

# ZEN BOXES

an art project by Ven. Shikai Zuiko o-sensei

# 1 DON'T BE ASSHOLE



metal presentation case for a watch (6 ½" by 3" by 2") | artificial pearl | doll's arm with red acrylic paint | fishing line | paper tag

*"You're still thinking about Huike slicing off his arm and then standing around having a conversation. Unlikely, isn't it? It is however an aspect of the story that has been extremely powerful for Chinese and Japanese Zen masters and students. I remember Joshu Dainen roshi once becoming very moved when he was speaking of this, almost at the edge of tears with depth of feeling. I asked, 'Do you really think he cut off his arm?' He said, 'Don't be asshole. Of course not. Not the point.' The point for him was that, if he had been the kind of student that Huike was right from the beginning, things would have been much easier for both him and his Teacher, Daiji Tenku roshi."*

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi,  
"Bodhidharma's Eyes, teisho 5: A Fine Blend of Teas",  
October 11, 2000, Daruma-ki O-sesshin

## 2 THIS MOMENT



12" by 3 1/4" | engraved acrylic globe | fishing line

*"The world turns in space and, we can know that at this moment, it is night dark somewhere. It's bright at ten o'clock in the morning here in the Hatto, but it is, nevertheless, this moment everywhere."*

Ven. Shikai Zuiko osho  
"Being Breathed"  
May 11, 1996

### 3 ZAZENSHIN



wood & acrylic presentation box for liquer 9 ¼" by 8" by 4 ¼" | acrylic paint | blown glass fish | fabricated fabric fish | shells | coral | fabricated bird with feathers from monastery pigeons | crab claw | limestone with fossils from Bonnechere Caves

## THE POINT OF PRACTICE

by Eihei Dogen Kigen zenji

The Awakend One's essential function  
is the functioning essence of the Ancestors.

Completing itself inherently,  
it is beyond all up or down.

It manifest Before Thinking  
and accomplishes without obstacle.

This Stainless and undefiled intimacy  
drops itself without losing anything.

Manifesting Before Thinking,  
its manifestation is inherent intimacy.

Complete and beyond duality  
it penetrates without effort.

Accomplishing without obstacle  
it completes itself inherently.

Water is clear right through to the earth:  
the fish swims like a fish.

Its manifestation inherently intimate,  
it is always Stainless and undefiled.

The sky's vastness penetrates the heavens;  
the bird flies like a bird.

(Kosso-Horin-ji, March 18th 1242)

## 4 BIG UNDERSTANDING



wooden box 5 ½" by 5 ½" by 3" | wooden box 3" by 3" by 1 ¾"

*"You can't fit a big box into a little box.  
You can't fit a big understanding into a small understanding."*

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

## 5 BLACK IRON BALL



11" by 5 ½" by 3" | 'sculpie' figures-2" high, cloth robes | metal vajra | wooden kotsu-Teacher's stick | antique onyx bead from my Nana's, Eliza Dodd Lamberton Jones, necklace | fishing line

## HIMITSU SHOBOGENZO, CASE 14

When Zen Master Gikai sees his attendant Keizan Jokin entering his room he confronts Keizan with, *"Show me your Ordinary Mind."* When Jokin starts to answer Gikai strikes him directly on the mouth. Jokin is lost in hesitation.

One night as he sits in the monks' hall he hears a sudden wind lashing at the window and wakes up. He proceeds straight to Great Master Gikai's room, offers three great bows and says, *"I've got it."*

Gikai says, *"What have you got?"*

Keizan says, *"A jet-black iron ball hurtles through the dark night."*

Gikai says, *"Not enough. Say it further."*

Keizan says, *"When thirsty I drink. When hungry I eat."*

## 6 CUTTING THE CAT



wood cutlery box from Goodwill in Asheville, N.C. | paper Xeroxed scrolls (2 zenga by Anzan Hoshin roshi, portrait of Dogen zenji from Kyoto) | 14 sculpie figures with cloth robes | plastic cat | metal rupa and gong

## NANQUAN CUTS THE CAT IN TWO

### Mumonkan Case 14

Nanquan saw the monks of the eastern and western halls fighting over a cat. He seized the cat and told the monks: *"If any of you say a good word, you can save the cat."*

No one answered. So Nanquan boldly cut the cat in two pieces.

That evening Zhaozhou returned and Nanquan told him about this. Zhaozhou removed his sandals and, placing them on his head, walked out.

