

## Jade Buddha for Universal Peace World Tour - Sydney, Australia.

### Speech by Kylie Kwong for the Opening Ceremony.

On my travels, I have been privileged to visit some very sacred Buddhist sites, including Songzanlin Monastery in Zhongdian, the largest Tibetan monastery in China's Yunnan Province; the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai; and the extraordinary Potala Palace in Lhasa. I have also been fortunate enough to attend the annual Tsechu Festival in Paro, Bhutan, where an enormous silk-embroidered thangka that dates from the 6th century is slowly unfurled before dawn, then ceremonially rolled away before the first rays of the sun strike it. These experiences have been life-changing for me, and they continue to exert a powerful influence on my daily life.

I find myself energetically drawn to images of the Buddha, mesmerised by the calming aura and magical quality they always seem to radiate. Such an experience of peace is something we all seek, and this extraordinarily beautiful Jade Buddha brings this special gift to us wherever he travels around the world. Jade is revered in many Asian cultures, and in ancient times was carved into offerings that were believed to allow humans to communicate with nature, and with the spirit world. Considered the 'stone of heaven' in China, my grandmother, mother and aunts all wore jade necklaces and, as an adolescent, I remember receiving my grandmother's precious jade necklace when she sadly passed away.

About six years ago, I became interested in Buddhism, and now my Buddhist practice informs everything I do in my life. In my restaurant, we serve only organic and biodynamic produce, as we feel that offering the healthiest, most life-giving, vibrant food is the very best way we can serve the community. Buddhism reveals the interconnectedness of all things, including the profound human connection with nature. At Billy Kwong, we recognise that we are merely caretakers of this precious planet and, to this end, we are passionate supporters of the sustainable food movement.

Through my books and my TV series, I aim to raise awareness of the fascinating and complex culture of my ancestral home, China. As a third-generation Australian and a 29th-generation Kwong, I have been blessed by being exposed to different cultures and traditions, and I feel so fortunate to have a foot in both worlds. There is so much to be gained from East meeting West. And, although a Buddha image is associated with Eastern spiritual practices, the message of peace that is so apparent in the face of the Buddha is universal in its appeal to those of all faiths.

After touring elsewhere in Australia, the Jade Buddha will be sharing a stage with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama at the beginning of December, as he gives a series of teachings at Sydney's Entertainment Centre. I will be welcoming His Holiness for one of these lectures, and I feel deeply honoured and humbled to have the opportunity to be so close to not one Buddha, but two!

I am thrilled that such a positive image has made its way to Sydney. It gives me great hope, and I encourage all of you here today to return to this sacred place with your friends and family. I am completely in awe of the efforts of Ian and Judy Green, who have made this all possible – their insight and commitment are an inspiration.

I feel incredibly fortunate to be here, in this moment, to unveil – with Ian – the 'Jade Buddha for Universal Peace'. May the Buddha's presence bestow an enduring sense of peace on all of you, and on our wonderful city!

Thank you.