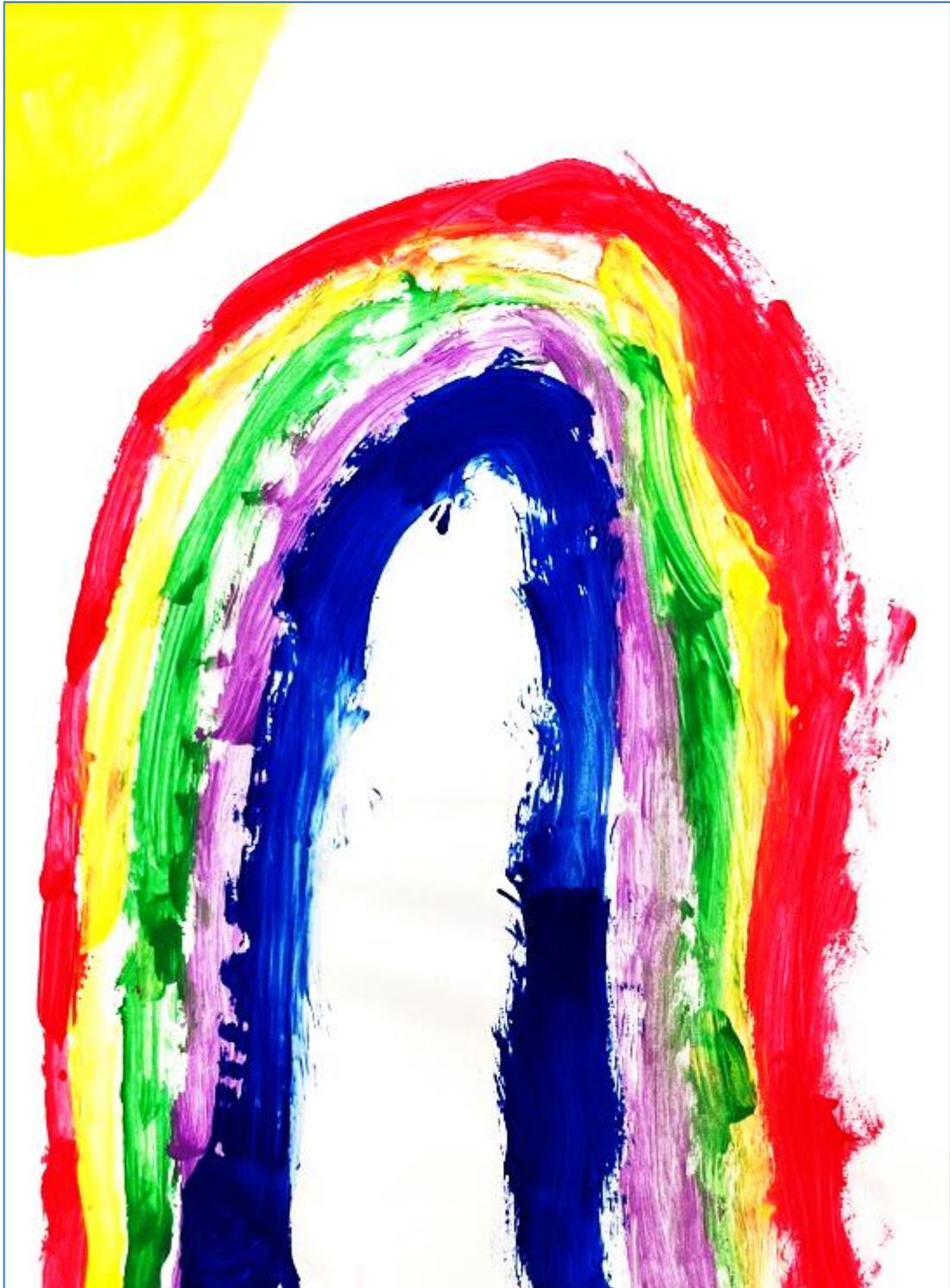


# Mind Moon Circle

Winter 2025



The Colour of Zen

# Contents

<b>Rainbow</b>	<b>Frederick Stewart</b>	<b>Cover</b>
<b>How Do You See It?</b>	<b>Maggie Gluek</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Authentic colour</b>	<b>Janet Selby</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Moon says</b>	<b>Colin Hopkins</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Our Zen Bodies, What Colour?</b>	<b>Caroline Josephs</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Some crumbs gathered from various places</b>	<b>Gilly Coote</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>What Colour is Zen</b>	<b>Colin Hopkins</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>To Paint my Midnight Wanderings</b>	<b>Colin Hopkins</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Winter's morning</b>	<b>Helen Sanderson</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Colours of humanity</b>	<b>Sue Bidwell</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>What is the colour of Zen?</b>	<b>William Verity</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>To Experience Zen-Like Awakening Try Going the Headless Way</b>	<b>Brentyn J. Ramm</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>red rebels</b>	<b>Mari Rhydwen</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Love Colour</b>	<b>Gretchen Rubin</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Colour my Palette – Zen Colour of the Ocean</b>	<b>Caroline Josephs</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>What colour is our sangha?</b>	<b>Brendon Stewart</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Winter Mists</b>	<b>Glenys Jackson</b>	
<b>O Colour of the World</b>	<b>Dorothea Mackellar</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Radiant Compassion Bodhisattva</b>	<b>Subhana Barzaghi</b>	<b>35</b>

**Spring 2026 Edition: William Verity, “Letting Go”  
jwgverity@gmail.com**

## How Do You See It?

Maggie Gluek

*What is the colour of Zen?* I've been walking my days with this question, taking it on as a kind of koan and feeling grateful for the assignment. It doesn't matter that I have no idea what the colour of Zen is, or Zen itself for that matter. I just return to *What is this?* Koans are an invitation not to know but rather to receive. Here, there is an invitation to open the eyes and let them be. To get out of the way, that forms and hues come forward and declare themselves. I am struck by how much I do not see, moment by moment gifts overlooked by a "knowing" function that shuts out surprise. I vow to let in the light.

One can be seduced by the idea of some greater reality apart from what is right here before our eyes. Witness the monk in Case 82 of the Blue Cliff Record.