Nanquan said: *"If you had been there, you could have saved the cat."*

## 7 RABBIT KILLING TREE



metal coffee container 6" by 4" | fossilized wood, polished on one end |  
stuffed cloth toy rabbit - 3" | acrylic paint

*"One fine day in China, many hundreds of years ago, on a morning just like this, or perhaps it was on a Friday morning, a man was walking through the forest. The snow was falling through the branches, dancing in the air. As he was walking, he walked very close to a bush and all of a sudden, from beneath the snow-covered evergreen bush, a rabbit darted out. The rabbit was very frightened and ran very quickly. Not looking where it was going, it ran smack into a tree and fell over dead. The man walked over to the rabbit, picked it up and took it home. He skinned it and fed it to his family. The next day, he went out to the forest again, sat down by the tree...and waited."*

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi,  
"Before Thinking"  
1992

## 8 WHITE THREAD



acrylic box 7" by 3 1/2" by 1 3/4" | white wool thread

*"The phrase 'resting at ease' is not very easy to understand. Usually we think that lying down and closing our eyes and making up our own world through stories and dreams is resting. But we always have to fend off the real world to do this. Or we might think that saving ourselves difficulty is resting at ease. We walk down the hallway and see a bit of white fluff or a strand of black string on the floor and we think that this has nothing to do with us or we think that we will pick it up later. But this kind of taking it easy makes things very difficult for us and soon the hallway is filthy and we become depressed at how shabby our situation is and we feel oppressed. Resting at ease is a matter of not avoiding difficulties. We bend over and pick up the thread. We fold the wash cloth after wringing it out thoroughly and then we put it away. We do not put too much rice on our spoon in oryoki and so grains of rice do not fall in our lap. And if grains of rice fall we make it easy for ourselves and every one else by not making too much difficulty about picking them up."*

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi,  
"Sitting Up Straight, teisho 3: A Very Good Thing"  
1989

## 9 FIREWORLD BINDU



metal watch box 5.5" by 2.5" by  $\frac{3}{4}$ " | pearl | acrylic paint

Gift to deshi Ryoshin in 2013.

## 10 DRAGONS AND TIGERS



Japanese cardboard box-8 1/2" by 8 1/2" by 5" | upper left-wire and cloth figure, wood veneer floor, Xerox copy of Dogen portrait from Kyoto | plastic tiger 4" by 2 1/2" - area walls lined with Xerox silk from "Voices of a Cave" multi-media artwork 1982 | plastic dragon 5" by 5" - area walls lined with photographs of the Fourth Chute, Bonnechere Caves by artist | silver acrylic paint

**"HOW EVERYONE CAN SIT", FROM THE "FUKANZAZENGI"**

as translated in "Chanting Breath and Sound"  
by Joshu Dainen roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi

*"Traps and cages spring open. Grasping the heart of this, you are the dragon who has reached his waters, the tiger resting in her mountain. Understand that right here is the display of Vast Reality and then dullness and mental wandering have no place to arise."*

by Eihei Dogen Kigen zenji  
Kennin-ji, 1227

## 11 IF NOT HERE, WHERE?



acrylic box 9" by 9" by 4 ½" | acrylic mirror making up the back of the box reflects the face of the questioner-in this case the photographer, Nathan Fushin Comeau

*"If not here, then where?  
If not now, then when?"*

Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, 1985

## 12 INTIMACY



metal box from Ikea-9" by 9" by 5 3/4" | blue curtain fabric | severed dolls' legs  
| paper scroll-Sho brushed by Shikai sensei after a sho by Anzan Hoshin roshi

*"Since we sleep together on the same floor,  
we know the holes in each other's quilts."*

"Jippo: The Ten Directions"  
A Fascicle of the Shobogenzo  
Dogen zenji, 1243

## 13 A SILVER BOWL FILLED WITH SNOW



perforated metal box 5" by 4" by 3" | plastic bird 3" tall | metal miniature dish | cotton wool | styrofoam chips | silver paint

*"A silver bowl filled with snow,  
a heron hidden in moonlight.*

*That these are not the same  
can be seen when brought together."*

Hokyo Zanmai,  
The Jewel Mirror Samadhi  
by Dongshan Liangjie daisho  
Circa 850.

## 14 SEVEN TIMES DOWN



wooden box 4" by 3" by  $\frac{3}{4}$ " | Komyo scroll by Shikai sensei after Anzan Hoshin roshi | Daruma doll-wood- $\frac{1}{4}$ "

*"There is a saying associated with Mr. Daruma dolls: 'Seven times down, eight times up.' In Japanese, 'nana korobi ya oki'. If you knock the doll over it rights itself. Mathematically, of course it makes no sense. Seven times down would be seven times up, not eight. Regardless, it means that no matter how often you fall down, get up. Just get up. This is very good advice. When you fall down, get up. If you fall down again, get up again. No matter what happens, the last thing you do should be to get up, not fall down."*

Anzan Hoshin roshi,  
Bodhidharma's Eyes, teisho 2: Mr. Daruma,  
October 8, 2000, Daruma-ki O-sesshin

## 15 THE GREAT MATTER



Benson & Hedges vintage wooden cigar box 7  $\frac{3}{4}$ " by 6" by 2  $\frac{1}{2}$ " | han brushed by Shikai Zuiko; "Great Matter" | branch striker | hemp twine | hour glass

DAIJI-NO-GE :  
VERSE OF THE GREAT MATTER

*"The Great Matter is birth and death.  
Life slips past and time is gone.  
Right now, wake up! wake up!  
Do not waste time."*

Chanting Breath and Sound:  
Hakukaze Soto Zen Sutras  
translated by Anzan Hoshin roshi

## 16 PECKING AND TAPPING



plastic box 8" by 5 ½" by 4" | nest of woven twigs 5" by 5" | photos by Shikai osho of: Anzan sensei (at the time), self, Butsudan at DaijozaN | commemorates receiving of first monk's vows

