

The Jade Buddha Project





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"It will illuminate the world..."

Lama Zopa Rinpoche



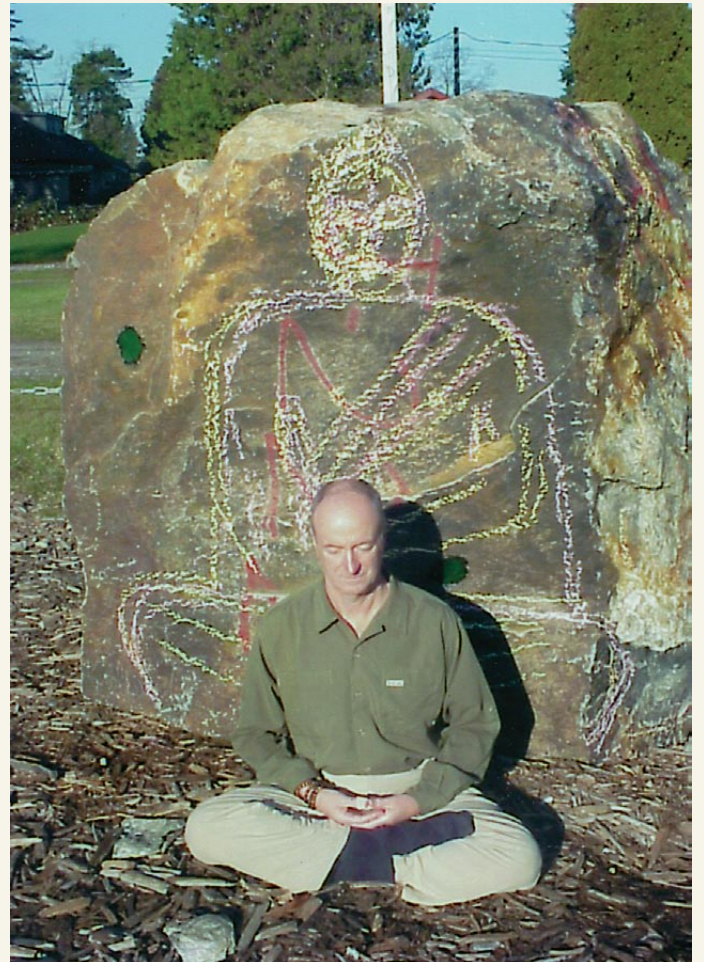
Buddha at the Mahabodhi Stupa

The Jade Buddha Project is one of the largest and most magnificent Buddhas ever carved from gemstone-quality true jade. The Buddha, including lotus and throne will be nearly 3.5 metres (11.4 feet) tall. The Jade Buddha will be carved from one great boulder known as "Polar Pride". It will be a wonder of the world.