*A monk asked Ta lung, "The body of colour (that is, the physical body) perishes. What is the solid Dharma body?"*

*Ta lung said, "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade. The river between the hills is blue as indigo."*

Ta lung's words are something to cherish. The empty Dharma body, solidly unchanging, abides only as our beautiful, ever-changing world, seen in endless manifestations.

I once had a friend who in the midst of depression spoke of passing her days in black and white, whereas before she had lived in full colour. It's a good metaphor. At such times body and mind shut down, sense communication diminishes. Perspective flattens, affect flattens, joy disappears. But even the suffering that comes with feeling cut off from life is shaded. What aesthetic is more subtle and revealing than black and white?

In Case 36 of the Blue Cliff collection we meet the richness of being.

*Ch'ang Sha one day went on a picnic in the mountains. When he returned to the gate, the Head Monk asked, "Your Reverence, where have you been wandering?"*

*"I have come from strolling about in the hills," said Sha.*

*"Where did you go? (literally, where did you come and go?)," asked the Head Monk.*

*Sha said, "First, I went following the scented grasses, then came back following the falling flowers."*

*“That is spring mood itself,” said the Head Monk.*

Ch’ang Sha takes us right into the picture. We’re strolling in the hills with him, with the scented grasses, the falling flowers, even the alluded-to picnic. (Num!) There’s colour—in the widest sense of the word—implicit in these particulars. Whether we’re sighted or not, our sense doors open us to the vividness of things, the glory of this earth—hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, reflecting. Birth and death shade every moment. All things arise and dissolve, we love and we weep. Wandering at ease, going nowhere in particular, Ch’ang Sha shows us the way to live in the world of coming and going. It’s a privilege to be embodied and present. Right here where you are, nothing is lost. Paul Maloney once quoted me this wonderful line from Dogen’s *Bendowa*: *Those who believe there is no Buddha Nature in mundane things fail to realise there are no mundane things in Buddha Nature.*

I offer a few personal experiences of colour and its potency.

Aged four years old, I am given a finger prick blood test. On my extended finger, a pool of red appears. RED! I faint.

A baby boy has just been born. Calm and still, he looks intently at his parents. (What is this?) I fall into the blue of his old-soul eyes. Who of us does not fall into the blue of sky?

My mother decides that my sister and I can have wallpaper in our bedrooms. What colour would I like? To my surprise and without hesitation I say “yellow.” It makes me happy. When Tony and I visit Claude Monet’s house in Giverny and enter his dining room, I find that this affinity is shared. His colour choice is mood-altering, a dazzle of joy.

White is a combination of all colours of the visible spectrum. A blanket of snow, covering the land and its features, is then a blessing for the eyes, at once brilliant and quiet, awake and asleep. A longing for my childhood.

Painters know colour intimately. Tony and I visit the exhibition at the SH Ervin gallery of paintings from the Utopia homelands in central Australia, which includes works by Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Gloria Petyarre and her sisters. These artists *see* so interestingly, so outside (our, or at least my) received conventional ideas of how things appear and are to be

represented. They paint country from within, not as separate, alive in the energy of colour and texture ... as well as from a vast bird's eye map-view. We are dizzied by the altered reality.

Meanwhile, spring mood is upon us. In these next weeks and months have a wander in Sydney bushland where wildflowers are appearing. There's purple hardenbergia (hello, native bees!), soft pink wax-flowers and bright pink boronia (early season arrivals), honey-scented white woollisia, Sydney wattle, sun-spheres wattle and so much more in this highly biodiverse region. The world of colour ... over to you!



*Claude Monet's dining room in Giverny, France.*

## Authentic colour

Janet Selby

Teaching colour theory in a Design Fundamentals course, led me to reassess the usual guidelines about using colour in creating art, and to explore how it affects us individually.

In Zen practice, we just note what is, and with awareness we note how things in the environment affect us at that moment - just as it is. When making art it can be useful to understand some effects that have been traditionally studied, so as to compare our own individual response, and so to distinguish our authentic use of such principles.

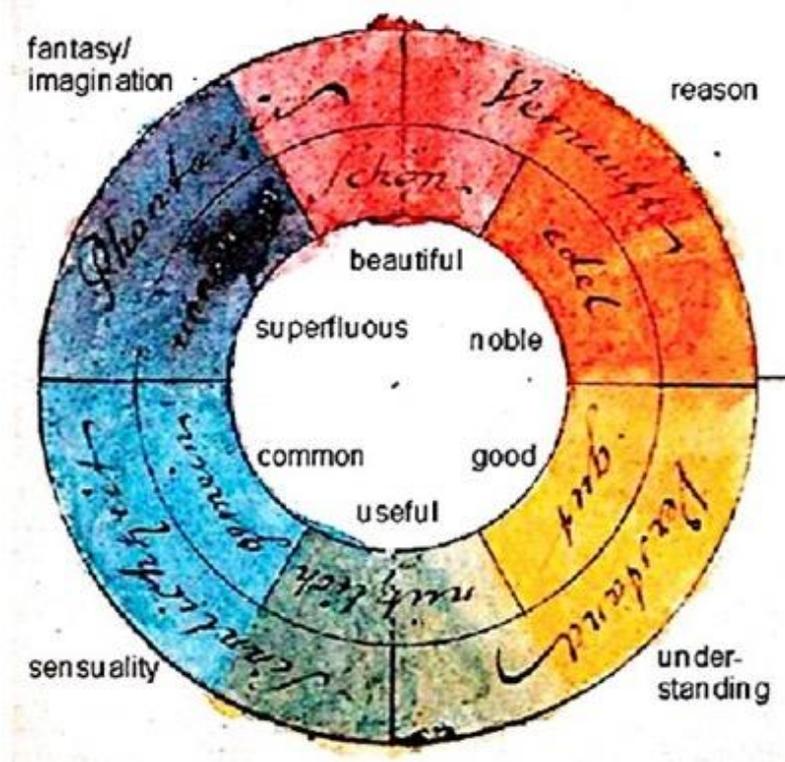
Different cultures have different approaches and interpretations. In traditional western approach, various colours evoke specific emotions and perceptions. For example:

1. Red: passion and energy but can also invoke feelings of anger or urgency.
2. Blue: calmness and tranquillity, it can also promote feelings of sadness.
3. Green: nature and balance; refreshing and restorative.
4. Yellow: Represents warmth and cheerfulness but can become overwhelming in large doses.
5. Black: Associated with mystery and sophistication but can suggest fear or negativity in certain contexts.

