

# oxherding

exhibition prospectus

**GUNDGALLERY**  
Kenyon College

## exhibition description

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Celebrated New York painter Max Gimblett partners with award-winning author Lewis Hyde for *oxherding*, a fresh, American take on the Ten Oxherding Pictures, a venerated Buddhist parable from 12th-century China. Originally exhibited at Japan Society in New York in the fall of 2010, and at Kenyon College's Graham Gund Gallery in the fall of 2011, *oxherding* is now available for exhibition in additional venues starting in January of 2013.

*Oxherding* is a series of ten sumi-ink paintings by Gimblett, each one matched to a set of letterpress-printed poems in Chinese with three multi-layered English translations by Hyde. It is accompanied by a set of jointly produced artist books. The ten picture/poem vignettes tell the story of an elusive ox and a herder whose quest to find and tame the animal becomes a metaphor for the struggle toward Buddhist enlightenment.





*Oxherding* is based on the Song-Dynasty Chinese “Oxherding Series,” a Zen Buddhist parable of self-discovery comprised of pictures and verse. The original Ten Oxherding Pictures series was used by Zen masters to guide disciples through successive stages of spiritual training. *Oxherding* departs from this traditional approach.

Gimblett’s ink drawings are abstract “demonstrations” of the text, not realistic illustrations, manifesting his personal vision and spiritual connection to the themes of the series. Hyde’s multiple English translations

of the Chinese poems suggest a range of possible readings, with varying nuances of meaning and tone. The two artists’ joint approach frames the poems as texts open to interpretation and invites a larger discussion of the ways we make meaning and receive spiritual instruction.

Although well-received by a wide array of audiences, this interdisciplinary exhibition is particularly appropriate for college campuses as it not only speaks to creative artists and writers but touches also on questions of teaching, translation, spiritual practice, and religious history.

# the images

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Searching for the Ox



Seeing the Traces



A Glimpse of the Ox



Catching the Ox



Taming the Ox



Riding Home



Ox Forgotten



Self and Ox Forgotten



Going Back to the Beginning



Entering the Marketplace

## sample text & translation

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### POEM I.

茫茫撥草去追尋  
水闊山遙路更深  
力盡神疲無處覓  
但聞楓樹晚蟬吟

#### SEARCH OX

Without	bounds stirring	grasses leaving,	tracking	down
Waters	broad mountains	distant road	more	obscure
Strength	exhausted spirit	weary no	place	to-hunt
But	hearing sweetgum	trees evening	cicada	song

#### SEARCHING FOR THE OX

Searching, pushing through endless underbrush.  
Wide waters, distant mountains, darkening path.  
Strength exhausted, spirit weary, no hint of where to hunt.  
Just hear the evening cicada sing in the sweetgum grove.

#### SEARCHING FOR THE OX

Alone in the deep woods, despairing in the jungle,  
searching in darkness!  
Flood-swollen rivers, mountains beyond mountains,  
the trail endless and unchanging.  
Bone-tired, heart-weary, the whole thing seems hopeless.  
No sound but the evening cicadas singing in a grove of  
maple trees.

