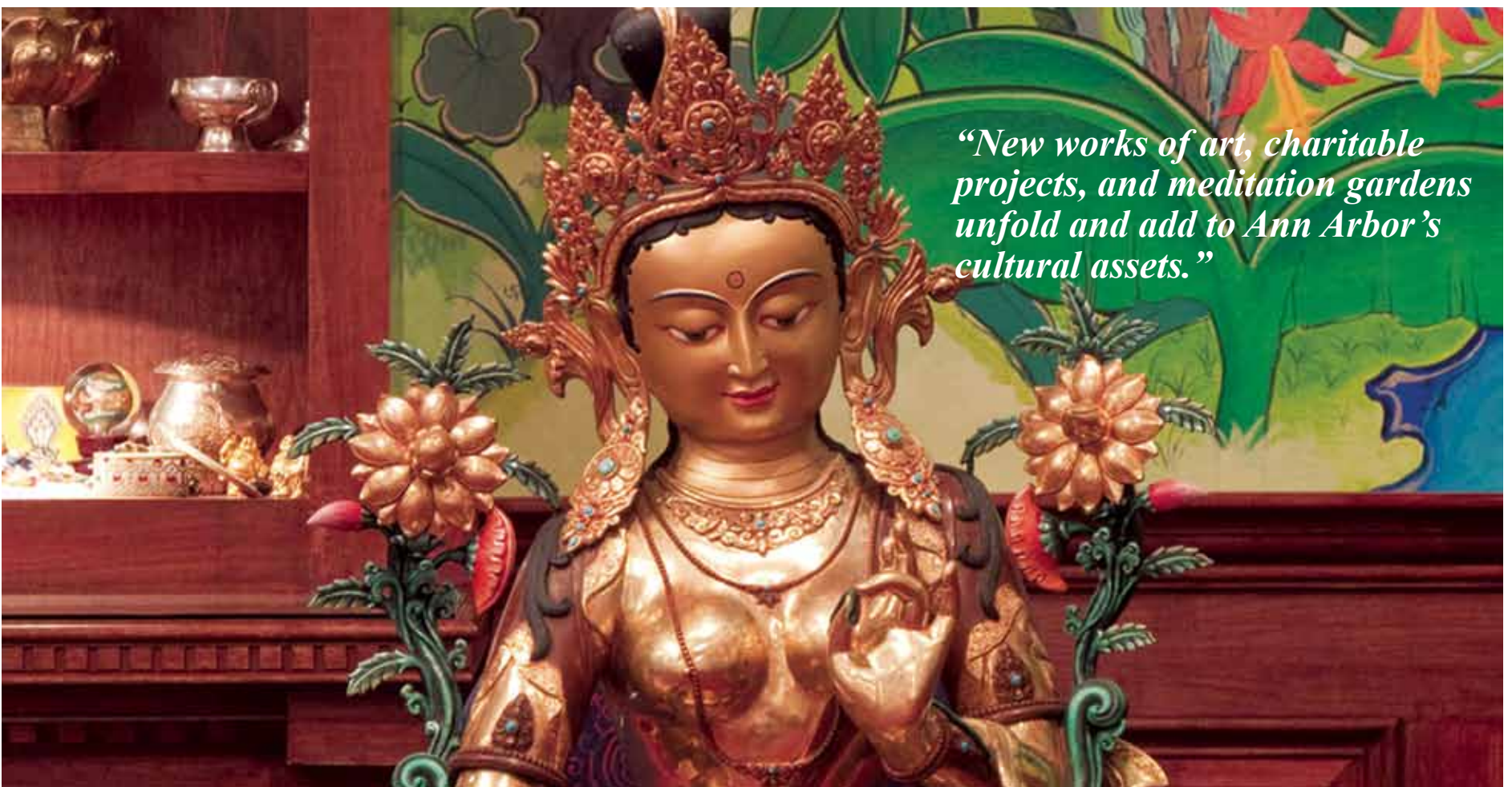
What follows is a 4-page photographic glimpse of Tsogyelgar’s ever-evolving community.



“...community members have dedicated land and energy to producing a Human Enrichment Zone, which offers, to all, opportunities for embodying and enworlding the deep values of wisdom, compassion, and beauty.”