Then there is an alternative approach from Goethe.

Goethe's "*Theory of Colours*" was published in 1810. He noted that current scientific practice was actually a hindrance to understanding. He used his instinct to interpret the effects of colour and produced the first colour wheel. Purple: imagination; red: beautiful; orange: noble; yellow: understanding; green: useful; blue: sensuality; violet: superfluous.

(from "Goethe: Theory of Colours" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe )



This is somewhat like the French composer Eric Satie’s notations on how to perform his piano compositions.... *“on the tip of the tongue”, “to ignore one’s own presence”, “Open your head”, “Flat”, “White”, “Still”, “Without your fingers blushing”, “Like a nightingale with a toothache”*.

(From “Erik Satie Gymnopedies, Gnossiennes and other works for piano”, Dover Publications, 1989).

What does he mean by “white”, to play the piano like the colour white?

According to Wassily Kandinsky, white “is not a dead silence, but one pregnant with possibilities”. Perhaps like contemplating Mu, or Wu.

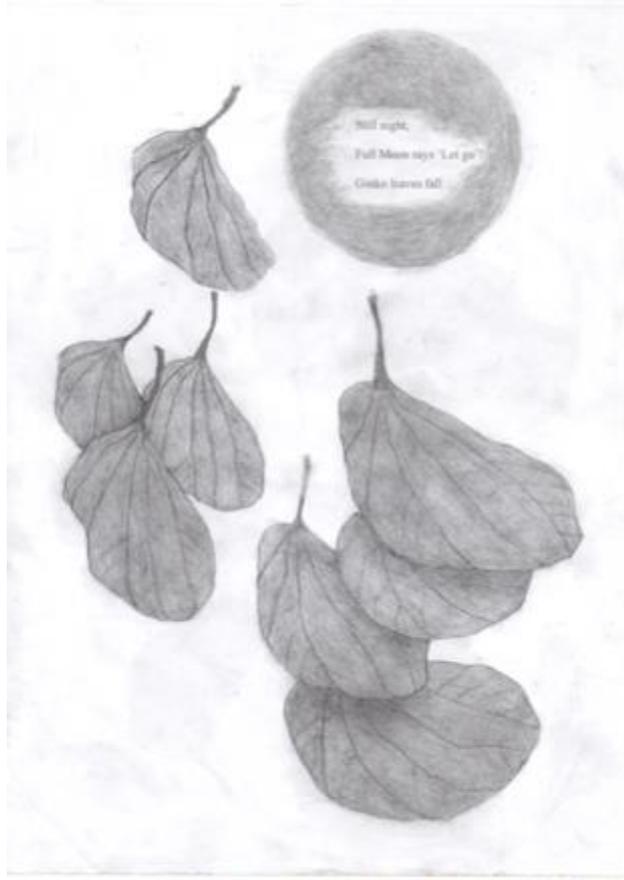
(from “Concerning the spiritual in Art”, Wassily Kandinsky, 1946)

Apparently, colour in Japanese Zen culture can be seen as the following: white symbolises purity, emptiness; dark colours represent mystery, and introspection; earthy tones imply grounding, peace and stability.

Using colour adds different effect and responses. The artist uses an instinctive mindful approach, and depending on the actual moment, they would choose a colour palette to convey those moments. A degree of planning might be needed. But what the artist is trying to convey, and whether the viewer receives that message is an experience with no right or wrong, no good or bad. The power of art is just as it needs to be, for all involved. That's why we keep looking at the same piece of art over and over again at different times in our lives. Our involvement changes depending on our ever-changing mood and perceptions.

Creating art is a form of meditation in Zen. Viewing art is also a meditative exercise. Just viewing, experiencing it without the need for analysis or interpretation.

Exploring colour may promote greater awareness about its potential impact on our lives and may bring us enhanced awareness through engaging with art. However, the act of mindfully creating or viewing art and how its colour attributes affect us are a unique, authentic, and are a fully engaged experience in that moment, whichever colour it happens to be.



In the dark night  
clouds fall down the hillside  
blotting out everything.  
Then cloud becomes mist  
and thins and whitens,  
billows, and twists, and twirls,  
floats - slowly - up through the trees  
that are now new - sprung,  
and swaying majestically,  
sails down the black valleys of the night.  
Treetops are seized by the wind.  
It rains.

Colin Hopkins



## Our Zen Bodies – What Colour?

Caroline Josephs

What if we were  
Born red?  
Skins holding us  
In a force field of colour?  
We would be earth red,  
Poppy red, blush red,  
Rose red, post office red,  
Mao's Little Red book red,  
Blotched blood red.

And, what if we were born yellow fellows?  
Skins encapsulating yellow mellow yellow  
We would be autumnal yellow, ochre yellow,  
saffron yellow, Yangtse River yellow.

And, what if we were born black?  
Skin of night-sky eclipse black,  
pitch black, coal black,  
Black sheep baa baa black,  
Black cloud, Bitumen black, boot black,  
Skin shining glistening black  
Black panther fur black,  
Tar-brush black, ebony black, raven black,  
Black as thunder black  
Black Maria black,  
Lash black.

And, what if we were all brown...  
Skins Mother earth brown, tanned brown,  
Brown as berry brown, winter dry leaf brown,  
Toasted brown, sienna brown, burnt bronze brown,  
Nutbrown, tawny foxy brown,  
Browned-off brown?

What if we were all white,  
Skin bleached blanched almond white,  
porcelain white, purity snow white,  
chalk, flour white, albino white, milk white, sheet white,  
White-collar white, white ant white,  
White flag, white feather white,

White lie white, white livered white,  
Whitewashed white?

What if we were all green, skin luminous  
Neon light green?  
Grassland green, green-eyed green,

green-fingered green,  
green tree-hugging green,  
New spring shoots green?  
Credulous green, ignorant green.

What if we were all blue  
Skin of bruise blue,  
blue moon blue, blues music blue  
Blue ribbon blue, Bluebeard blue,  
Blueblood blue,  
Bluestocking blue?

Or, what if we were rainbow - coloured  
Skins a mixture of blended,  
variegated tones and pigments, inter-weavings --  
Hybrids, mestizos, mongrels, mulattos,  
A fusion, a harmony, an amalgam, alloy  
Jumbled unclassifiable disorder,  
heterogeneity,  
Of complexity - a motley patchwork mosaic,  
pot-pourri, -- hotchpotch,  
tangle of creoles? Octoroons.  
a medley of non-conformity.

