



The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation presents:  
**The Many Faces of Buddhism**  
Visual Arts • Artist Talks • Dance • Film and more



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# London to host International Buddhist Film Festival 2009

A new world perspective on  
Buddhist ideas and inspiration

Presented at the Barbican: May 7<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>



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The **International Buddhist Film Festival** is coming to London to offer the United Kingdom a fresh perspective on world cinema with a Buddhist touch.

It will celebrate Buddhist ideas and inspiration represented in all film, from Eastern documentaries to Hollywood blockbusters; showing more than 40 films from 18 countries including 27 UK premieres.

The **International Buddhist Film Festival** takes place at the Barbican from Thursday May 7 to 17<sup>th</sup>, the first time it has visited the UK. The IBFF showcases cinema which inspires a fresh perspective on Buddhism from around the globe – including films incorporating broader Buddhist themes and ideas as well as movies made by Buddhists. The festival is bringing **27 UK premieres** to London as well as an incredible selection of features, documentaries and shorts. Special strands include **Profiles** and **Mind the Gap**, and the festival looks forward to welcoming special guest speakers and filmmakers – including some well-known names.

**IBFF 2009 LONDON** is presented as part of **The Many Faces of Buddhism** – a city-wide celebration of Buddhist ideas and values through the arts. It is sponsored by The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation whose new Gallery of Asian Buddhist Sculptures at the V&A opens on 29 April. A series of arts events including an International forum on *Buddhism and the Arts Today* and *A Day of Rare Buddhist Dances* will be held at the V&A in celebration of the Gallery inauguration while **IBFF 2009 LONDON** will take place at East London's cultural hub The Barbican.

Highlights of **IBFF 2009 LONDON** include the UK premiere of the film *The Devotion of Matthieu Ricard*, attended by Matthieu Ricard himself, the author of the bestseller *Happiness* and subject of the film.

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Tibetan lama/film director **Neten Chokling Rinpoche** will be attending **IBFF 2009 LONDON** for the UK premiere of his *Milarepa* film. Other screenings include a UK premiere of *Un Buda*, from Argentine director Diego Rafecas and *A Guest of Life*, from Hungary. Rare screenings will include *Uppalavanna*, from Sri Lanka, *Hometown of the Heart* and *Beyond the Mountain*, both from Korea, and *The Anniversary*, from Vietnam.

**Gaetano Kazuo Maida**, executive director of **IBFF** said: "This is world cinema with a Buddhist touch. We reached out to filmmakers and archives on three continents to bring over a wide range of works that reflect the incredible diversity of expression and impact of Buddhist ideas today. In a year of deep economic crisis and gloom around the world, this festival is exactly what we need in 2009. It will encourage everyone to take a close look at the philosophies that drive them and their lifestyle choice – the perfect opportunity to question exactly what makes us happy."

He added: "The filmmakers aren't all Buddhists of course. They're artists exploring issues and ideas that are in alignment with any of the wisdom traditions that value compassion. These films can change the way people see the world – but the festival is about much more than the films, it is about inspiring further thought and debate."

Directors associated with **IBFF 2009 LONDON** include:

- Martin Scorsese,
- Werner Herzog
- Woody Allen
- Meredith Monk
- Bernardo Bertolucci
- Doris Dörrie

Actors with films at **IBFF 2009 LONDON** include:

- Ewan MacGregor
- Johnny Depp
- Bill Murray
- Jake Gyllenhaal
- John Cleese
- Forest Whitaker

Musical talent with work featured at **IBFF 2009 LONDON** include:

- Leonard Cohen
- Iggy Pop
- Neil Young
- Bono
- Philip Glass
- RZA

Forty-six films – covering dramatic features, comedies, documentaries and animated features - from 18 countries will be shown. Schedule and ticket purchases will be available on the Barbican website [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk) and at the Barbican box office on Silk Street in London.

**Robert Rider**, Head of Cinema, **Barbican Centre**, said: "Barbican Film is proud to be hosting the International Buddhist Film Festival and to be working in partnership with the Festival organisers. We look forward to welcoming audiences to the Barbican for this prestigious and timely Festival which may enable us all to look at our world in a different light."

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## Grand opening gala with *The Light of Asia*

A special opening night gala reception will launch the International Buddhist Film Festival, with a unique screening of *The Light of Asia* – the story of the Buddha - backed by an original Indian score from a talented group from Amsterdam and Mexico City.