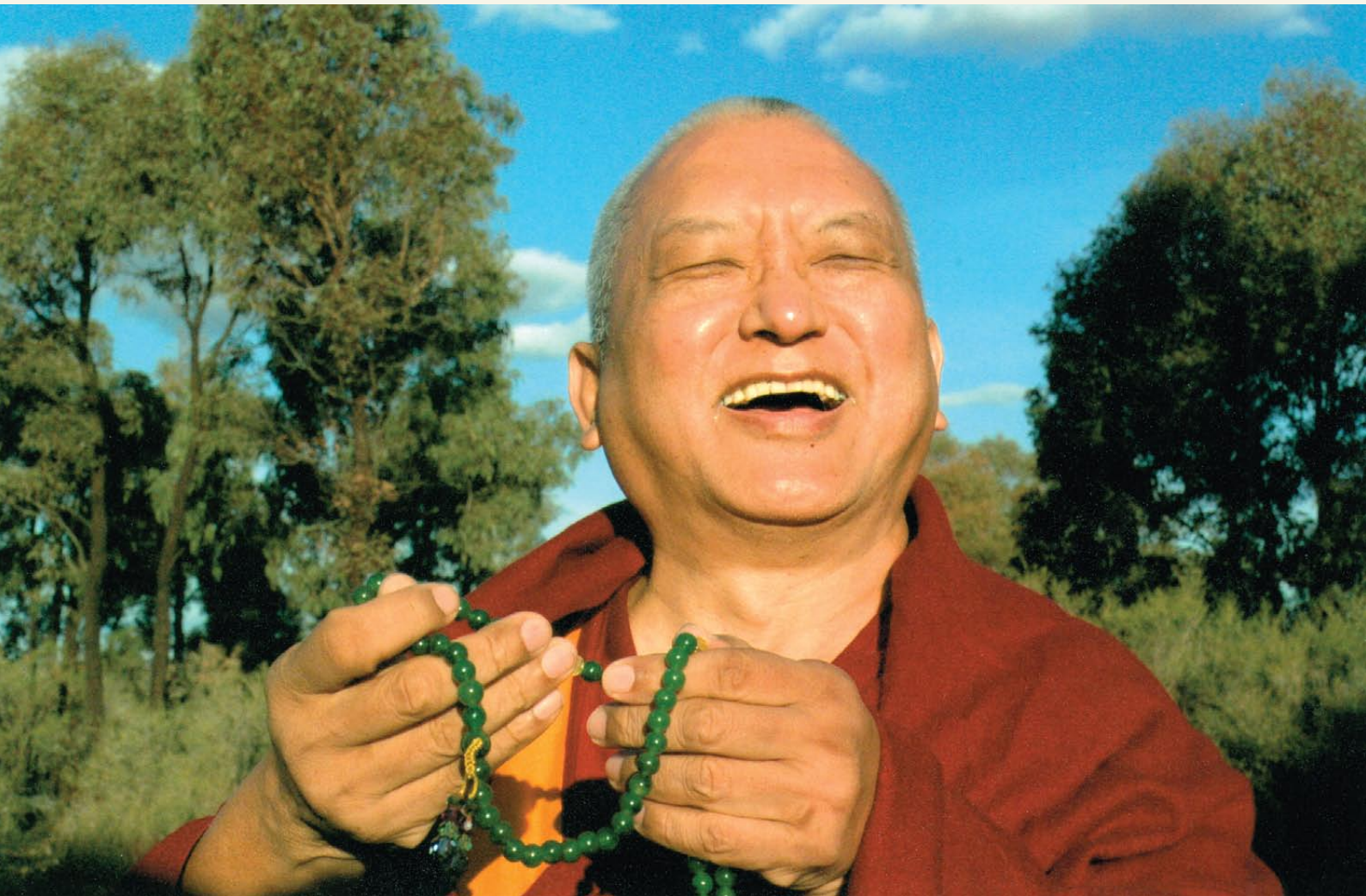
Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said of the Jade Buddha *"It will illuminate the world and bring inconceivable peace and happiness and help prevent the destruction that is happening so much in the world, including war."*

The Buddha inside the Mahabodhi Stupa at Bodh Gaya (India) is the model for the Jade Buddha. This magnificent Buddha in the earth-touching mudra (pictured left) was chosen by Lama Zopa Rinpoche because it is universally recognised by all Buddhists.

The Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee gave special permission for a detailed photographic study of the statue to be taken as reference for the carvers.



The larger "half" of Polar Pride showing a rough outline of the Buddha.



Lama Zopa Rinpoche with a Polar Jade mala.



Nephrite Jade – The Stone of Heaven



The power of jade has influenced civilisations in Asia, South America and the Pacific since the beginning of history. The hardness and toughness of jade was first exploited for tools over 5,000 years ago. But beyond this practicality jade conjures the magic of ancient myth. Wherever jade occurred the people found value in it: as a tool, a healing stone and as a connection to the gods.

In China, Nephrite or “true” Jade was known as the stone of heaven. Here ancient myths told of jade being plucked from the rainbow and cast down to the earth. With such importance attached to it, the Chinese have traditionally valued jade above other worldly possessions.

Nephrite, China’s historic jade, is a silicate of calcium and magnesium, which ranges from pure white to green in colour. Under a microscope it is made up of interlocking fibres.

Ritual axe-head made from white Nephrite dating from 475-221 BC, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Jade from the Arctic Regions of Canada



Deep in the heart of the Canadian North, under the shadow of the rugged British Columbian mountains lie beds of nephrite jade. Here amongst the green grass and wild flowers the jade sits in its majesty. First discovered in the 1960s and 70s these jade deposits have since been found to be the largest in the world.