Skin fades, dissolves, disintegrates, erodes, rots  
Leaving bones -- dense, weighty, porous,  
Diamond and quartz of the body,  
Bearing frame, structure,  
An interior - holding shape, pattern, plan,  
architecture, skeleton, mortality.....

There, souls speak,  
one with the other --  
In colourless silence...

## Some crumbs gathered from various places

Gilly Coote

From Google: “Grown-up colouring books are commonly referred to as adult colouring books. They gained popularity in the 2010s as a form of stress relief and relaxation, often marketed as a way to tap into a sense of childhood and mindfulness.

Based on the structure and methodical nature of patterns and symmetrical art, *The Zen Colouring: Patterns* title takes the artist into a space surrounded by intricate and bold patterns with aesthetically pleasing scenes and designs. Designed with the intention of creating engaging and calming content packaged in a refreshed package, updating the design of the current *Zen Colour* series.

Reconnect with calm and peace of mind through the practice of colouring, with *Zen Colouring: Patterns*, anyone can home in on the simplicity of patterns, figures, and designs.”



So, Zen Colouring: Patterns title **markets** calm and peace of mind of ink monochrome paintings by Zen monks, which **express** calm and peace of mind.

Today, ink monochrome painting is the art form most closely associated with Zen Buddhism. In general, the first Japanese artists to work in this medium were Zen monks who painted in a quick and evocative manner to express their religious views and personal convictions. Their

preferred subjects were Zen patriarchs, teachers, and enlightened individuals. In time, however, artists moved on to secular themes such as bamboo, flowering plums, orchids, and birds, which in China were endowed with scholarly symbolism. The range of subject matter eventually broadened to include literary figures and landscapes, and the painting styles often became more important than personal expression.

Zen Buddhism's emphasis on simplicity and the importance of the natural world generated a distinctive aesthetic, which is expressed by the terms *wabi* and *sabi*. These two amorphous concepts are used to express a sense of rusticity, melancholy, loneliness, naturalness, and age, so that a misshapen, worn peasant's jar is considered more beautiful than a pristine, carefully crafted dish. While the latter pleases the senses, the former stimulates the mind and emotions to contemplate the essence of reality. This artistic sensibility has had an enormous impact on Japanese culture up to modern times. (From The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York.)

(also from Google) 'What is the last colour to go with dementia?' the response?  
Green. Green boosts relaxation. It reduces central nervous system activity and helps individuals be calm. Green is also the last colour people with dementia lose the ability to see. Further to green, this poem by the US Buddhist poet, David Budbill from his 'Moment to Moment'.

### ***The First Green of Spring***

*Out walking in the swamp picking cowslip, marsh marigold,  
this sweet first green of spring. Now sautéed in a pan melting  
to a deeper green than ever they were alive, this green, this life,  
harbinger of things to come. Now we sit at the table munching  
on this message from the dawn which says we and the world  
are alive again today, and this is the world's birthday. And  
even though we know we are growing old, we are dying, we  
will never be young again, we also know we're still right here  
now, today, and, my oh my! don't those greens taste good.*

That's it, folks!



## **What Colour is Zen?**

At first thought, it is black,  
A monk's robe, ink paintings,  
Sumi contains all colours!  
But what of colour blindness?

Others see colour differently,  
Colour not an "it" but a "thou"  
A presence known only  
So far as it is revealed.

Perhaps colour is not a noun,  
But a verb, a "happening"  
Not an attribute.  
And Zen has no colour at all.

Colin Hopkins

## **To Paint my Midnight Wanderings**

Seemingly haphazard, like an Old Curiosity Shop,  
The scene is crowded, many objects vie for attention,  
Appearing familiar, they are not what they seem,  
The forms distorted, relations disjunct.  
Always you see more than one object,  
And as the gaze shifts, forms change,  
Relationships alter, colours, reflections  
Alternate, blend and interchange.  
Launceston, Liberia, Leningrad,  
Each might contain this room,  
Only in the mind's eye  
Is its location manifest.

How fortunate  
There are no fixed forms –  
No need to compare

Colin Hopkins

## Winter's Morning

Helen Sanderson

Today, after weeks of chill and rain, the sun peeps, yellow lemon, through the grey. It brightens this morning with light. This light is a speck, then a patch, next a splash. A sweep of cerulean appears, broadens and deepens. A watercolour sky.

Stepping out along city streets past small front gardens, fences and brown pavements, black dog and me in my old navy shoes. Over there, under red flowered camellia, a lush petalled carpet colours the ground crimson. And here against the blue, cherry blossoms branch, pale, pink, pristine. Rainbow lorikeets perch on street trees chattering and sucking nectar from magenta blooms, so bright they offend any sense of modesty, as does the lasiandra, gowned in shiny purple. A sulphur-crested cockatoo screams white life across the sky. And magpies feathered in elegant black and white, make harmonious melody, singing duets to the day.

The earth is turning, winter is becoming spring.



*Watercolour by Helen Sanderson*



Photo by Jillian Ball

Colours of humanity  
woven in a tapestry of  
outrage at injustice;  
and feelings of  
anguish,  
compassion,  
hope.

A moving mass  
of humankind.  
Advocates all,  
walking with purpose;  
connected and warm-hearted  
in the rain.

Sue Bidwell



*Pro-Palestine peace protest “March for Humanity”, Sydney Harbour Bridge, 3 August, 2025*

**What is the colour of Zen?**

William Verity

**a flash of summer lightning**



# To Experience Zen-Like Awakening Try Going the Headless Way

Brentyn J. Ramm

A prominent theme in Asian religious traditions such as the Advaita Vedanta and Zen Buddhism is that our everyday human experience is like a dream. The dream is that you are merely a person – a thing in the world bounded by your skin, a self that is separate from things and other people. But you are not separate from things and other people. And when you see through the illusion of separation, you become ‘awakened’.

