

## PROJECT TWO: IN SUMMARY

**Title:** Always Letting Go

**Media:** Wax Medium, Turmeric, Sumi ink, Rice paper, Black cord

**Dimensions:** 10" x 10" rice paper x 23; Suspended from 30 feet of cord.

The Challenge project began with the intent to illustrate a conversation between resistance and letting go, with two key elements being the use of a "resist" material in the drawing process, and repeated images of hands in gestures of grasping/resisting and of release/letting go. My goal is to illustrate a universal human experience. The references to Buddhist symbolism described below served to deepen my own process and experience rather than being essential for the viewer to understand the message.

The project changed directions several times in response to material research and testing, and research into Buddhist art. I chose rice paper and sumi ink for their deep history in Chinese and Japanese art and calligraphy. I drew on the paper using wax medium, using my fingertip and a palette knife to lay down the wax in the shape of the hand, then sponged an ink/water mixture over the whole surface, blotting up the excess. I chose wax medium as my resist because of its quality of stickiness (linking this to the idea of resistance) and because it performed spectacularly well to resist ink uptake when drawn on rice paper. I chose to dye some of the wax yellow using turmeric powder which is one of the traditional dyes for the robes of Buddhist monks. The colours are significant in Buddhist art: yellow (also orange and gold) represents enlightenment, black signifies ignorance, white indicates the end of ignorance.

What to draw? I chose a fist or closed hand to represent grasping/resistance. I wanted an open hand, palm visible, to represent letting go, and selected the Varada Mudra hand position, one of the recurring positions used in statues and drawings of the Buddha. It represents compassion and generosity. I decided to make as many multiples of the drawing as my time allowed, to illustrate my experience of grasping, noticing the grasping so letting it go, then noticing a while later a new grasping only to let it go again. And again. The gestures would alternate in the final piece and each would be unique in the proportions of yellow/white/black and the shadings chosen. Finally, I decided to arrange them suspended along a line, in the way that Buddhist prayer flags are usually presented.