“A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion — these are the things which renew humanity.”
~ Buddha



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Tsogyelgar Pages Designed by Hans Anderson
Photo Captions by Christina Burch
Photos provided by Tsogyelgar

Tantric Mural at Tsogyelgar

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

For 2500 years, Tantric Buddhists have been exploring the geography of mind, mapping the interface between wisdom and bliss. Traktung Khepa has taught, “The felt images and imaged feelings of Tantric art are a science of transformation, they are a participatory technology of beauty. Their mystery of form and color draws us into the wonder of Buddhahood —our own deepest reality.” It was with a wish to share this ancient path of wisdom and beauty that Khepa commissioned master Thangka painter Rob Davis to create Tsogyelgar’s massive mural of Tantric art.

The Buddhas in the mural are potent symbols which evoke the enlightened energies of our spiritual potential—Tara the Mother of All Buddhas, Chenrezig the Lord of Love, Majushri the symbol of Wisdom’s Power, Mandarava the Flowery Princess of Enlightenment, and many others. For Buddhist practitioners, each Buddha becomes a doorway, an invitation. At a deeper level, the Buddhas, the offering gods and goddesses, plants, animals, and symbols become a map of the enlightened mind and body. Each Buddha becomes a ‘skillful means’ whereby we can benefit beings through active compassion.

