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Critique #2
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On March 19 at 7:30 in Williams Hall, I attended a presentation by Myron and Juana McGhee called "Seeing Differently Through the Mind's Eye". The Presentation was about their photographic undertaking of monks who painted sand mandalas at Emory. I enjoyed the background information we were presented with because I think it helped with understanding the artistic process of the monks. I found it surprising and interesting to know that the mandala process began with a ceremonial consecration, which emphasizes the religious and sacred aspect of their creations.

In the presentation, we were informed that the monks do not use modern technology to create their works. Instead they used basic instruments like the Chakpur (used to hold sand) and Thurma (used as the instrument to edge the sand out). The mandala process is not only focused on the artistic side of the creations of the monks but while they are working, they are also meditating. It was intriguing to see them in a 21st century world, and yet still adhering to their old traditions.

Mrs. McGhee then told us that as part of the closing ceremony, the monks sweep the sand mandalas away. The point of this action is to reflect on the impermanence of our lives and to remind us of our mortality. That such a simple action carried such a deep meaning astounded me. The reminder of our mortality however, hit home for me. I have felt the pain of losing a young friend and I think that every once and a while, we need to be reminded that we are all human and fragile. Probably the most interesting thing I learned was the fact that the words "please return" are put on their tools, partly in case they lose them, but mostly for their hopes of returning to their homeland because they have been displaced into the United States.

The entire presentation induced a lot of emotions, at least from me, and I think Mr. and Mrs. McGhee intended that kind of reaction. Through this presentation, I saw that, though these monks never show outward signs of suffering, on the inside, they are constantly meditating on the pains of the world and yearning for the freedom of their people back home in Tibet.

Mr. McGhee's speech was much different from that of his wife's. His information about various photographers was insightful and impressive. It was very clear from the presentation that he had a deep passion for photography, and also appreciated the historical aspect of its development.

Though I did not know the photographer he spoke about, after he provided us with some information, I was able to see Edward Weston's influence in Mr. McGhee's works. Edward Weston was able to look at a simple object and observe its shape, form, and color in a way that no other photographer had been able to do before. He interpreted natural things in a way unprecedented by any other artist, and I see that kind of appreciation for simplicity in Mr. McGhee's works. His photographs covered the relationship of monks and how they related to one another and observed the people that were watching them. The images of simple actions,

body movements, and facial expressions found in his photographs reflected so much more than just what was superficially seen.

I was surprised when Mr. McGhee mentioned the painting *Dutch Masters* by Rembrandt. That painting crossed my mind when I saw the photograph of the monks, but I did not know Mr. McGhee was familiar with Rembrandt's works. The similarity was uncanny. In the painting one could see the focus of the men and how unified they were around their worktable. And the same could be said about the photograph of the monks working on the sand mandala.

Overall, I loved the presentation and the artwork done by Mr. and Mrs. McGhee. I thought it was tasteful and helped to open another cultural outlet for the students here at Oxford College. While I cannot speak for my peers, the presentation has inspired me to make the trip up to Emory next week to see these monks in action.