

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

For Immediate Release

ELIZABETH ENGLANDER: EMINEM BUDDHISM, VOLUME 3 April 7 to October 27, 2024

Elizabeth Englander’s first solo museum exhibition presents sculptures of gods, goddesses, and saints from the pantheons of Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism made from discarded wooden tchotchkes

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is pleased to announce Elizabeth Englander’s first solo museum presentation, *Eminem Buddhism, Volume 3*, on view April 7 to October 27, 2024. The exhibition will be accompanied by the artist’s first museum publication.



Elizabeth Englander, *Yogini no. 10* (detail), 2022.
Courtesy of Elizabeth Englander and Theta, New York.

Nutcrackers, toys, outgrown children’s furniture, and other discarded wooden tchotchkes are the material basis of Englander’s sculptures of gods, goddesses, and saints from the pantheons of Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Taking artifacts from consumer culture—paradoxically loaded with memory and nostalgia, but endemically disposable—she reassigns the fragments new anatomical significance and joins them into abstracted bodies that capture identifying attributes of the deities they represent. Englander writes: “I like to imagine that by dismembering them, I free them from some of this karma. Refashioned into spacious, divine bodies, the resulting personal icons are indices of my dialogue with the dharma.”¹

The iconography is drawn from Englander’s study of Asian religious art, specifically the history of statuary icons that began in the 2nd century BCE in India. From this iconography certain sacred forms emerge as the protagonists in her sculptures: Chamunda, “the feminine element of god,” or *shakti*, whose attributes symbolize the destruction of ignorance, hatred, fear, and death;² the poet-saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar who, “traded her beauty to worship as one of Shiva’s cremation ground ghouls”;³ Bahubali, the victorious heir of a fratricidal dynastic war who renounces his inheritance and embraces the ascetic life; Jinas, the “beings who [have] transcended the flux of the world and attained total equanimity.”⁴ Sculptural practice led Englander to a spiritual practice in the form of Zen Buddhism. This new experience informs recent works seated, like the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, in so-called “royal ease,” and in the orthoprax postures of zazen.

¹ Englander. *Eminem Buddhism, Volume 2*. Guadalajara, Mexico: House of Gaga, 2023. Press release.

² Dora, Jayanti. “Iconography: With Special Reference to the Iconography of ‘Shakta’ Deities of ‘Vaital’ Temple, Bhubaneswar.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 63 (2002): 1227.

³ Englander. *Eminem Buddhism*. New York, NY: Theta, 2022. Press release.

⁴ Cort, John E. *Framing the Jina*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010. 24.
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The title of the exhibition series is taken from stories written by the artist's brother when they were children that chronicles the spiritual conversion of the rapper Eminem under the guidance of Buddha.

The artist's first museum publication will accompany the exhibition, featuring an essay by the curator, Eduardo Andres Alfonso, Associate Curator.

Elizabeth Englander (b. 1988, Boston, MA) lives and works in New York, NY. She received her BFA from The Rhode Island School of Design in 2011 and her MFA from Hunter College in 2019. Recent solo exhibitions include: House of Gaga, Guadalajara (2023); Liste Art Fair Basel, solo presentation with Theta (2023); Theta, New York (2022); Smart Objects, Los Angeles (2021); and From the Desk of Lucy Bull, Los Angeles (2019). Group exhibitions have been held at: White Columns, New York (2023); Lomex, New York (2022); What Pipeline, Detroit (2022); Theta, New York (2021); Smart Objects, Los Angeles (2021); Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Safe Gallery, Brooklyn (2019); and Muzeum Ikon, Warsaw, PL (2018).

Elizabeth Englander: Eminem Buddhism, Volume 3 is organized by Eduardo Andres Alfonso, Associate Curator.

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