



*Buddha Monk*

2018-19

Oil on canvas

Dimensions unknown ("mid-sized")

Source: <https://www.artnews.com/gallery/art-news/photos/susan-rothenberg-famous-works-slideshow-1202687917/sw-19346-buddha-monk/>

This painting was part of a New York gallery show in January 2020, and Rothenberg died 4 months later.

I've seen this bright yellow colour in other of her paintings but usually just in small dashes and highlights, rather than the main event of the background. However, the energetic and layered marks of the background are familiar from her other paintings.

One reviewer of the show (Sharon Butler) believed the source material for this painting to be a statue. She commented on the off-balance energy of the image, particularly given that the Buddha is most often presented as the epitome of stillness and calm abiding. (source: <https://twocoatsofpaint.com/2020/01/susan-rothenberg-hope-and-discontent.html>). By contrast, this figure feels nervous, agitated, and energetically in motion, just as many of Rothenberg's animal and human representations. The figure is less volumetric and shaded, though, more of a line drawing. Its position is off-centre to the left and down, so much so that it extends out of the picture frame at the bottom. The Buddha / monkey seems to have at least 6 limbs, perhaps reflecting arms in motion – some Buddhist monks use repetitive ritual arm movements, or mudras.

Or perhaps we are simply seeing the infusion of Rothenberg's own restless spirit and physicality into her painted figure – consistent with her lifelong quest.