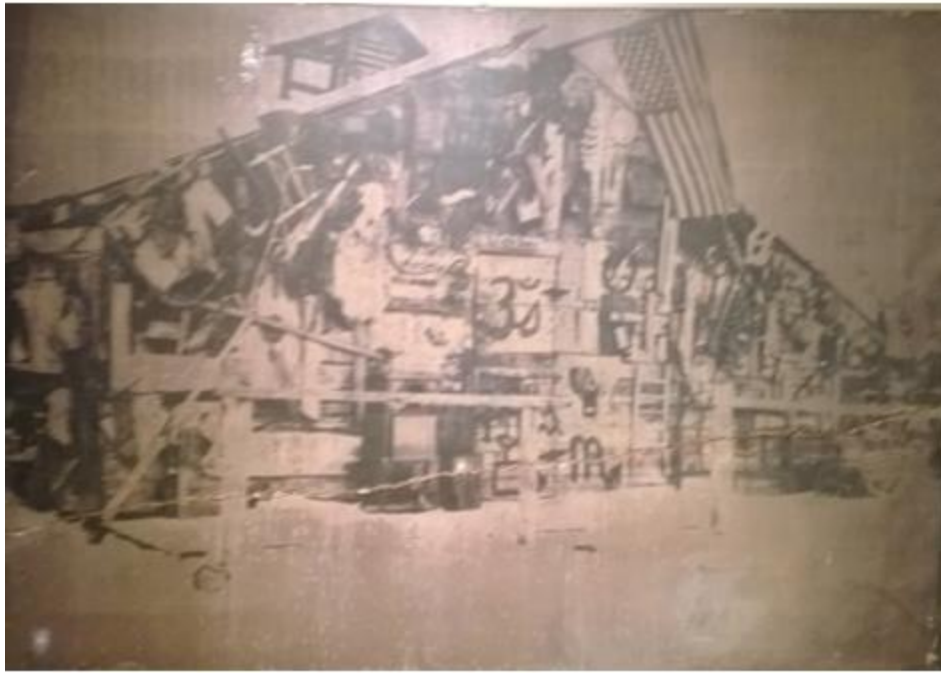


## Tack Shack

Poems by Jampa Dorje  
Photos by Mike Burtness



# TACK SHACK ILLUMINATED

Assemblage & Poems by Jampa Dorje

Photos by Michael Burtness

Interview by Bouvard Pécuchet

Foreword by Lu Auz

Kapala Press 2015 Ellensburg

*Tack Shack Illuminated* is comprised of a shortened version of *Tack Shack*, which contained poems and photographs, published by D Press in Sebastopol, California, in 1998.

The interview by Bouvard Pécuchet originally appeared in the section entitled "Art: Visual Art and Artists" in *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas*, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2014.

“An Art Historian’s Perspective” was composed for Jampa Dorje’s retrospective, “Cowboy Funk”, held in Ellensburg, Washington, at the 420 Building, July and August of 2015.

Lindy Gravelle, a singer, songwriter and friend, bought a mounted photograph of “Tack Shack” because she wanted a piece of Ellensburg, and she asked me for the backstory.



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## **An Art Historian’s Perspective**

Drawing inspiration from his experiences as a poet-monk, his travels zigzagging across the American landscape and the rich conversations that arose in each locale, Rychard Denner created a body of work that ranges from the fragile and ephemeral to the rugged and enduring. These assemblage sculptures recall the Neo-Dada combines of Robert Rauschenberg as well as the funk art of Bruce Conner. Entering into each new environment, Denner collects life’s detritus and fragments of the site. These humble, broken objects are then later imaginatively reworked to draw the beautiful and brutal closer together in an improvised and spontaneous creative moment. These works are then left in the original environment – hung on a fence, leaned against a shack, lying in a field – and the elements of nature are allowed to leave their final signature.

Lu Auz  
Memphis College of Art

## ELEMENTAL

Two friends  
near  
this fire.

You here,  
I there  
in a garden

of fire.