### PREFACE I.

從來不失何用追尋  
由背覺以成疎  
在向塵而遂失  
家山漸遠  
歧路俄差  
得失熾然  
是非鋒起

#### SEARCH OX

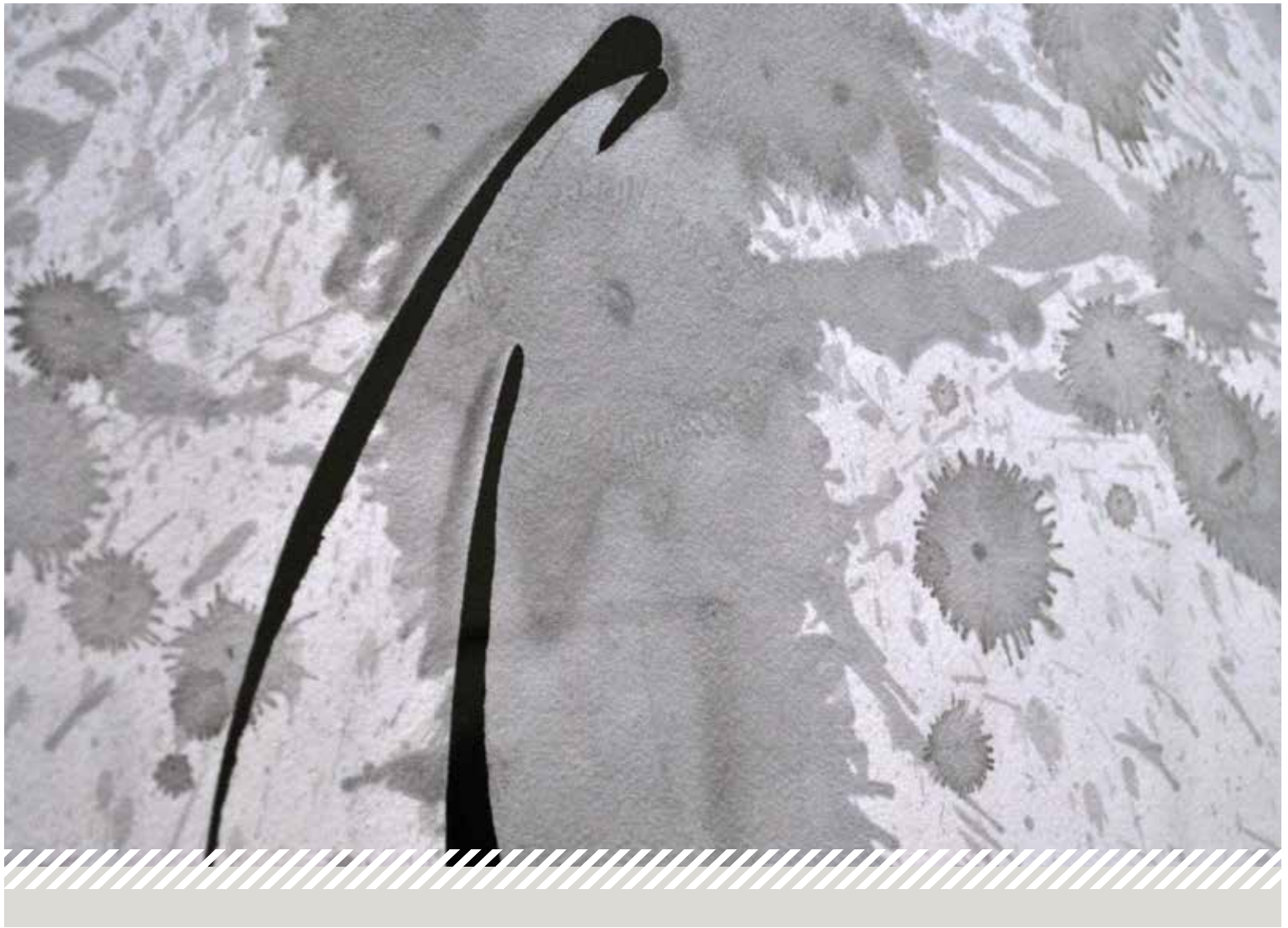
From what	start use	not search	lost for
Because so	abandoned become	awakening scarce	
Living and	near therefore	dust loss	
Home	mountain	gradually	distant
Branched	roads	suddenly	strange
Gain	loss	blazing	up
Right	wrong	blade	rising

#### SEARCHING FOR THE OX

From the beginning nothing was lost; there is no need  
to search.  
Turning away from awareness, that's how neglect arises.  
Move toward dust: loss will follow.  
The family mountain grows more distant,  
the forking roads are useless now.  
"Gain" and "Loss" catch fire;  
"Right" and "Wrong" sharpen swords.

#### SEARCHING FOR THE OX

The Ox is never really lost, so why hunt for it? No oxherd can see  
what he has turned his back on. Six kinds of hunger have led him  
this way and that. What was home a moment ago is now a con-  
fusion of crossroads and dirt paths. Desire for gain and fear of  
loss circle like tongues of fire. An obsession with right and wrong  
marks everything, like a blade sharpened on both edges.



## Public Programs

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The exhibition may be enhanced by a series of related lectures and workshops. Both Hyde and Gimblett are available to make presentations related to the show. Past presentation venues have also invited local scholars and practitioners to respond to the work. In New York, Hyde conversed with psychiatrist and author Mark Epstein on the interface of Buddhism and psychotherapy, Buddhist practice, and the art of translation. At the Gund Gallery, Kenyon College Professor of Religious Studies Joseph Adler offered a lecture entitled “Chan/Zen, the Oxherding Pictures, and the World-Affirming Turn in Chinese Buddhism.” Similar programs capitalizing on regional and

institutional scholars, other artists, and public intellectuals can be developed by hosting venues in consultation with exhibition artists.

“This project has involved a six-year collaboration with friend Max Gimblett. The exhibition and accompanying programs offer many insights - into traditional Japanese sumi ink painting, into the puzzles of translating from Chinese into English, and into Buddhist spiritual practice as it is reflected in this modern version of an ancient parable.”