*The Light of Asia* will get the festival off to a spectacular start. The rare 1925 German/Indian co-production is based on Sir Edwin Arnold's famous 19th century book. The first edition of the book was published in London in 1879 – giving the gala screening to open the **IBFF** at London's Barbican 130 years later a special resonance. Also known by its Indian name **Prem Sanyas**, the film tells the story of the historic Prince Siddhartha and his journey to becoming Buddha. There will be a live performance of an original musical score by a group from Amsterdam led by sitarist Sidartha Siliceo.

**Gaetano Kazuo Maida**, executive director of **IBFF** said: "The Light of Asia is a classic Buddhist story, one that is sure to excite those already familiar with it - and people being introduced to it for the first time. The Barbican is a magical setting for this title and the perfect place to combine the beauty of the film with an incredible musical accompaniment.

"There will be live performance of an original musical score from a group led by sitarist Sidartha Siliceo, with Julia Ohrmann on flute, Lenneke Van Staaen on violin, and Heiko Dijker on tabla – this is a performance that will produce perfect harmony between screen, sound and imagination and it can't be missed."



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## Special feature programming strands

The International Buddhist Film Festival incorporates a series of programming strands; all focusing on the deeper thematic issues in and around the titles on show. These offer festival-goers the chance to understand the story behind the stories in the films being presented.

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### Mind the Gap: *Bardo* and back

**Playing on the iconic London safety warning, this strand will focus on the Buddhist concept of the *bardo*. It means the ‘interval’ – or the ‘gap’ and refers to the intermediate state between one life and the next.**

The term can also refer to other transitional spaces, even the space between birth and death – such as life itself. A number of filmmakers have taken this concept as an inspiration and explored the possibilities as drama, sometimes specifically referencing the many psychological demons and obstacles presented in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (actually known as the *Bardo Thodol*, or *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State*), and sometimes taking great poetic license. **IBFF 2009 LONDON** will explore this profound and perceptive theme through a series of films, including *Dead Man*, *Stay* and *Donnie Darko*.

**Gaetano Kazuo Maida**, executive director of **IBFF** said: "Londoners are, of course, used to ‘minding the gap’ almost every working day. But with this fascinating strand playing such a key role in the festival, we’re hoping that every time they hear that immortal phrase they will have a new thought about what the phrase might mean. The films showing as part of this strand range from renowned American classics to some little-known gems that fell off the radar. I’ve no doubt that this is a programming strand that will capture the imagination of all Londoners."



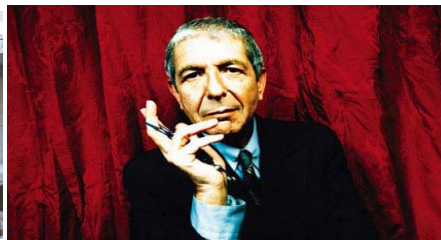
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### Profiles: Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Leonard Cohen and more

**Buddhist ideas and practices are embraced by people from all over the world, and not always in obvious or traditional forms. The Profiles strand will explore Buddhist ideas through well-known artists.**

What’s become remarkable over the last few decades is the enormous range, the diversity of experience and expression evident among people who identify themselves as “Buddhist” in some way. Films in this section include *Glass: A Portrait of Philip in Twelve Parts*, *Inner Voice: Meredith Monk*, *Sogyal Rinpoche – Ancient Wisdom in the Modern World* and *Leonard Cohen: I’m Your Man*.

**Gaetano Kazuo Maida**, executive director of **IBFF** said: "This strand explores Buddhist themes and ideas in the broadest possible fashion. The festival is all about opening up a fresh perspective on Buddhism and by focusing on these well-known personalities, this is a brilliant way to engage a new audience with these ideas and open up these thoughts to a wider range of people."



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## Showcase: BOS

**A supporting event focusing on the world's only independent television and radio broadcaster exclusively devoted to Buddhist content.**

Since 2001, there has been one independent television and radio broadcaster in the world exclusively devoted to Buddhist content: BOS in Amsterdam, part of the Public Broadcasting System there.

The Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation (Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting in Dutch, or BOS) produces and licenses programs to be broadcast in the Netherlands, and distributed to other broadcasters around the world.

**IBFF 2009 LONDON** will screen eight BOS-associated titles at this year's festival. BOS founder and program director Babeth VanLoo, who also directed, co-directed, or produced several of the films, will be attending the festival over its first weekend.

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## Supporting **IBFF 2009 LONDON** events

Alongside the special feature programming strands the International Buddhist Film Festival will feature several supporting events.