## ON THE BEACH

The beach at Miramar  
is marked Right To Pass  
Revocable At Any Time.

Banana skins, plastic cups,  
oil derricks, all forms  
of rubber, wood and steel

ripped to elements,  
stripped of character  
and dipped in tar.

## POLOOT

Alaska, who lives there?  
Caribou, wolves and bear.

This grizzly airs a grudge  
that everyone fears to judge.

A refinery doesn't smell  
like Chanel— more like hell.

## BIG FOOT

One drop goes  
a long way to ease  
the friction.

100 billion barrels,  
ten to the tenth power—  
while the answer is hair

warm nights in fur,  
and the best investment  
is Sasquatch.

## DIRT

Dirt makes me itch.  
Asphalt hurts my feet.  
Kindness an official bitch.  
Lawn order on every street.

## RED GIANT

Hard to see

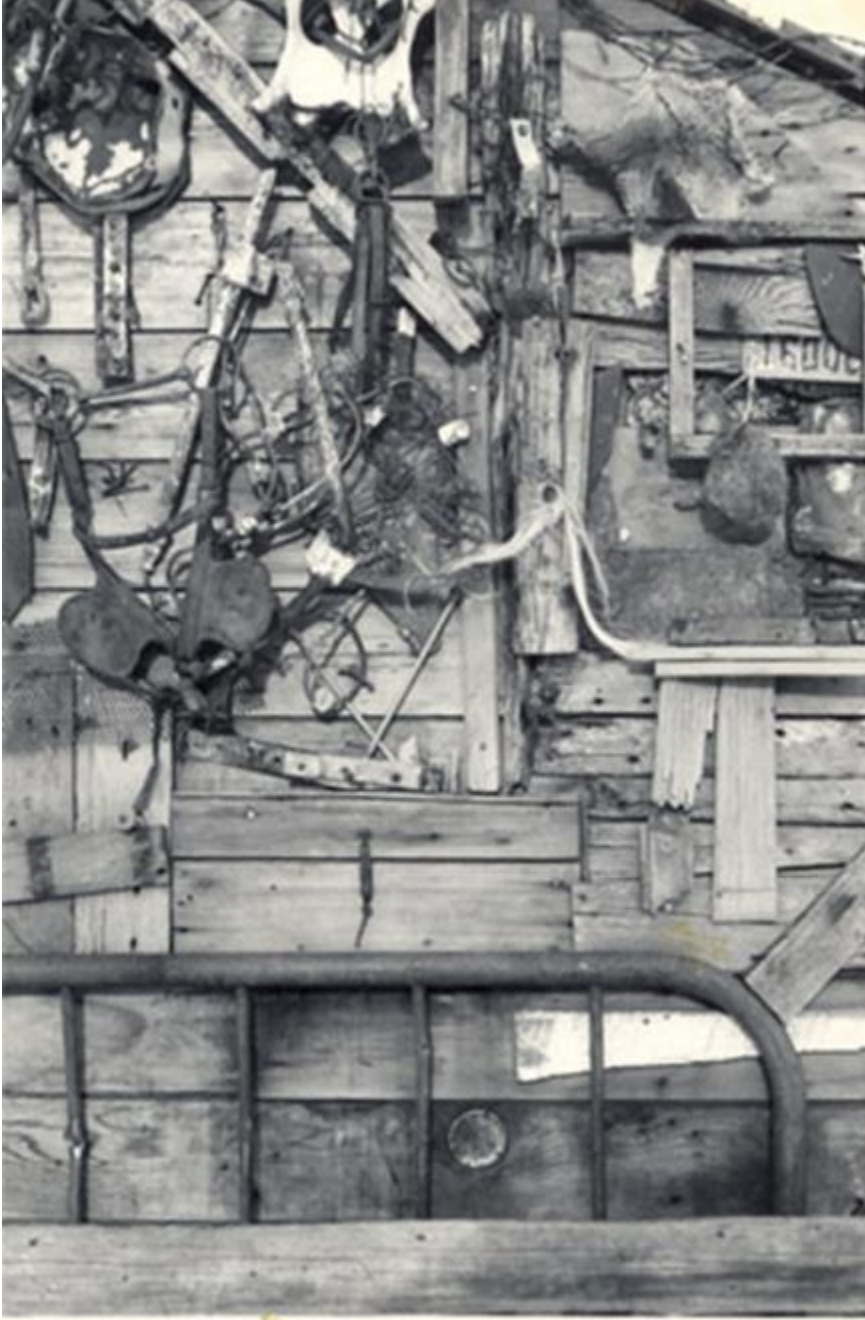
the truth. Shaggy curves  
in a fuzzy country.