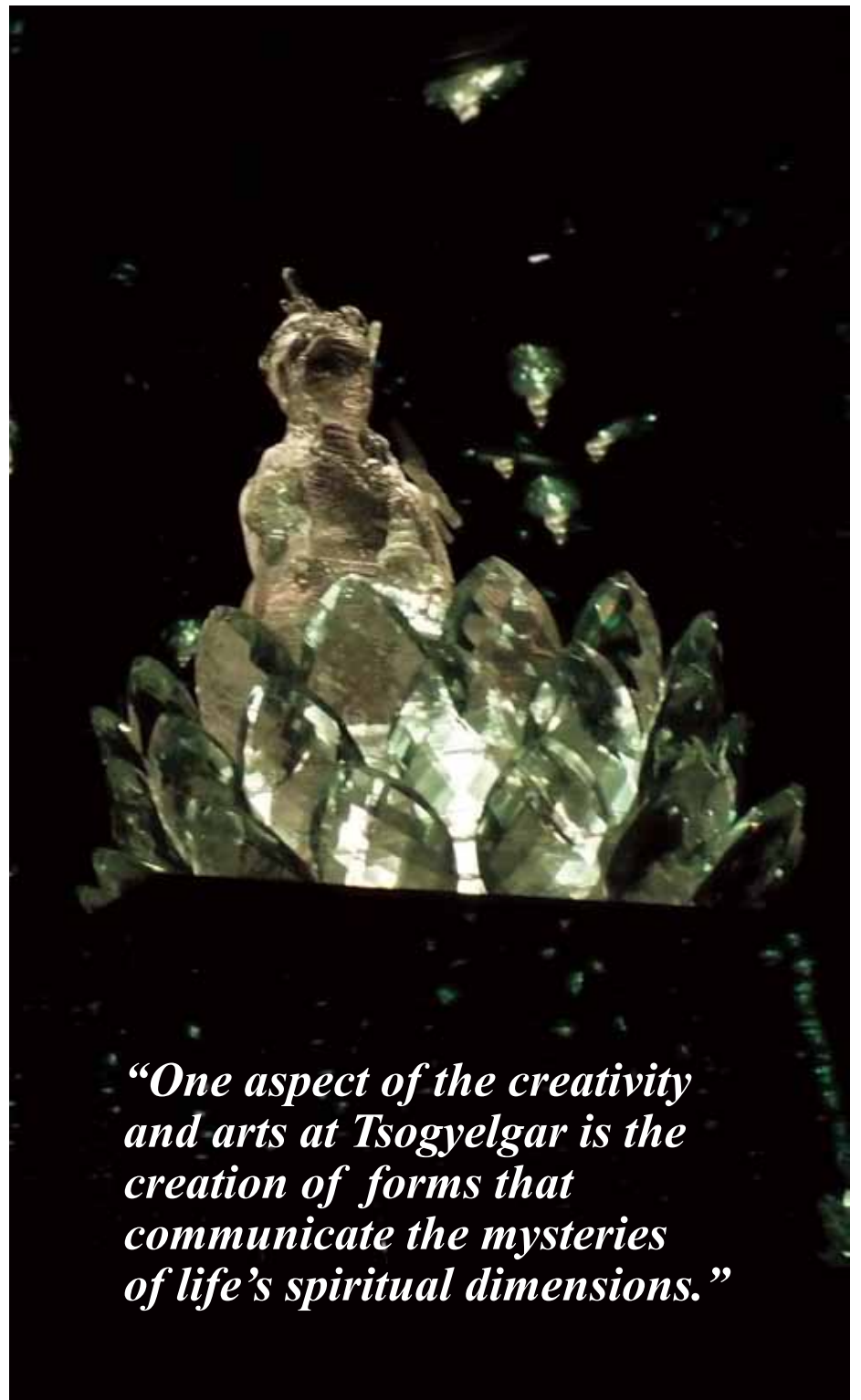


The Mirror Hut

In the 6th century, the Empress of China asked the mystic, Fa Tsang, to demonstrate subtle truths of wholeness and oneness without using words. In response, Fa Tsang built an aesthetic marvel called the “Mirror Hut.” In 2009, craftsmen at Tsogyelgar completed a re-creation of the Mirror Hut so that women and men today could also experience this mystery.

One aspect of the creativity and arts at Tsogyelgar is the creation of forms that communicate the mysteries of life’s spiritual dimensions. The thirty-five foot tall stupa with its dazzling colors, the Tantric Mural, the Mirror Hut, gardens, and more all speak of, and to, the deep truths which are beyond dogmas or even words.

To see a beautiful video of the Mirror Hut visit www.tsogyelgar.org



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Copper Colored Mountain Arts

What began as a project to create the mural and other works of Tantric art has now become an arts education program. An entire barn has been transformed into studios, workshops, and laboratories for experimenting with the power of art and beauty. Artists are invited to teach, speak, and share in projects with students. This blossoming of activity arises from the union of wisdom and compassion in action. Copper Colored Mountain Arts (www.ccmarts.org) will be housed in the historic red barn adjacent to Tsogyelgar. Here Mr. Davis will be teaching thangka painting, and a variety of other working artists will offer instruction in various arts such as ceramics and glass beadmaking. There will be classes in music, poetry, and Dharma Arts such as tsa tsa making, prayer flag making and ceremonial dance. CCMA will also host the One Pause Poetry Series, performances and exhibitions of contemporary art, and outdoor sculpture and installation in and around the gardens of Tsogyelgar.



The Mandarava Peace Park and Wishing Tree Gardens

“My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece.”—*Claude Monet*

Where beauty and nature meet, meditation comes naturally; it is on this principle that the Tsogyelgar community started the Mandarava Peace Park. Winding through acres of community-held property, the gardens include ponds, flowers, art works, stupas, and places for sitting silently in the midst of nature. In 2010, four acres of flower beds, inspired by the painter Monet’s gardens, will begin. Several new art works will be installed this year in partnership with Copper Colored Mountain Arts. In addition, a beautiful outdoor shrine containing a life-size statue of Tara, the mother of all Buddhas, will be finished. The gardens can be visited by appointment throughout the week. On Saturdays we invite the public to help us in creating and maintaining this sanctuary of peace and beauty.



Another project in partnership with nature is the Wishing Tree Garden. This project works to address food security issues for families in need by partnering with Food Gatherers’ Faith and Food program. On several acres of recently donated land, Wishing Tree Gardens will initiate innovative natural farming methods and experimental aquaponics systems to help provide fresh produce to those in need. This project has found tremendous inspiration in the urban farming movement, especially the work of Growing Power in Milwaukee and Chicago.



“I am hiding amidst everyone. I have made the walls of my retreat hut from the fabric of appearance, hidden my mind in the emptiness of space and safeguarded my love in the guise of all beings.....”

~ Traktung Khepa