While the jade deposits of British Columbia are without parallel in the world, jade mining in British Columbia is a difficult and expensive process. The earth is free of snow only three months of the year and the workers must make use of every hour of every day. Being in a remote area, supplies must be flown in. And removing the jade requires a great deal of care during the long journey through rugged terrain.

One positive factor is the mines' latitude, 59 degrees North, which allows the miners to work in 14 hours of daylight.

Jade mining in British Columbia entails difficult work in the roughest of terrain.

The highest quality Nephrite in the world



In the late 1990s something very unexpected happened. Just south of the Yukon border a remarkable new find was discovered. It contained stone so green, so clear, so vibrant, it was unlike any other jade ever found. Inspired by its surroundings it became known as “Polar Jade”. Under scientific investigation it was found to be harder than any other variety of Nephrite. The stone shines to a brilliant polish and has been set as a gem in precious jewellery. It has been recognised by the spiritual community as holding great power. As a carving material it is elevated into the world of fine art. Indeed the arrival of Polar Jade has changed the way the world looks at Nephrite.



Polar Pride - the find of the millennium

In the year 2000 a most amazing discovery was made. It was the largest boulder ever found of flawless, gem-quality Polar Jade. This 18 tonne boulder was named “Polar Pride”. In the world of jade, it has been described by internationally known Gem Author, Fred Ward, as “the find of the millennium”.

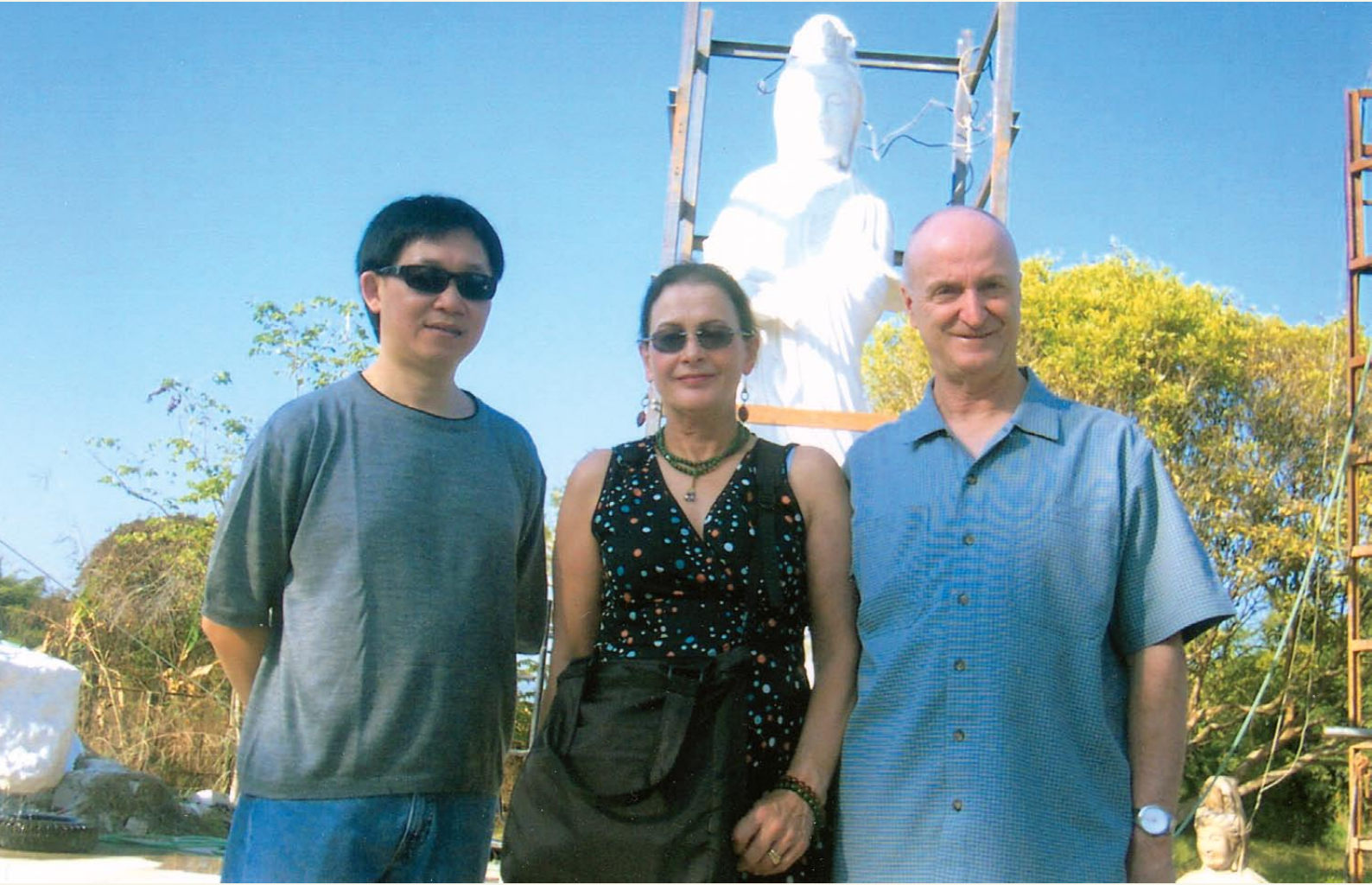
Shortly after “Polar Pride” was discovered, the manager of the mining company, Kirk Makepeace, was asked what he was going to do with the boulder “I’m going to let the world decide,” he said “I named this one *Polar Pride* and I’m not going to cut it any further. Instead I’ll auction it this way, as a wonder of nature. It’s an icon I expect to see as a museum piece, a monument, a symbol; the world’s best green nephrite boulder ever.”



