



**University of  
Sunderland**

Cope, Nick (2009) Miles Away Dir. Nick Cope: Video/DVD 6'19", 2009,  
soundtrack: Phil Thornton. [Video] (Submitted)

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**Miles Away** – Dir. Nick Cope: Video/DVD 6’19”, 2009, soundtrack: Phil Thornton.

Online:

<https://vimeo.com/7324654>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1Ni4A5hdnM&list=UUqTCQPevqAnFRWTOyY8DP1g>

Selected for Tricycle Magazine’s BuddhaFest online film festival short film showcase: <http://www.tricycle.com/short-films>, June 2012.

<http://www.tricycle.com/short-films/miles-away>

*Installation:* Featured in video installation/screening as part of the exhibition ‘A Global Gathering’, Bexhill Museum, East Sussex, June- September 2012.

*Published on DVD:* ‘A Global Voyage: A video compilation from the Stories of the World programme, an official part of the Cultural Olympiad for the London 2012 Olympic Games’, Brighton and Hove Museums, August 2012.

(Featured on the Blu Dot Music You Tube Channel, reaching 133,000 views as of January 2013;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPCofrzY4vs&feature=BFa&list=FLqTCQPevqAnFRWTOyY8DP1g>)

Selected for Spirit Enlightened online film festival:

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/2893/Miles-Away>.  
December 2011.

*Miles Away* is a short video essay/documentary taking the viewer into the heart of the Shoton Festival, Lhasa, Tibet. Shot by Nick Cope in 2005, the Shoton Festival held each year is a Tibetan Buddhist Festival which features the annual unveiling of a huge embroidery of Buddha on the mountainside next to Drepung Monastery. It is a major festival for the Tibetan community to celebrate their culture and identity. Edited to a soundtrack by musician Phil Thornton, *Miles Away* seeks to give the audience a taste of the experience of being present at this unique occasion.

*Miles Away* derives from a body of work I have been shooting over the past 5 years in Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan, China. Nominally titled ‘Journeys East’.

**Journeys East** is a proposed educational online web project; video and image database; and starting point for documentary, creative media and installation based projects, centered around the film and photographic resource collated during travels in Tibet, Yunnan and Sichuan, China. Organising and making this resource of around 100 hours of video and hundreds of photos available to other practitioners/art practitioners, researchers, museums and scholars opens opportunities for collaboration, scholarship and creative practice. The archive features footage shot at some of the most renowned sites of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism, and features Buddhist and Taoist temples, rituals, customs, artworks and performances; a unique record of threatened and changing cultures and ecologies.

"..What will be singled out as the salient event of our time by future historians?'... Not, he replied, the 'sensational or tragic or catastrophic political and economic events', but rather the impact of West on East and of East on West leading to the ending of age-old 'parochial' distinctions between the civilisations of East and West and the emergence of a world community, a revolution that will be seen to be the product not of economic forces but of religious convergence." (Arnold Toynbee quoted in J.J. Clarke 'Oriental Enlightenment')

Current digital technologies are facilitating a high quality film making style, acquisition of content and access which builds on the revolutionary leaps in film production so well documented since the French New Wave, which smaller and more mobile technologies enable. Exploiting these potentials alongside the opening up of China in the past twenty years, and increasing mobility which internal tourism developments have also enhanced throughout China, has given me the opportunity and access to film material in the context of a fast changing, developing Chinese cultural landscape; documenting changing Chinese openness of its own indigenous cultures; recording cultures and sacred sites which have been decimated during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, but which are being reinvigorated once more with a growing recognition of the importance by both populace and state of the Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian traditions in Chinese society.

This reinvigoration is not without its problems, sometimes it is tourism potential driving the redevelopment of sacred spaces, and sometimes internal political conflict is stalling developments.

Some of the sites filmed are under dire threat, without urgent development, and my footage may sadly prove to become historic record, if neglect continues. In the case of some of my footage shot in Sichuan, the 2008 earthquake has since damaged some of the historic sites previously filmed.

Whilst I am aware of historic collections of footage and imagery shot in these regions in the past, and which form the basis of a number of study collections, much contemporary filming and photography in this field has tended to be in the Buddhist and Himalayan regions outside of China itself, due to the previous historic and political contexts mentioned above.

With a substantial amount of material shot – some 100 hours of video and thousands of photos, the necessity now is to collate this material, both as the first stage in developing further creative practice, and as a means of making this resource available to others.

I see this work having a direct correlation with current work by the Tibetan Himalayan Library project, co-ordinated through University of Virginia, and the Digital Himalaya project run through Cambridge University.

I will be utilising the hard work and clear support given by these projects in methods of cataloguing and archiving, and will look to make my resource available through these projects and possible other outlets too. These methods facilitate a thorough keywording and contextualising of material, whilst making the work accessible to

other researchers. Initial links have been made with both these institutions as well as with indigenous Tibetan Media project Rabsal (<http://rabsal.org/mission.html>).

Journeys East is featured in the 'Vision' section of the Glasgow based Arts for Intercultural Dialogue Project, produced and edited by Sarah Potter & Dr Emily Munro, for the British Council - Intercultural Navigators Programme:

“Case study: JOURNEYS EAST (Nick Cope, artist and Senior Lecturer in Video and New Media Production at the University of Sunderland, England)

Journeys East is an emerging digital media project deriving from a long-term interest and engagement in Buddhism. The project arises very much out of an ongoing process of personal transformation and learning; intercultural dialogue has become a way of exploring both my place in the world and my creative practice.

The impact upon me of the visual and symbolic language that Tibetan Buddhism utilizes has been of immense personal interest. Over a number of years I travelled to Himalayan regions with video and stills cameras and began to record art and architecture, rituals, prayer, dances, as well as the landscapes, environments and modern urban developments, and sometimes the impact and evidence of mass tourism on sacred locations.

The challenges for me as a filmmaker now, are how to express the profound impact an engagement with Buddhist art and cultures has had on me; how to communicate some of the subtle, philosophical, profound and spiritual aspects of Buddhism (is this possible through the medium of film?); how to share the fruits of my own intercultural dialogue with others; how to ensure that my own dialogue and expression avoids the pitfalls of 'orientalism', exoticising otherness, or being merely some kind of travelogue.

My immersion and engagement with Buddhist study and practice I see as integral to addressing the above issues, as well as ongoing research into the historical, cultural and ethical issues involved. Dialogue with indigenous people and organisations, facilitated through personal contact, is also crucial.

Having amassed photographic and video material, I hope to make it available to others. An ongoing archive of my work is online at <http://www.vimeo.com/nickcope> but I have also made contact with the cultural preservation and communication project Rabsal (<http://www.rabsal.org>) which uses multimedia technology to creatively capture aspects of Tibetan culture and to invigorate interest among young Tibetan people in documenting and regenerating their culture. Rabsal also aims to create accessible representations for those outside Tibet through the involvement of Tibetans and non-Tibetans.”

<http://interculturalnavigators.britishcouncil.org/index.php/projects/69/247>  
[http://interculturalnavigators.britishcouncil.org/images/stories/knowledge\\_bank/AID-toolkit-lowres.pdf](http://interculturalnavigators.britishcouncil.org/images/stories/knowledge_bank/AID-toolkit-lowres.pdf)