Realm of the densely packed.  
In turn, a town with streets  
that aren't on any map.

## DETAIL

Birds that lay  
in Euclid's branches  
have a view of May.

Spring blows and sucks,  
sucks and blows  
the eucal blossom.



ENDANGERED

Birds and rain

turtles on the waves  
deep in your heart  
you know harmony.

Keep your eye peeled  
for litter along the way.  
If it talks to you, pick it up.  
That's politics, too.

"Hi, I'm a moldy doughnut  
in the dumpster wishing you  
a really nice day  
with sprinkles on top."

"I'm a recycled plastic bag  
giving you longevity vibes."  
"An aluminum can, here, sending  
blessings of happiness and peace."

"No, I want to send peace!"  
"Shut up, you dumb Styrofoam,  
get back, and wait your turn."  
"Then, I'll send joy and light."

Birds and rain  
turtles on the waves  
I sing of lovingkindness as  
a responsible use of power.

## WINTER FOREST

January 25th, Saturday, 5 p.m.  
Sun 05° Aquarius opposed the Moon  
Winter transmutes Craig's Hill  
dense and gray— a dead forest



Ethan and Barb and Steve  
Tom and Sharon and Jill  
circle dance around  
the water tower

when you touch the earth  
red rays rise through your body  
when you walk you bring  
purple rays down from Heaven

meanwhile  
I'm drinking Jack Daniels  
with a little water  
while they dance and chant

explaining how, if you'd let me, I'd let you,  
when we went in for the Hydrogen Bomb...  
and it is embarrassing  
standing here in a white shirt and tie  
with debris falling, yes

it's a long day  
if you have an extra sunrise  
and a long night  
with ultra-violet Spring  
after Nuclear Winter



WHY2K

in the Springtime, etc.

to be precise

1987 was the conclusion

of the 16th 60 year cycle  
of the Kalachakra System  
and the climax of matter

in the Springtime, etc.

I dream of the New Age  
although I know  
it's hopelessly eternalistic

in the Springtime, etc.

SINGIN' DIXIE

you're right, Charles  
the South did win  
the Civil War

and America can't wait  
for the next Texas Bar-B-Q



GET DOWN

Flies mate on the page  
drawn by my attic honey breath.  
Life in Washington's delicious

compared to the worm  
eating at the core.

Ruskin describes it, a march  
of infinite light...intevalued  
with eddies of shadow.

Note the putrid smoke, the plague,  
if only a tapestry of the travesty,  
a  $n+1$  number of knots.

## BURGER PRODUCTIONS

The band heats the air  
with acid rock.

Black-lighted bodies  
dissolve in the dark.

Flames of ice,  
flames of flood,  
flames of meat,

flames of mud.

## BLACK RAINBOW

Slanted rain falls  
on blank flowers  
in a mechanical garden.

I have desperation  
I walk like a dog,  
never shifting my gaze.

## TO THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI

Red Sea.  
Persian Gulf.  
Iraq. Now, that your world map is complete,  
the game can be changed.

No apologies.  
This is magic.  
The technology  
is what's real.

The bleeding, twisted bodies  
are real.  
The beauty, the truth, monstrous.

## OLD GROWTH

Mother's gaga,  
limbs tied in tape.

No cedar to see, dear.  
Can't dial 911-rape.  
SLASH

Hands at work,  
sound of saws,  
a drape of smoke.

Gaia grotesquely  
posed, tossed flesh  
that terrifies.