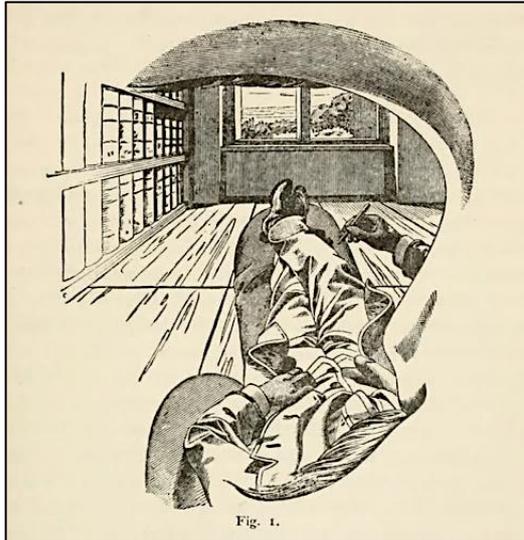
In Chinese Zen Buddhism (Ch’an), a significant form of awakening experience is known as ‘Kensho’. This literally translates as ‘seeing one’s true nature’. In Zen, one’s true nature is often described as ‘empty’ – and at the same time identical with the given world. Kensho isn’t the end point of practice. It isn’t some supreme final state such as ‘enlightenment’ or ‘nirvana’ (if these states are even possible). Rather, it is the beginning, for awakening is in fact a life-long practice, never truly completed. This is the type of awakening experience that I am interested in here.

Hui Hai, an 8th-century Zen Master renowned for establishing the monastery and insisting on the importance of manual work, said that your true nature should not be sought externally. He described your true nature as follows:

*Mind has no colour, such as green or yellow, red or white; it is not long or short; it does not vanish or appear; it is free from purity and impurity alike; and its duration is eternal. It is utter stillness. Such then is the form and shape of our original mind, which is also our original body.*

Our true nature, then, is like a void. It lacks all objective qualities. It is shapeless, colourless, limitless, motionless. So how exactly does one see one’s own true nature, if it is so shorn of discernible features? The traditional method is to sit for many years in an intense meditation practice under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Unfortunately, most practitioners never experience ‘the void’. There is however a tradition in Zen of spontaneous awakening even in the absence of any meditation practice. This suggests that there is a far quicker and more direct means of awakening.

Let's look at a method of self-enquiry called 'the headless way', which provides a modern method of approaching awakening. These first-person experiments were developed by the English philosopher and mystic Douglas Harding in his influential book *On Having No Head: Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious* (1961). Harding grew up in a fundamentalist



Christian sect in which he wasn't allowed to go to the cinema and the only book he was permitted to read was the Bible. When he left the sect at 21, he was determined to seek the truth for himself and to be his own authority. The approach he developed was unconventional and can be considered a form of radical empiricism.

Self-portrait by the Austrian physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach from his book *The Analysis of Sensations* (1914). Public domain

The key to his method is noticing that you cannot see your own head. Rather than looking out of a head, visually speaking, there is just a gap here. Indeed, early Chinese Zen masters referred to the need to 'chop off one's head'. Hui Hai claimed that he could teach nothing as he had no tongue to teach with. The heart sutra, which distils the essence of Zen teaching, states that 'in emptiness there is no form, no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind.' Zen masters also urge practitioners to recognise their 'original face' – another name for one's true nature.

How does one see their true nature according to Zen? One of the best places to start is with the mysterious figure Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Zen, who reputedly brought Buddhism to China from India around the 5th century. A legend about him tells us that he attained enlightenment after sitting for nine years facing a cave wall, and also that he cut off his own eyelids to stop himself from falling asleep. Bodhidharma is attributed with the following verse, which is often thought to express the core of Zen teaching:

*A special transmission outside the scriptures,  
Not founded upon words and letters;  
By pointing directly to one's mind  
It lets one see into one's own true nature and thus attain Buddhahood.*

How exactly does one directly point to one's mind or true nature? Harding's 'pointing experiment' assists in turning one's attention within, starting with the exercise of pointing a finger literally to the spot from which you are looking. Note that if these exercises are not carried out, or if they are merely thought about, this article will make no sense. So please do the following:

*Point at a distant thing, such as a wall. Notice its shape and colour. It is a thing that is extended in space. It is also opaque. You cannot see through it. Point to the floor. Again, notice the coloured expanse and its textures. Point to your foot. Again, it is a shaped and coloured thing. Point to your chest and notice its colours and shape and the movement from your breathing. Now point to where you are looking from. In your present experience, is there any colour here? Any shape? Any texture? Any movement? Are there any eyes, mouth or cheeks here? Are there any features of a person? Notice that this spot is totally lacking in any personally identifying characteristics. Is there anything at all here? Or is it just a transparent opening?*

When I look within, when I turn my attention 180 degrees from objects over there to where I am, I find that I am not a coloured, limited thing in the world, but rather a colourless, unchanging capacity for the world, exactly as described by Zen. Is this the much sought-after 'void' that is referred to by contemplative traditions across times and cultures?

A well-known story in Zen is of Tung-Shan's awakening, in the 9th century, which also shows intriguing parallels with Harding's observations. Once, as a child, Tung-Shan was reading the heart sutra with his tutor when he came upon the passage 'no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind'. He was confused. He used his hands to feel his face and then asked his tutor why the sutra said they didn't exist. His tutor told Tung-Shan that he could not help him, so Tung-Shan spent many years searching for a worthy master to explain this and other mysteries of the Dharma to him. One day he was crossing a river and saw his face reflected in the water. He saw where his face was in his lived experience, and he instantly had a great awakening.

Zen goes beyond words and letters, so merely thinking about this story would be against the spirit of Zen. To test this out directly in your own experience, please carry out the 'mirror experiment':

*Look into a mirror. You can now see your human face. Notice where it is. In my experience, it is over there, a couple of feet away, not on my shoulders. Is this true for you? It is also facing the wrong way. It is looking in, rather than outwards. How many faces do you see? Two, or just one? Notice the shapes, textures and colours of that little face trapped behind the glass. By contrast, notice the lack of shapes, textures, colours and indeed boundaries to the spot you are looking from.*

That face over there is your acquired face. When you were an infant, you did not recognise it as your own. It was just a baby behind some glass. It took many months to learn to identify with that face. You learnt to marry that visual thing over there with the ‘facial’ sensations you feel here, and hence you became boxed in (at least apparently so). Isn’t how you are for yourself – that is, your ‘original face’ – in total contrast to that little face in the mirror? In fact, as lacking any characteristics of its own, isn’t this ‘gap’ seamlessly united with the world? Couldn’t you equally say that your ‘original face’ is the given world itself? All this might sound a little esoteric, so let’s look at one potential practical benefit of the ‘headless’ practice in the case of personal relationships. We think that we meet each other face-to-face, thing-to-thing. Of course, this is how it looks to others from the outside. But you relate to others from your first-person perspective, not from over there. The lived experience of being with others isn’t in fact of being face-to-face, but rather face-to-no-face. My face never gets in the way of the faces of others – including those you dislike. The ‘space’ you are looking out of has no preferences. It takes on everyone completely, no matter who they are, without judgement. Noticing this is a rather simple and concrete way to see that you are not, in fact, separate from others. In theory, this could provide a basis for true compassion towards others.