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### Animation: Films by Kihachiro Kawamoto

**The International Buddhist Film Festival is taking a close look at animation; looking at how Buddhist themes and ideas can be explored through the artform, focusing on the award-winning Kihachiro Kawamoto.**

This supporting event will prove Japanese animation is not limited to just anime - **Kihachiro Kawamoto**, born in 1925, is regarded as the master of Japanese puppet animation and this event will take an unprecedented close look at his work.

From an early age, he was captivated by the art of doll and puppet making. During the 1950s, he began working alongside Japan's first stop motion animator, the legendary Tadahito Mochinaga, and in the 60s he studied under Czech animation legend Jiri Trnka. Famous for his beautiful, expressive puppets, Kawamoto integrates the traditional art forms of Noh, Bunraku doll theatre, and Kabuki into a unique aesthetic to visually stunning effect.

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### Human Rights: Ellen Bruno

**IBFF 2009 LONDON will include a retrospective collection of films looking at human rights around the globe, focusing closely on the award-winning work of filmmaker Ellen Bruno.**

Ellen Bruno's films on human rights in Asia have won numerous awards and have aired on national public television in the US and in over a dozen foreign countries. She served as coordinator for the International Rescue Committee's family reunification program in refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border, and she later served for four years as director of the Cambodian Women's Project for the American Friends Service Committee.

Bruno completed a Master's Degree in Documentary Film at Stanford University in 1990. She was the recipient of a 1998 Guggenheim, a 1997 Rockefeller, a 1995 Shenkin (Yale), and 1992/1994/1997 Western States Regional Media Arts Fellowships.

Ellen's films being shown at the Barbican as part of **IBFF 2009 LONDON** include: *Satya*, *Sacrifice* and *Sky Burial*. She is expected to attend the festival.

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### Buddhist Broadcasting and Media

Babeth VanLoo is hosting a debate on Buddhist and multicultural broadcasting in the media. He directed, co-directed, or produced several of the films being presented at **IBFF 2009 LONDON**. His event will show clips and discuss Buddhist content and public television; obligations, responsibilities and opportunities; role of government funding; audience response/support; multiculturalism and the mainstream.

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## Editor's Notes

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### IBFF & Buddhist Film Society

The **International Buddhist Film Festival** takes place at the Barbican from Thursday **May 7 to 17th**. The **IBFF** showcases cinema which inspires a fresh perspective on Buddhism from around the globe, and is a programme of the **Buddhist Film Society, Inc.**

The **Buddhist Film Society, Inc.** is an independent non-profit educational organisation based in Oakland California.

The BFS Advisory Council includes **Philip Glass, Alice Walker, Richard Gere, Maxine Hong Kingston, Huston Smith, Lisa Lu** and **Robert Thurman**. For more information log on to [www.ibff.org](http://www.ibff.org)

### Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation

The **Many Faces of Buddhism** is presented in London by **The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation**, a Hong Kong based philanthropic organisation committed to fostering Chinese arts and culture.

Working towards these goals with global perspective, the Foundation supports arts and Buddhist programmes both in its home base and internationally. The Foundation is presenting these events in conjunction with the opening in late April of **The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Gallery** at the V&A featuring the first permanent collection of Asian Buddhist Sculpture in Great Britain. For more information log on to [www.rhfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org)

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### The Many Faces of Buddhism

**The Many Faces of Buddhism** is a series of arts and cultural events drawing on Buddhist cultural traditions, and presented in London from Saturday 25 April to Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> of May. The programme will include visual arts, artist talks, dance, films and more.

The events illustrate an array of art forms produced by varied cultures of Buddhist practitioners throughout the world, and which represent the many faces of this ancient philosophy. The series' goal is to inspire and encourage the public to better understand Buddhism through its art. For more information log on to [www.rhfamilyfoundation.org/manyfaces](http://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org/manyfaces)

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### The Barbican

The **Barbican** Centre is the largest performing arts centre in Europe. It hosts classical and contemporary music concerts, theatre performances, film screenings and art exhibitions.

It also houses a library, three restaurants, and a conservatory. The London Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra are based in the Barbican Centre's concert hall.

For more information log on to [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

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## Ends

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### Websites



[www.ideageneration.co.uk](http://www.ideageneration.co.uk)

For:

- Online Press Office
- Client list
- Company contact detail



[www.ibff.org](http://www.ibff.org)

For:

- News
- Press room
- Events



<http://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org/manyfaces>

For:

- Intersection of Buddhist philosophy and the arts



<http://www.barbican.org.uk/>

For:

- Listings
- News
- Visitor information