--Lewis Hyde

## MAX GIMBLETT

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Max Gimblett, a masterful painter, draftsman and Rinzai lay monk has a long and distinguished career as a sumi ink painter and regularly collaborates and exhibits calligraphy with his teacher, Zenen Dairyu, Great Dragon. Gimblett has participated in over 100 solo exhibitions, and his work was featured in the recent exhibit *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. A major monograph, *Max Gimblett*, was released in 2003, and the catalogue *The Brush of All*

*Things* was published in 2004. Gimblett's works are in the collections of Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art & the Humanities, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; and Auckland Art Gallery – Toi O Tamaki, Auckland. More at [www.maxgimblett.com](http://www.maxgimblett.com).

## LEWIS HYDE

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Lewis Hyde is a poet, essayist, translator, and cultural critic. His 1983 book, *The Gift*, illuminates and defends the non-commercial portion of artistic practice. *Trickster Makes This World* (1998) uses a group of ancient myths to argue for the kind of disruptive intelligence all cultures need if they are to remain lively, flexible, and open to change. Hyde recently published *Common as Air*, a stirring defense of our cultural commons, that vast store of art and ideas we have inherited from

the past and continue to enrich in the present. A MacArthur Fellow and former director of undergraduate creative writing at Harvard University, Hyde teaches during the fall semesters at Kenyon College, where he is the Richard L. Thomas Professor of Creative Writing. During the rest of the year he lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he is a Fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society. More at [www.lewishyde.com](http://www.lewishyde.com).





**Curator:** Originally curated by Suzanne de Vegh of Japan Society, New York. Ongoing curation by the artists.

**Organized by:** Originally organized by Japan Society, New York. Ongoing organization by the artists, and toured by the Gund Gallery at Kenyon College.

**Number of Works:** 10 paintings, each accompanied by two text panels = 33 items.

The framed paintings measure 33 1/8" wide x 25 1/8" high x 2". The text panels are approximately 25" high x 8" wide x 1/4" (and the paired panels are thus 16"+ inches wide).

There is, in addition, a set of 12 artist's books created by Gimblett and Hyde over the years spent in the creation of oxherding. A selection of 4 books typically accompanies the exhibition. The books' sizes vary but most measure 12" high by 15" wide (and 1" thick); displayed open they measure 30" wide. Casework required.

**Approximate size:** Variable: Between 50-75 running feet.  
Approximately 500 square feet.

**Security:** Moderate

**Fee:** \$2,000

**Shipping:** Venues pay outgoing shipping only.

**Booking Time:** January, 2013-December 2016, 4-6 weeks

**Original Venues:**

Japan Society, New York, October 1, 2010-January 16, 2011 &

Gund Gallery at Kenyon College, October 26, 2011-March 4, 2012

Contact:

Julie Leone, Collections Manager & Registrar,  
Gund Gallery at Kenyon College,  
740-427-5971, leonej@kenyon.edu

Tour:

Available for flexible timeframes starting  
January 2013





## Possible Public Programs

The artists offer lectures on the work, dialogue about their process over the years, gallery talks, and college class visits. Hyde offers writing workshops focusing on the ways in which translation can be used as a point of entry into all creative writing. Gimblett offers sumi ink workshops (details available on his website: <http://www.maxgimblett.com/index.php?/info/sumi-ink-workshops/>).

## Public Program Fees

The charge for Gimblett's sumi ink workshop is \$500 honorarium, plus travel and accommodations. Workshop costs are approximately \$65 per person for materials. Exhibiting venue may offset materials costs for participants. Gimblett does not charge for class visits, lectures or discussions--just travel and accommodations. For all public events, Hyde is represented by the Jodi Solomon Speakers Agency of Boston, with his fee to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

## Online Resources

Listen to Lewis Hyde read one version of his translations of the poems, and to Hyde and Gimblett discuss their collaboration. On the Japan Society website, here: [http://www.japansociety.org/event\\_detail?eid=9092817](http://www.japansociety.org/event_detail?eid=9092817)

Max Gimblett's paintings, on the artist's website:

<http://www.maxgimblett.com/index.php?/projects/oxherding-with-lewis-hyde/>

Episode #2 of Japan Society's video series, Nihon New York, offers a seven-minute YouTube video of Gimblett at work in his New York studio discussing his process and the oxherding work:

<http://www.japansociety.org/webcast/nihon-new-york-episode-02-zen-in-america-painting-with-nycs-max-gimblett>



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