#### ODE TO LILLIE LANGTRY

Joaquin sings of Lillie's graces.  
She brought the house down.

The house had beams  
musically spaced,

columns of concrete  
delicate as bird legs.

A structure,

a broken shell.

## BLUE NOTES

The bug is right,  
we're pond scum, flotsam  
in the evolutionary wave.

Hear that—  
Coltrane, man,  
like in *Kind of Blue*.

There's a certain shape  
to these final chords  
like a crystal structure.

Inside, you can see  
naked people, the living  
dancing with the dead.

## INTERVIEW WITH JAMPA DORJE

by Bouvard Pécuchet 4/1/13

I made my way, wearing snowshoes, along the faint traces of a trail in the deep snow to Luminous Peak, the cabin where Jampa is still ensconced after having completed a traditional Tibetan three-year retreat at Tara Mandala Retreat Center, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, in the San Juan Mountains. He welcomed me with a big smile and a hot cup of tea.

Bouvard: This tea has an interesting flavor. What is it called?



Jampa: Lapsang Souchang. It comes from the Fujian province of China. Smokey, some people say it tastes like boot polish. I have some other choices, if you'd prefer.

Bouvard: No, this is delicious, but don't yogis avoid becoming attached to fine teas?

Jampa: Well, there's no reason for throwing away good tea. Enjoy your tea, and then we'll get down to business.

Bouvard: Do the Tibetans have a tea ceremony like the Japanese?

Jampa: Not that I know of, but they do use tea as an offering, and I have heard that, if there is a limited amount of tea available, the first steeping is called the "nirmanakaya" and the second is the "sambhogakaya" and the third is the "dharmakaya." Each kaya, or dimension, is progressively more rarified, until it is tasteless. (Jampa laughs.)

Bouvard: Can you tell me about your assemblages?

Jampa: Assemblage is a process of making a painting by combining found objects. Assemblage has its roots in collage, and collage has its roots in folk art. Picasso added real newspaper and pieces of a guitar to one of his paintings. Schwitters used found materials. Philip Whalen said, "Kurt Schwitters tore it all into COLOR." Abstract Expressionists, like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg took assemblage to new heights of composition and absurdity. It is not all to be viewed in a serious vein. There is also humor in this work, although some critics see it as "anti-art" or "the end of art." A gallery curator told me that my Cowboy Funk pieces were too dirty to hang on her walls. The outdoors does cling to my combines, which is another name for these objects, and I feel they are akin to environmental artworks.

Bouvard: Many of your assemblages hang on sheds and fences. I saw a number of these, as I walked towards your cabin. Do you see them primarily as belonging outdoors? You also make collages and boxes, right?

Jampa: Yes, the collages and boxes are made of more delicate materials. They are

more intimate. The junk pieces I like to see outside. They highlight an otherwise overlooked structure, and the various objects around old buildings seem to become a part of the assemblage itself.

I move objects around until things fall into place. I bring disparate objects together—eggshell Styrofoam, curtain lace, blurry photos and plastic water pipe—hoping for a most fortunate accident of composition. Look for nothing behind the junk.

I am not a trained artist. I took printmaking and a class in drawing from Terrance Choy at the University of Alaska in the early 1970s. Mainly, I have hung out with artists that eat, drink and dream art, and I've watched them work and sat in cafes and walked the streets, talking with them.

I have used the skills of a carpenter, a plumber, a printer, a painter—trades I work at and enjoy—to make my artworks. The best carpenter is the one who can disguise his errors. However, here I like to see the errors, the crustiness, the broken, bent, wrinkled, burnt, twisted materials, the wire, thread, nails, and the seams in the cut paper.

I paint with junk, exploring space, positioning this “trash” to reveal hidden beauty.

When I was hanging out with Don Webster, an artist I knew in Aptos, I was sweeping up a bunch of debris into a wooden box, and I decided to pour in some glue. Why not? Of course, it didn't hold together, but it was a start. If you want a combine to hold up under the force of the elements, you have to give some consideration to how you construct it. I often begin by laying the parts I have collected on the ground and leaving them. I rearrange them a few times, taking into account how they fit together, structurally and esthetically, and how I am going to eventually mount them, what wire, nails, screws will be used.