One can meditate for many years without seeing their own true nature. Most never do. The precision and apparent reliability of these experiments open up a form of Zen-like awakening to empirical investigation. Yet these techniques have so far received little attention from philosophers and scientists. The results of the experiments suggest that it doesn’t require a lifetime or many lifetimes to see your true nature. You can do so right now. It is simply to see who or what you are at this very moment – that which is seeing these very words.

This article was originally published in *Psyche*, 2 February 2022

<https://psyche.co/ideas/to-experience-zen-like-awakening-try-going-the-headless-way>

## red rebels

Mari Rhydwen

I went to the march for Gaza across the Harbour Bridge. I was a minder for the Red Rebels, a branch of Extinction Rebellion whose flyers I was handing out. These included the words: *We wear red to symbolise the blood we share with life on earth.* The Red Rebels never speak, but silently act out ever-changing tableaux depicting the grief we earthlings share. On this occasion they were holding pretend-babies, swathed in white with red patches, as if they were bleeding. As they did this, members of Muslim communities came and offered more such ‘babies,’ or wrapped their keffiyeh around the ones already there.

Because the Red Rebels do not speak, questions were directed to me. I had small pamphlets to give out and answered questions on behalf of the silent Rebels. After I explained to one man why the Rebels wore red his eyes lit up and he said, ‘Oh yes, do you know Persia? There is a Persian poet who wrote about birds, the blackbird — You know the blackbird? — and the bird with colour here,’ as he indicated his chest, ‘*and a tail*’ he added, indicating with his hands the tail fanning out and up behind him, the peacock, concluding, ‘They look very different but they share the same red blood.’

‘Yes, yes! Exactly!’

‘All of us.’

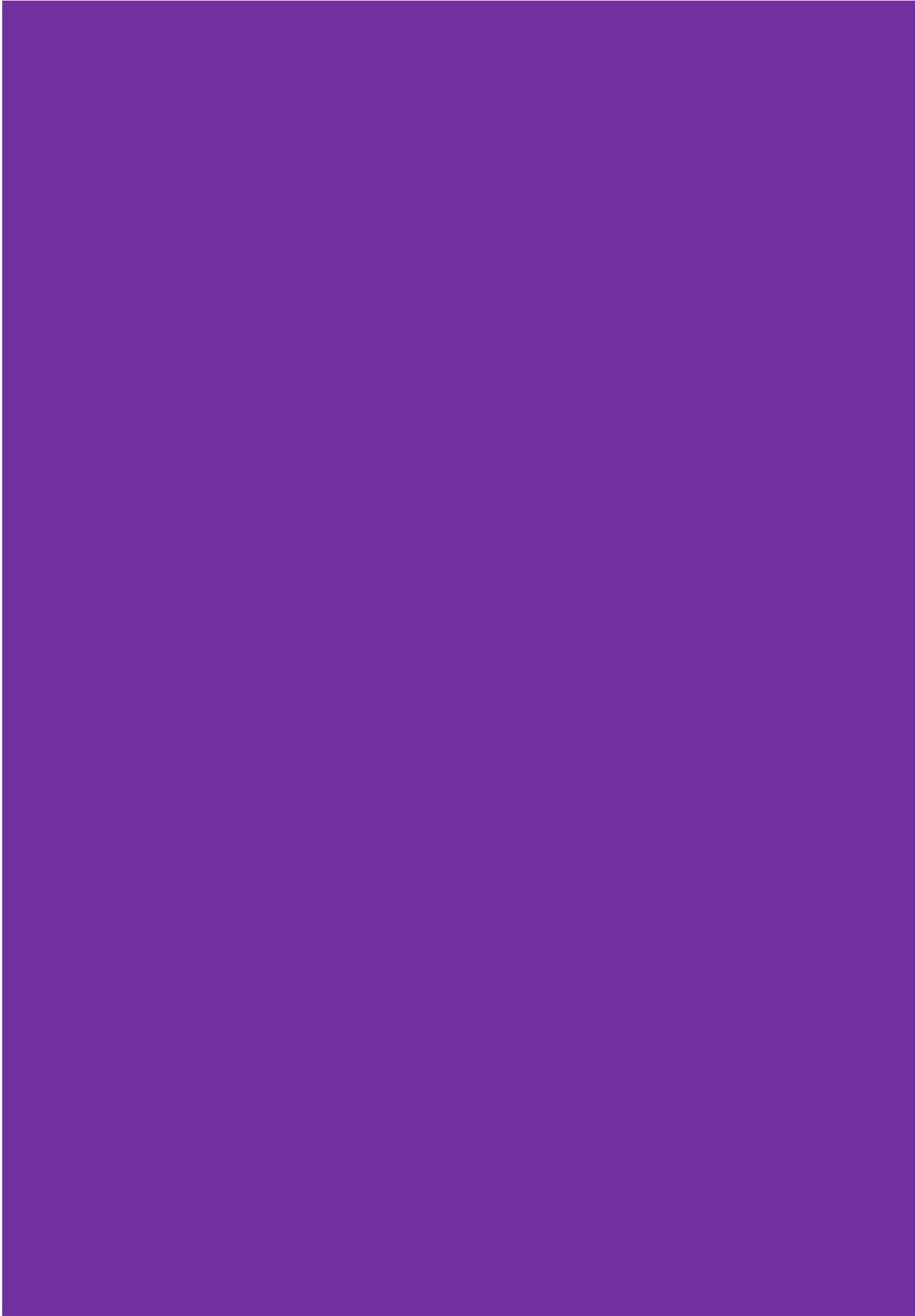
‘Yes, all of us,’ I agreed, smiling back at him as we shared that moment of deep accord.