HEKIGANROKU 16  
translated by Anzan Hoshin roshi

A monk said to Jingqing, *"I am pecking from the inside; will you tap from the outside?"*

Jingqing said, *"Will you live or not?"*

The monk said, *"If I could not attain life, I would become a Laughingstock."*

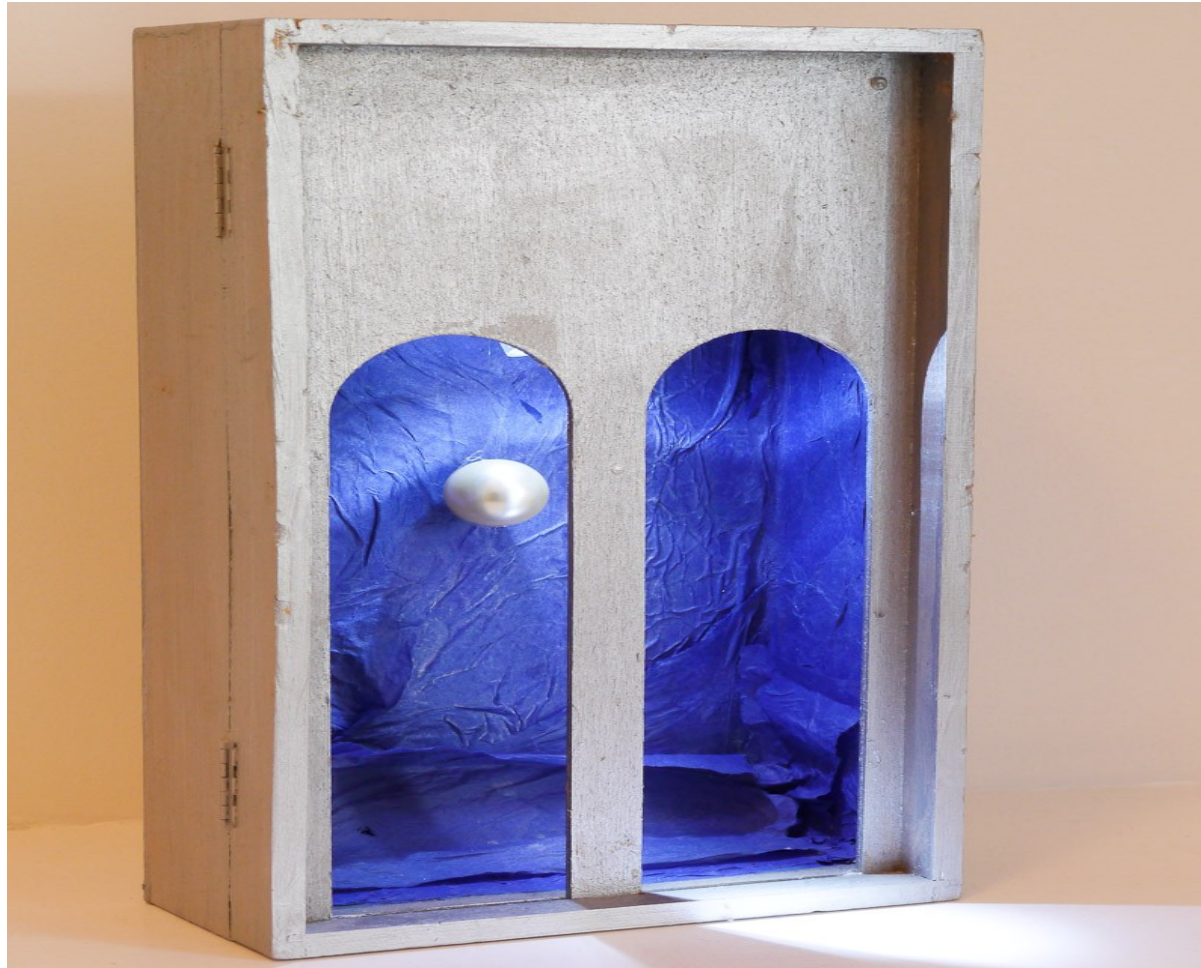
Jingqing said, *"You are just another man in the weeds."*

## 17 "MOTHER OF WISDOM" ASSEMBLAGE



"Mahaprajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra" on silk bag | Shikai osho as Acala Vidyaraja-zenga  
by Anzan Hoshin roshi | rubber snake | metal photo holder received as gift

## 18 VISUALIZATION BOX



liquor presentation box 12 1/2" by 7" by 3" | synthetic pearl | blue tissue paper | silver paint | reading light

dedicated to the late Anna Roko Cave

## 19 SUN-FACED BUDDHA MOON-FACED BUDDHA



synthetic pearls | acrylic paint | fishing line | bent wire figure | cloth from an old robe | miniature metal vajra | bead mala

## HEKIGANROKU CASE 3

translated by Anzan Hoshin roshi

Great Master Ma was seriously ill.

The monastery's head monk came to see him and asked,  
*"Master, how are you these days?"*

The master said, *"Sun-faced Buddha, Moon-faced Buddha."*