

FILM SCREENING

“The Calling” and “Pure Land, Amsterdam” by Wen-jie Qin

Friday, September 19, 7 p.m.

Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University

DIRECTIONS: <http://cds.aas.duke.edu/about/here.html>

In conjunction with the Triangle East Asia Colloquium's Seminar on Contemporary Buddhist Practice, September 19–20, Department of Religion, Duke University

Wen-jie Qin, a documentary filmmaker and scholar of religion, was born in China and grew up under the rule of Mao Zedong. She studied philosophy at Beijing University. After the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989, she went to the U.S. to pursue graduate studies in religion. She received a Fulbright-Hays dissertation fellowship and completed a Ph.D. in Chinese religions and filmmaking at Harvard University in 2000. While a Fellow at the Harvard Film Study Center, Qin made a number of award-winning documentaries on issues concerning religion, gender, children, and economic reform in post-Mao China. In recent years she has made documentaries on Chinese Buddhism in the Netherlands for the Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation and on immigration for VPRO Television, all aired on Dutch national channels. Currently, Qin is writing a book on prehistoric spirituality in Stone Age Ireland as well as developing a documentary on the impact of the Sichuan earthquake on the Chinese soul.

On September 19 Qin will screen two of her recent films, “The Calling” and “Pure Land, Amsterdam,” at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. She describes the films below.

The Calling (30 minutes): An inner conflict between spiritual calling and family responsibility has been afflicting Siu, a Chinese woman living in Haarlem, Netherlands, for the past two decades. Siu has a loving Dutch husband, two wonderful children, and a beautiful house, and she plays a key role in the Chinese Buddhist community in Amsterdam. Yet, Siu dreams of going to a monastery to find her true home. In an intimate style, this film delineates the inner journey of a woman who listens to and eventually answers the calling from deep inside. Combining documentary footage and dramatic reenactment scenes, the film portrays a classic dilemma experienced by many practitioners on the Buddhist path. Between the way of family and the way of monastery, where is the Middle Way taught by the Buddha? The way to the Middle Way, as the story of Siu shows, is a way of the heart.

Pure Land, Amsterdam (30 minutes): Surrounded by bustling restaurants, coffee shops, and red-light windows, two young Chinese nuns quietly go about their daily routines inside the He Hua (Lotus) Temple on Amsterdam's infamous Zeedijk street. An enormous temple run by two small women is changing the dynamics of life on the Zeedijk. Trained in the Fo Guang Buddhist order in Taiwan, which advocates socially engaged Buddhism, Venerable Man Jung and Venerable Chueh Hai offer a range of services to both the Chinese and the Dutch: meditation and study programs, family visits, funeral services, and dance lessons. Socially engaged or alone, the nuns seize every moment to cultivate a power to transform the inner and outer world. The two nuns joined hands with the Buddhist Union of the Netherlands to create for the first time a pan-Buddhist celebration of the Buddha's birthday in Amsterdam. The collective effort of Chinese and Dutch, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, resulted in a large festival in May 2005. A Chinese Buddhist ideal was manifested.