Once I am satisfied with my composition, I start with the background level and begin to build, changing things as necessity dictates, as the materials demand. It never comes out as I planned, but that is half the fun. I do tend to over work my pieces, not to let well-enough alone, to get cute, “to put a bird on it.” Literally.

At the gallery I mentioned earlier, where the curator was concerned about the

crustiness, the rustiness, the flakiness, I did get three works accepted in a community show and won first, second and third prize in the mixed-media category. I asked the judge, later, why the one piece received third place, and she told me that the little hand-crafted bird I had added to a projecting piece of metal was silly. Maybe so, maybe not; I had added it because I didn't want someone to poke out their eye. There's a bird in Rauschenberg's *Canyon*. Maybe, if I had spray-painted my bird black, it might have flown.

Bouvard: Where do you find your materials? How do you choose?

Jampa: There's a lot of junk out there to choose from, too much really. I set rules for myself, like I will only pick up pieces of stuff I find along the roadside on my morning walk. Occasionally a piece "presents" itself and goes to complete a work still unfinished. People give me things: "Jampa could use this," they say.

Sometimes, I find a huge stash of materials, on a ranch or in a junk pile. I get excited. I want it all; but I settle on pieces that interest me. Another rule is to use things from other projects I'm working on, say, doing some plumbing or fixing a garage door. I may incorporate the broken parts or the left over materials in my art.

When I lived on a ranch near Ellensburg, Washington, there was a mound of junk out in the desert. The guy I worked for had problems, work pressures, girlfriend pressures—he was a man in a mid-life crisis—and he used my shoulder to cry on. We had a good working arrangement, a rent-free house and a monthly salary, but the added "psychologist" part on my days off had not been part of the original deal, and it became oppressive. I continued to do my chores, but I took out my frustration by covering a large shed with junk. This was my first big work. My boss sold the spread, and the man who bought it was going to bulldoze the "Tack Shack," as it was called, but his wife said it was a treasure, that she loved it, and it was saved from destruction. Kind of a happy ending, unlike the fate of the wall in the film, *The Horse's Mouth*.

The opening scene of Sam Albright's video, *The Collage Artist*, takes place in front of the Tack Shack. I appear in a black tweed overcoat and fisherman's cap,

working on my art. I get in a battered GMC van and drive down 4th Parallel Road towards Ellensburg. Mt. Rainier can be seen above the Manastash Hills, and there's a great shot of a hawk cutting the air in front of the van. The video follows the activity of an artist preparing a retrospective art show. There are three parts: the ranch scene and trip to town; a café scene, shot in the Four Winds with a part that is an interior monologue; and a final, Chaplinesque scene of Chris Shambacher and myself, accompanied by Craig, Chris's three-legged dog, carrying a mysterious box around town. The video was shot just prior to a show I had at Gallery One with Don O'Connor and Bruce McNaughty. If you go to the gallery at my

D Press website, [dpress.net](http://dpress.net), you can see photos of this show by Julie Prather.

Bouvard: Jampa, what is the source of your inspiration? What makes you create?

Jampa: Oh, that's harder to describe than how I make my art. You know that I am also a writer. I go back and forth and sometimes combine both mediums. When the poetic muse takes a vacation, I do visual art. They're related activities. In collage, you cut and paste images; in poetry, you take an image from your mind and put it, in the form of a word, on the page. The brain might but the impulse to make art is the same. Both are means of expression, like giving birth to something that wasn't there beforehand, an urge to procreate. There's a time for flirtatious-like curiosity with an idea or image, and then of conception, gestation and delivery—even before I begin to work—then, you have to nurture this baby. The actual making of the poem or collage involves all the trials and hopes and disappointments of getting this baby to grow into a being, but I don't like this analogy much. Maybe the drive to create is something more transcendent, like communing with the Absolute. Or it might be totally mundane, like wanting fame. If you think too much about this, you'd never do it.