Later investigation indicate he was surely referring to the famous Conference of the Birds by the 11th century Sufi mystic poet Farid ud Din Attar. Sufism, like Zen, emphasises personal experience and realization, albeit within a different tradition, Islam. I think that I, and the Muslim man I was speaking with, recognised at that moment the deep connection all of us red-blooded creatures share. Incidentally, my curiosity drove me to find out if it were only mammals and birds who shared red blood—Why didn’t I know this? I wondered—but no, it is all other vertebrates too, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes, everything with a backbone, except for the Antarctic icefish that has evolved to survive with a clear blood that does not freeze in the icy waters.

This was just one example of the overwhelming feeling shared by everyone I spoke to who had been on that walk on the Harbour Bridge, that all of us were in this together: old and

young, people of different faiths or with no religious affiliation. We found ourselves chatting to people we had never met in a spirit of the recognition that we were all red rebels —beings with backbones opposed to the Gaza genocide.





# Love Colour

Gretchen Rubin

This is a delightful list taken from a podcast about colour with Gretchen Rubin. Gretchen in her podcast a *Little Happier* says that “colour is a ubiquitous and conspicuous aspect of our world, but it’s shift. We see the world, the solar system and universe as colourful, our eyes rest or rebel in the colours all about, interior designers can argue for hours over a shade of grey, paint manufacturers are forever producing different renderings of their colour charts, artists use colour but can’t necessarily describe it; philosophy argues it out of existence; science is unsatisfying and popular culture overplays its contrived importance. Colour is a wonderful mystery.” *Editor.*

She loves colour and koans, so wrote her own list of colour koans:

“What colour is the chick inside the egg?

If you walk outside on a moonlit night, is the grass green?

What’s more blue: a canvas that’s entirely blue, or a canvas that’s mostly blue, with a bit of yellow?

Is a preference for deep colours more admirable than a preference for pastels?

Do fluorescent colours have the same status as non-fluorescent colours?

What colour is almost-black: brown, purple, or grey?

We get the colour pink from adding the colour white to the colour red, so pink is light red.

Why, then, is it possible to point to a dark pink that’s darker than a light red?

What colour is the opposite of red? (You probably said green. Only after Newton did red and green become opposite. In antiquity, the opposite of red was white; from the central Middle Ages, the opposite of red was blue.)

This is a true story: I told a store clerk that I wanted to buy a blue chair, and he told me, ‘You should consider buying this chair. True, everyone thinks it’s grey, but it’s actually blue—just look on the tag.’ Is the chair grey or blue?

I hand you a ball with a green core and a thin red surface. Is it a green ball or a red ball? Now I cut the ball in half. Is it a green ball or a red ball? Trick question! It’s not a ball anymore.”

And here’s her colour twist on a famous Zen koan:

“Three monks were arguing about a flag. One said, ‘The flag’s colour is in the fabric.’ The other said, ‘The flag’s colour is in the light.’ The other said, ‘The flag’s colour is in the eye.’ The Sixth Patriarch happened to pass by. He said, ‘Not the fabric, not the light, not the eye, mind is colour.’”

These extracts were published on her website: <https://gretchenrubin.com/happier>

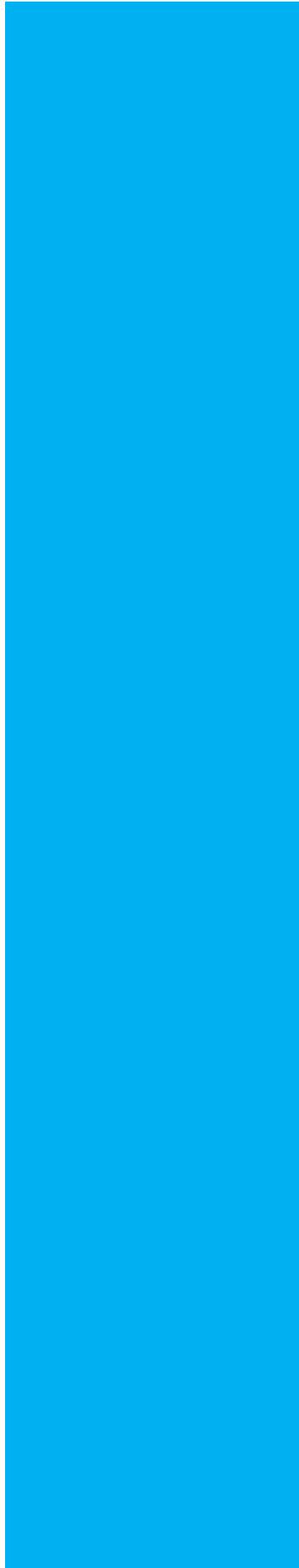
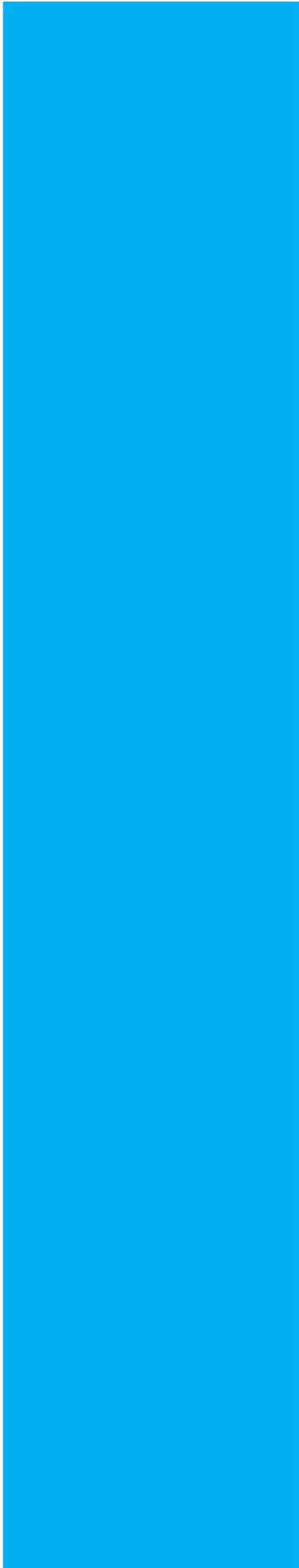
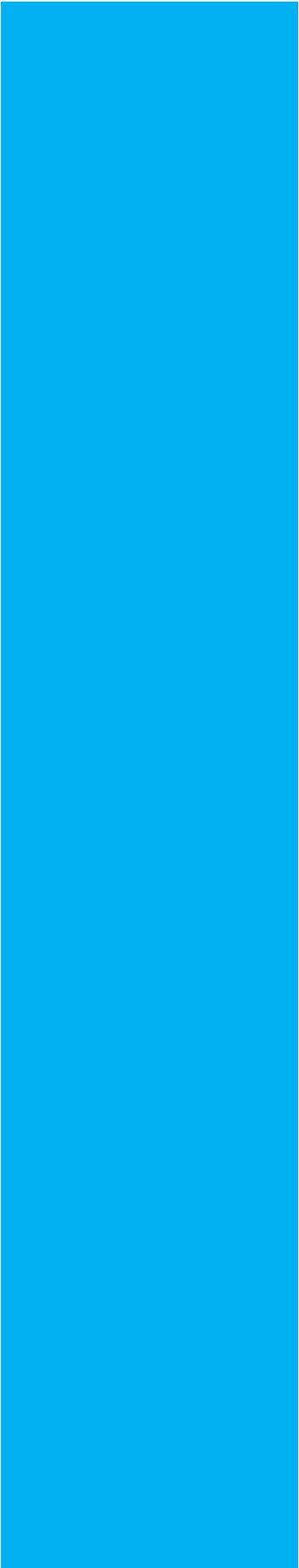
## Colour My Palette—Zen Colours of the Ocean