Kirk Makepeace and Ian Green with the two “halves” of Polar Pride.



Highly Regarded Jade Carvers



Factory Manager, Vanit Yotharvut (left) with Judy and Ian Green. Behind is an 8 metre high Kwan Yin carved from alabaster. Note prototype of Kwan Yin near Ian's watch.

The carving of the Jade Buddha is being undertaken by Thailand's oldest and most highly regarded jade factory, Jade Thongtavee Co. Ltd. Jade Thongtavee is located near Chiangrai in northern Thailand.

Jade Thongtavee was founded by Mr. Boonthong Yotharvut. After several years cutting jade in Thailand Mr Yotharvut travelled to China where he intensively studied jade sculpture for over a year. After returning to Thailand he established Jade Thongtavee Co. Ltd. in 1973. Jade Thongtavee now has over 30 expert jade sculptors. Their work is renowned for its unique and delicate craftsmanship that is highly sought after by collectors and Buddhist temples. The carving of the Great Jade Buddha will be overseen by the son of the founder and current factory manager, Mr Vanit Yotharvut.

This factory creates both small and full-size prototypes. Before proceeding with the jade carving. The prototypes of the Jade Buddha will be personally reviewed and approved by the Spiritual Director of the project, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.



Cutting nephrite jade at Jade Thongtavee.

Famous Jade Buddhas of the world



There are several large jade Buddhas at Buddhist pilgrimage places around the world. Famous jade Buddhas exist at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Myanmar, the “Emerald” Buddha in Bangkok and at the Jade Buddha temple in Shanghai. The Jade Buddha carved from Polar Pride will be every bit as significant as these famous Buddhas.

The Jade Buddha will be toured to major cities in Asia and Australia before being set up in a Dragon Shrine next to The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion in Bendigo, Australia.



Jade Buddha Temple. Shanghai, China.



Shwedagon Pagoda. Yangon, Myanmar.



The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion



The Great Stupa (Kumbum) of Gyantse, Tibet.

The Jade Buddha will be housed in a magnificent Dragon Shrine at the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion currently being built in Bendigo, Australia. The Great Stupa is based on the famous Gyantse Kumbum that was built in Tibet in the 15th century. Being 50 metres (164 feet) square at its' base and rising to a height of nearly 50 metres the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion will be the largest Stupa outside Asia.

The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion will be a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists of all traditions as well as a place of worship for our fast growing Australian Buddhist community. Located next to the Stupa is a meditation centre and monastery for monks engaging in study and retreat.

The Great Stupa has a vast collection of sacred Buddhist relics including those of Shakyamuni Buddha, Kasyapa Buddha and the 16 Arhants. These relics have been offered from many Buddhist traditions including Chinese, Tibetan, Thai, Burmese and Mongolian. These sacred relics can be viewed each weekend and public holiday at the Great Stupa Exhibition Centre.



The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion The Great Jade Buddha Project
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Secure donations on line at: www.jadebuddha.org.au and www.stupa.org.au