Bouvard: What might set you off, be a catalyst?

Jampa: Anything. As Borges points out, everything has its poetry, its beauty, even if you can't see it. A blank page is a formidable thing, perfect in its blankness, but once you make a mark on it, you are committed. The work moves, changes, and

you can find yourself lost, weary and confused. Stop. Leave it. Sleep on it. It's easy to botch things. Or, go on. It's your call. Sometimes, from a mess, a masterpiece emerges. I recall Henry Miller's short story, "The Angel Is My Watermark," where an image of an angel appears in his ruined watercolor. After he had tried several ways to save it, he tried scrubbing it in the bathtub; and presto!

Bouvard: There's a question I've wanted to ask someone who is both a creative artist and a meditator. Do you find there to be a conflict between these two activities?

Jampa: I didn't quite finish answering your last question, but I think what I have to say will lead to that, ok?

Bouvard: Of course, go ahead.

Jampa: William Blake describes a work of art as consisting of three parts: one part comes from myth, apart from the art tradition, and a part comes from your own genius. It is my view, a work of art also has its source in three locations: in an outside place, an inside place, and a secret place. By the "outside" I mean the context for the work to be done, perhaps a commission or an upcoming show, and this imposes a deadline. This pressure acts as a stimulant. The "inside" is your own personal standards and the methods, the skillful means, you have developed to make art.

For example, my way of writing is described in *My Process* (dPress, 2002, see Vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of Richard Denner*). I explain how I write into the book. I use linked text boxes in a computer program to create a book format. The open pages "call out" to be filled; and from here, it is out of my hands. The book becomes an editing process. I print out a copy, sew it up, edit, and print it again, until I am satisfied. There are usually pieces left over, and these start the next book in a series. The "book" is never done. It is done when you put a frame around it and call it done. With my assemblages, I may begin with a frame and fill it. Or, a wall seemingly calls me. I make a few strokes, and the composition begins to expand and take on a life of its own. This is why it's hard for most people to

dedicate themselves to art, to live in the moment and give up their structured lifestyle.

Then, there is the “secret” place that is a source for the work of art. I may be inspired by a beautiful woman, or I may find I am writing or making a picture to please a friend. I discovered recently that I wrote many poems to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Spicer. I want to be in that Circle of Hell where Dante put the poets. As Jack once said, “Poetry is a conversation among the dead, and the poets get it second hand.” It is in this secret place that strange knowledge comes to the artist, and it is here that meditation is helpful.

Is there a conflict between making art and meditation? My experience is that there is room for both, that they are compatible and enhance each other. Aspects of the creative process are meditative: there is the focus of *shamatha*, of maintaining a mindful presence in your work; and there is a kind of seeing, or insight, that arises from the *vipashyana* aspect. It is impossible for the mind to reach complete stillness when making art, especially with writing, where logic and the law of contradictions are in play, yet the mind stream is channeled, directing the flow of energy toward realization of what is really real.

After a session of meditation, where the discursive mind is given rest, I find my creativity enhanced, my hand steadier. The continual search for bliss in visionary fantasy, the god-like power of creativity, the revelatory ecstasy of epiphany are a mistaken direction to pursue, if you want lasting transcendental wisdom. Finally, there is no meditation; all dualistic notions are subsumed under equanimity, in a simple state of awareness.

Blah, blah, blah!

If you have brought your art onto the path, then it is a form of practice, and your view, your practice, and how you carry this out in your life are unified, were always a unity. You need to develop confidence in this. It doesn't mean having a Big Ego. You develop what the Tibetans call Vajra Pride, which also requires you to maintain humility and compassion for others. You don't need to be acknowledge by others. You acknowledge yourself. I could go on, but I think this is a good place

to stop.

Bouvard: Thank you, Jampa.

Jampa: You are entirely welcome. Blessings. May the two-fold accomplishments of mine and others be of benefit—no, that's not it—through the two accumulations, may the two-fold benefit of mine and others be accomplished.