Caroline Josephs

*Musk pink* rocks  
painted seaweed.  
*Yellow green* slow  
furlings  
tidal wash,  
*Grey* furrowed  
surface of sea pool  
Pale sunlit networks  
Below *sand-tinted*  
floor  
undulating ridges  
lichen  
spattered  
*Blue-green*  
transparency  
underwater  
Pipe fish, *silver*  
darting dashes  
Catch light, twist,  
turning  
'Comma' fish  
hundreds  
spark tiny  
sunlit patterns  
'school' mates.  
*Black* fish hover  
above pool floor  
unmoving,  
or hidden in  
crannies...

octopus dances on  
tentacles  
*changing hue*,  
blending  
camouflages--  
finds nook home  
  
Crustaceans textured  
glimpsed --  
curling spikey  
sea urchins,  
chitons ancient  
*striped* molluscs,  
*blue* barnacles grip  
pool edge,  
nodilitterinas grasp  
a liminal ocean  
splash,  
crab scuttles.  
*white* foam sprays  
over  
barrier,  
bounces,  
shoots foam  
skywards.  
*white* clouds  
flurry horizon,  
*green* moss crusts  
rocky shelf.

Horizon curves dark  
*phthalo blue*  
against distant cliffs  
dotted houses  
shadowed  
southside,  
sunlit westwards  
  
Fellow pool lovers  
move around,  
descend steps  
don goggles,  
yank trunks,  
check earplugs,  
fitbits,  
dive in  
swim laps  
some glide  
through water  
others churn  
  
In the distance  
wedding cake Island  
supine cake -  
rock slender  
lapped by *white*  
waves slapping,  
foam icing for ever  
melting....



# What colour is our Sangha?

Brendon Stewart

Now that the Sydney Zen Centre is near on 50 years old we may have more of a sense of ourselves; can we now consider some conclusions about our Sangha?

Well, we have to admit our Sangha is overwhelmingly white, and middle class. This raises several important questions: Should this matter to us, or is it just the way things turned out and we have nothing to apologize for? After all, a good number of people come and have come into our Sangha whose ethnic heritage is not white European.

However, if this is a matter for us, can we do anything about it without compromising what's essential to our practice? And if we can do something to address our lack of diversity while maintaining what's so valuable to our existing communities, what is it we can do?

An assumption that came with Zen practice here in Sydney (and across the West) was the sense that Zen isn't for everybody, so the fact that we're almost entirely white is just the way it is. We like silent meditation, intellectual study, and talking about our feelings and experiences in calm and measured tones.

For the most part, the quiet meditative environment we sought and have created together is incompatible with the rowdy possibility of a multicultural get together. A Sangha led by people from a variety of different ethnicities might do things differently than we do now.

We like to meet at the Zen centre, but for the most part the rest of our lives are busy, separate, and private. Some of us are attracted to an austere and strict version of Zen practice. Many of us have retained a pleasure in Japanese imagery and aesthetics. This is just what Zen is, at least the way we've created it, and we like it. We don't expect everyone to like it. If we changed things to make Zen more widely accessible or popular, would it be less meaningful and supportive for us?

We make it clear to ourselves that Zen practice is about letting go of all the various aspects of self-identity, including race, gender, and difficult personal experiences like trauma, injustice, physical or mental illness, poverty, etc. Is this the pure "essence" of Buddhism? Well, maybe, but we are complicated and imperfect people who actually practice and teach our Zen in a world bogged down in the particularities of race, gender, socio-economic background, politics, and injustice.

In reality our Zen here in Sydney must always be influenced by culture and has to respond to culture in order to stay vital.

This piece references the Zen Studies podcast: 'Western Zen Grows Up' by Domyo (2018)  
<https://zenstudiespodcast.com/western-zen-grows-up>



## Winter Mist

Pastel by Glenys Jackson

## O Colour of the World

compiled by Jill Ball

'The lovely things that I have watched unthinking,  
Unknowing, day by day,  
That their soft dyes have steep my soul in colour  
That will not pass away.

And emeralds, and sunset-hearted opals,  
And Asian marble, veined  
With scarlet flame, and cool green jade, and moonstones  
Misty and azure stained.

There is no night so black, but you shine through it,  
There is no morn so drear,  
O Colour of the World, but I can find you,  
Most tender, pure and clear.'

*Extract from 'Colour' by Dorothea Mackellar (1909)*





*"Radiant Compassion Bodhisattva"* by Subhana Barzaghi. The black background is the traditional colour of Zen. Kuan Yin is painted in white and blue - her traditional colours.



Mind Moon Circle, Journal  
of the Sydney Zen Centre  
251 Young Street  
Annandale NSW 2038  
Australia

PRINT POST  
225 293 0002

POSTAGE PAID  
AUSTRALIA

